



ANANDA VĀRTĀ

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

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CONTENTS

- | | | |
|---|-----|---------|
| 1. Matri Upadeshamrita | ... | 83— 92 |
| 2. Sri Sri Ma's Self-Initiation—
A. K. Datta Gupta | ... | 93—110 |
| 3. Matri Satsang—Swami Bhagavatananda Giri | | 111—121 |
| 4. The Teaching of Ma Anandamoyi—
Jean and Josette Herbert | ... | 122—130 |
| 5. Ma, The Universal Mother—Anil Ganguli | | 131—150 |
| 6. Matri Lila in my Humble Life—
Abani Mohan Sharma | ... | 151—164 |
| 7. Matri Lila | ... | 165—169 |

What is *Ātma-darśana*, face-to-face vision of Self? Seer-seeing-seen...when three become One, then and only then the merging in Totality. Nothing like action or inaction can arise—that is called steadiness in Selfhood (*Ātmasthiti*). Or *Ātma-darśana* from the viewpoint of form: Look! your own Deity everywhere. Just as it's said, "Wherever my gaze alights, instantly flashes forth Śrī Kṛṣṇa." Perceiving anything as not Kṛṣṇa means the real darśana hasn't happened yet. With clear-eyed, unifying vision—self-evident the One Beloved.

When *pūjā* and similar rituals used to happen, in exactly the prescribed manner—the śakti, āsanās, mudrās, sentiments, whatever elements appropriate for worshipping a specific god or goddess—everything would occur spontaneously in this body out of that *bhāva* (an inclination within self-wholeness). Far from being a play of imagination, all that was as clear as you people are right here and now. Every detail was beautifully arranged. In fact, everything required issued of its own accord out of this body! The *mūrti* (image) of god or goddess was taken out from this body, made to sit down in front, and *pūjā* proceeded. Then, *pūjā* completed, everything merged back into this body in the same way and whence it had first emerged.*

It must be realized—everything is possible.

The purpose of *pūjā* is revelation of the one Ideal (*Iṣṭa*). To find yourself, to be poised in *Ātmā*, worship the Ever-Beyond. In doing that *pūjā* the puzzle of duality-nonduality occurs not. *Pūjā* without expectation of worldly benefit centers on *Bhagavān* alone.

Be ever intent on uncovering the *Mahāyoga* (absolute Unity) that reveals the fact of being eternally yoked to the Divine.

*Sri MA refers to a six-year period before age 30 when She played at *sādhana*, taking up and attaining perfection in the teachings and practices of every major and minor tradition.

MATRI UPADESHAMRITA

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

—Mataji

(*Mātri Upadeshāmrita*, “The Nectar of Mother’s Teaching”, comprises excerpts from various sources of Sri Ma’s spiritual instruction on selected subjects—compiled by Sister Uma)

ON GURU

(Continued)

In one form or another the grace of the Guru must be obtained. Until the Guru is found it is man’s duty to invoke and try to realise God by looking upon all forms as His Form, all names as His Name and all modes of being as His.

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Question : How can I come to know my true nature ?

Mataji : Have you obtained a Guru ?

Questioner : I love the name of Rāma. Today itself it has occurred to me again and again that you indeed are my Guru.

Mataji : By obeying the Guru's instructions, by carrying out the injunctions of the *śāstras*, your question will find its solution. Seek *satsang*. By the Guru's grace achievement comes.

Questioner : I look upon you as my Guru. I pray for the blessing of the Guru's touch for everyone taking part in this *Samyam Vrata*, since it is forbidden to touch your feet and there are hardly a few minutes available for personal questions and advice. Your gate-keepers do not allow us to go near you.

Mataji : God alone is the one Guru. If you pray inwardly, God will respond to your prayer and grant it.

* * * *

Placing your trust in your Guru, practise the seed mantra you received from him and contemplate the Beloved (*Iṣṭa*). It is imperative to have unswerving faith in one's particular *Iṣṭa*. What is the use of seeking initiation again and again? Rather is it not of the utmost importance to strive strenuously after the full revelation of the form under which He has manifested Himself to you?

Whenever practicable seek *satsang*.

* * * *

Question : What is the work of the Guru and what the work of the *shishya*?

Mataji : It is said that the *shishya's* task is to efface the ego and become as a blank. There is a story of a king who invited the best artists to paint frescoes in his palace. Two painters were working in the same hall at opposite walls with a curtain

between them so that neither of them could see what the other was doing. One of them created a marvelous picture which evoked the admiration of every onlooker. The other artist had not painted anything at all. He had spent all his time polishing the wall. He had polished it so perfectly that when the curtain was removed the picture of the other painter was reflected in a way that made it appear even more beautiful than the original.

It is the disciple's duty to polish away the "I-ness".

Question : But then the major portion of the work has to be accomplished by the *shishya* ?

Mataji : No, because it is the Guru who paints the picture.

* * * *

Question : Why has the Guru to be contemplated on the crown of the head ? What harm is there in thinking of him in the heart or in the centre between the eyebrows ?

Mataji : It is right to meditate as indicated in the *śāstras*. He at whose feet one is enjoined to surrender one's head, where should his place be if not on the top of the head ? Nevertheless, the Guru who is Knowledge itself is everywhere and therefore may be visualized in any place of the world or in any part of the human body. When the transmission of the Guru's power has taken effect, everything becomes permeated by the Guru. All the same, at the level of spiritual practice, the place for the contemplation of the Guru has, as an aid in meditation, been fixed at the centre on the

top of the head, or on Mount Kailash for the Guru who is Śiva and for Śiva who is the Guru.

Question : When one's Chosen Deity (*Iṣṭa*) becomes displeased, the Guru delivers one. Why cannot one's Chosen Deity save one when the Guru becomes displeased ?

Mataji : Because it is the Guru who reveals your *Iṣṭa* to you.

* * * *

The relation between Guru and *shishya* deserves to be called eternal only when the Guru is possessed of divine power and can and does communicate this power to the latter at the time of his initiation. This power being eternal, the relation between the Guru and *shishya* as thus established is also eternal.....

No true relation between Guru and *shishya* can exist unless this relation is assumed to be eternal. This implies that the Guru ought to be capable of communicating power to others as a matter of grace.

It is only in the case of a divinely gifted, powerful Guru that a temporary slackening of the disciple's faith cannot do much real harm inasmuch as the hidden power of the Guru infused into the disciple and functioning within him steadily, though unconsciously, has invariably a tendency to come up and lead him to a deepening of his faith.

In a case where the disciple's faith in his Guru is genuine and firm, any limitation in the Guru is not a hindrance. However, as soon as this faith is shaken for any reason whatsoever, difficulties are bound to arise. For, except by faith, which

naturally invokes divine grace and does not depend upon the individual merit of the Guru, there is no other way to render the relation with the Guru eternal....

* * * *

A person who has genuine faith in the Guru is unable to hate any human being, for this would amount to hating the Guru. The Supreme Guru is present within each and everyone. It is necessary to be firmly convinced of this fact. Patience is an indispensable part of *sādhana*.

To carry out the instructions of the Guru without questioning is the greatest service of all.

* * * *

Question : What does *Guru seva* (service of the Guru) mean ?

Mataji : To obey the Guru's instructions without reasoning.

* * * *

Question : While living in the Guru's Ashram, what is better ? Serving the Guru or engaging in meditation ?

Mataji : Whatever the Guru advises is best.

Questioner : But the Guru does not say anything about this ?

Mataji : Then he is not a Guru. To do the Guru's personal service is not possible for everyone. It requires special capacity. Suppose you do the Guru's personal work for a time and then someone else is asked to continue and does it in a different way and this upsets or irritates you. This is not called service. You should, on the contrary, feel happy that some other person also has the

chance to serve your Beloved in his or her own way.

Always remember that whomever you serve, you are serving God (*Janjanārdana*) in that particular guise. So many people come to the Ashram and there is no end to the opportunities of serving them in this spirit. Even if some of them be bad or mean, do not forget that they have come to the temple of God. For this reason serve them to the limit of your capacity, although they may not keep up the same attitude after leaving the Ashram. Serve the pure intention that has moved them for the moment. Whether you provide food or water, or sweep the place for them or assist them in any other way, it is service to God in the shape of man. Thus, there is any amount of scope for service in an Ashram.

Obey the Guru implicitly ! Whatever he may ask you to do, try to carry it out. If it be disagreeable or troublesome, accept it as your *tapasyā*. Although it is true that so long as one is bound by the knots (*granthi*) of "I-ness", perfect faith is impossible, nevertheless exert yourself to the utmost to act upon the Guru's orders. If you are able to remain in meditation continuously, nobody will ever dream of expecting any service from you. But if you linger about aimlessly for part of the time, you should certainly do service of some sort.

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To carry out scrupulously the Guru's instructions is the greatest service. It is written : "The

gratification of one's own will and pleasure is called self-indulgence ; the fulfilment of Sri Krishna's will and pleasure is called love." Therefore, to put into practice without reasoning the Guru's orders means engaging in the greatest service of all.

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The Guru's words are mantras. According to the Guru's instructions practise *sādhana* with deep religious feeling and God will *have* to respond.

* * * *

The way to God-realization is indeed straight and simple. The mantra which the Guru communicates is certainly the most excellent one. If the mantra received from one's Guru is repeated in the right manner, realization is bound to occur. How wonderful God's dispensation is ! When the power transmitted to you by the Guru begins to function, action will not create new karma anymore. If one enters fire one will of necessity be burnt...

* * * *

Question : What is mantra *caitanya* ?

Mataji : A mantra that has become alive ; that is to say, that which the mantra represents becomes revealed. The seed is sown by the Guru, but unless the soil is properly prepared the tree will not grow. An ordinary seed may die if not tended, while the seed which the Guru sows is immortal. All the same, the earth has to be dug up and made soft and receptive ; then the stones have to be removed and the earth is sieved and so forth. If the seed is not watered it cannot develop. The regular practice according to the Guru's instructions

provides the nourishment that will make the seed grow into a tree.

* * * *

Question : What exactly does *Bhagavat chintā* (the thought of God) mean ? Since I have not seen God and do not know Him, how can I think of Him ?

Mataji : At times you want to buy something that you have never seen. You nevertheless think of it, go to the market and finally get it.

At present you are on the level of belief and acceptance of what you have been told. You know the mantra and you know the Guru : The mantra is God and the Guru is God. In actual fact there is nothing but God. Anyhow, you accept the Guru ; therefore meditate on him.

Questioner : But I do now know the Guru ; I only see his body.

Mataji : Never mind. Concentrate on the little that you know of him and on the mantra, and carry out the Guru's instructions. The mantra is the seed. Having obtained the seed, the whole tree is potentially there. All you have to do is to bury the seed in good earth and tend it carefully. The tree will grow of itself. When you have found the Guru and received his instructions, you have in very truth found everything, just as the tree is contained in the seed.

* * * *

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

Mataji : Why shouldn't there be ?

Questioner : I believe the *śāstras* declare that unless one takes on a Guru nothing much can be achieved.

Mataji (smiling) : The Guru resides in your own heart. But ordinary people are unable to rely firmly on their own Self. So they have to take refuge in an external Guru. But in actual fact the Guru resides within one's own heart. It is He who prompts you to say you can succeed by repeating God's Name even without taking recourse to a Guru. On the other hand, when the time is ripe, it will be He who will make you say that without taking on a Guru nothing can be achieved. Then you will see how intense your longing for a Guru will become, so that you will run hither and thither searching for Him. The essential fact is that the Guru enthroned in your heart dictates to you what course to follow as and when the need arises. The main thing to do is to follow his advice.

* * * *

God Himself appears as the Guru. He has to be invoked full of faith. Just as a *vighraha* must not be regarded as a stone, so the Guru must not be regarded as a human being. If you look upon Him as a human being you have not found a Guru—can a human being ever be a Guru? The significance of the word, "Guru", is "Jagadguru" (World-teacher). A World-teacher is one who diverts man from the path leading to death and puts him on the path of Immortality. He who does this is the inner Guru. Once the Guru has accepted a disciple, He will never leave him until the Goal has been attained. The question of

leaving does not arise at all. Where can the Guru go? Does He dwell in the realm of coming and going? Therefore, if one calls Him, "Guru", it has nothing to do with the body that is transitory. The Guru resides within. So long as the inner Guru has not been revealed nothing can be achieved.

There is only one Guru, and that is Satchidānanda. He alone is the Teacher. My attitude toward God is that of a child toward its mother. One can get human gurus by the million. All want to be teachers. But who cares to be a disciple?

—Sri Ramakrishna

SRI SRI MA'S SELF-INITIATION

From : In Association with Sri Sri Ma Anandamayi

Sri A. K. Datta Gupta
(Translated from Bengali)

When this series of articles was started in the July-Oct. 1979 issue of *Ānanda Vārtā*, the first article was a translation of an article that had appeared in Bengali in the May 1954 *Ānanda Vārtā*. At that time the very first of these articles which had appeared in Bengali in the 1953 birthday number was somehow missed out. It is now published below. It deals with Mataji's *līlā* of *sāadhanā* and the fascinating episode of Her Self-initiation as narrated by Herself in Her inimitable style.

Sri Anandamayi Ashram,
Varanasi, July 28th 1949.

This morning, while discussing other topics, Professor Sudhir Gopal Mukherji asked : "Ma, I am eager to hear how exactly the first manifestation of Guru-power took place within you."

Mataji (laughing) : First of all let me tell you : this body is exactly the same now as it was in childhood. There is no such thing as an initial or a subsequent stage for this body. I am saying this while sitting on the banks of holy Ganga ! (Everybody laughs heartily) Nevertheless, a play of *sāadhanā* did take place for this body : for some time it assumed the role of a *sādhaka* and all the conditions and stages that are traversed by a *sādhaka* were fully manifested in this body.

Do I not repeatedly say : “I must now go and see how Nani¹ is ? Am I not aware of her condition while sitting here that I have to go upstairs to see her ? But although knowing fully well how she is, I do go again and again to see her ; my *sādhanā* took place in a somewhat similar fashion.

Sudhir Gopal : We are very keen to hear from you how your *sādhanā* started and how your initiation took place in due course.

Mataji : This body’s father was very fond of singing *kirtana* and religious songs. They included songs of various religious sects, such as *Śaktas*, *Vaiṣṇavas*, etc. He slept very little and usually spent his nights singing devotional songs. When this body was about four or five years old it asked him one day : “Baba, what is the purpose of singing the name of Hari ?” He replied : “By calling out to Hari one comes to see Him”. I again asked : “Is Hari very big to look at ?” He replied : “Yes, very big.” “Is He as big as this field here in front of us ?” “Much, much bigger. Why don’t you call Him, then you will be able to see for yourself how great He is.”

This was how I began to sing His Name. But right in earnest the repetition of the Name commenced when Bholanath took me to Astagram after our marriage. In the house where we stayed there was another person who was Bholanath’s friend. Although I was always heavily veiled, he used to address me as “Ma”. He let us occupy

1. Nani was the wife of Sri Sudhir Chakravarti. She had come on a visit from Calcutta and fallen ill.

the room in which his own mother had breathed her last.

In early childhood I had been taught by this body's mother to take great care of the tulsi plant. So on arrival in Astagram I prepared a *tulsi mancha*¹ in the courtyard. Daily I used to place flowers and lights there in such a way that people would come and perform their *praṇāmas* reverently at the *mancha*. It was due to this *mancha* that preparations for holding a *kirtan* in front of it were made subsequently.

When the *kirtan* started I was engaged in nursing a patient. But on listening to this *kirtan* for some time, I fell down as if in a faint. In this condition there was no longer any question of modesty or purdah. Before this I used to veil myself heavily and conduct myself with the utmost propriety.

On seeing my condition everybody thought I had a fit. They raised me up and sprinkled water on my eyes and face. Just as perspiration trickles down a human body in an incessant stream, so blissful ecstasy (*ānanda*) oozed out of every pore of this body. It appeared as if I had become one with the *kirtan*.

But if people become immersed in ecstatic emotion while singing *kirtan*, this is of a different nature because it is connected with *kriya* (action) and hence there is a touch of worldliness about it. But this body's condition was not due to any *kriyā*. So

1. *Tulsi Mancha* A raised platform with a *tulsi* plant in the centre.

worldliness was entirely excluded in this case. Furthermore the experience of *ānanda* was somewhat different—of its own right.

After my being in such a state of *bhāva*¹ during the *kirtan*, the singing of the name of Hari was continued regularly, whereas previously this used to take place only occasionally, not according to a fixed routine.

At this point of the conversation, Sri Sri Ma was being called for Her meal. So we performed our *praṇāmas* and stood up to go. It was decided to continue this discussion in the evening.

At about 5 p.m. I went to the Ashram. Ma had not yet descended but a little later She came downstairs and sat down in the courtyard. Sudhir Gopal, raising the topic of the morning, said : “The reason for asking questions regarding Sri Sri Ma’s *dikṣā* is that among us Hindus there is a tradition that without a Guru no religious practice can be started. But exceptions can be seen in the cases of Sri Aurobindo and yourself. Although Sri Aurobindo did in fact resort to a Guru to start with, he progressed far beyond the Guru to a much higher state of achievement. He himself said that he reached this state only by total surrender to God. He further declared that if someone is really deeply anxious to receive the grace of God, then it is not difficult to obtain it. Therefore, even if the Guru is not fully enlightened this need not prove an obstacle. On the other hand, even if the Guru is fully enlightened but the disciple has not the right foundation or is unable to surrender entirely to God, then the Guru cannot provide substantial assistance though his own Knowledge be complete.

Mataji : Well, do you think that as soon as you depend entirely and with your whole being on

1. *Bhāva* Spiritual ecstasy, generally emotional in nature. *Bhāvas* usually occur on elevated stages of the path of *bhakti*.

God, His grace starts functioning in you, or do you say it is due to the Lord's grace that you are able to surrender to Him completely? I pose the question: when the earth is struck with a crowbar and the crowbar penetrates into the earth, is it due to the force of the blow or because the earth yields a path to the penetration of the crowbar?

Sudhir Gopal: It is difficult to say which comes first and which afterwards. It seems that both occur simultaneously.

In any case, apart from Sri Aurobindo, in your case also there was no sign of any Guru. This is why I wished to ascertain whether your spiritual progress was due to taking on a Guru or did it come about without any Guru whatsoever?

Would you please continue from where you left off in the morning when you said that during *kirtan* your body would fall unconscious.

Mataji: Yes, after that incident this used to recur off and on.

Near where we lived there was a house belonging to a family of carpenters. They used to build boats. During the day they worked hard but after sunset they would sing *kirtan*. Although their house was invisible because of a bamboo-grove, yet the sound of their *kirtan* reached my ears. Whenever it was heard this body would react sharply. Later it came to pass that whenever I merely glanced in the direction of that house, everything there seemed to brim over with supreme bliss. And even though there was no possibility of any social relation with them, there was indeed a blissful relationship due to their *kirtans*.

There was a little boy in the carpenters' house who used to come to me. Whenever I asked him

to sing *kirtan* he would dance and sing simultaneously. This body had the *kheyāla* to make him dance while he was singing. When doing so he used to go into a *bhāva*. When his mother saw this *bhāva* she got frightened and told me : “He is still a child, please do not make him dance when he sings Hari’s name”. Since his mother objected to it, the boy was no longer asked to dance. But whenever he met me he would shout loudly : “*Hari bol, Govinda bol !*”

Anyway, this body continued to become unconscious when hearing various *kirtans* at various places. At first efforts were made to keep this secret. But even these efforts were of short duration ; because when the flood of *bhāva* was really roused, then all efforts to suppress this were of no avail. The fact that I had these *bhāvas* during *kirtan* was a source of amusement to some people. I would make light of their criticism by appearing to join into their amusement. For this reason nobody tried to prevent these *bhāvas* during *kirtan*. In fact, with the exception of Bholanath, people were hardly aware of what was taking place. Moreover, I at that time had the *kheyāla* that my *bhāvas* should remain hidden as far as possible from the outside world.

Subsequently an accomplished singer named “Gagan Kirtania” came with his party to perform *kirtan*. It was arranged that after the *kirtan* they would have a meal before departing. Thus various dishes had been prepared for them in advance. When the *kirtan* started I beheld two boys of tender

age dancing in the midst of the *kirtan*. The funny thing was that this body also took on the role of a child and assumed the restless behaviour of a child. It repeatedly ran to the kitchen to see whether the food was all right, and again ran hurriedly to the place of the *kirtan*. In this manner this body was hastening hither and thither. Although the chief objective of all this moving to and fro was to make sure whether the food was all right, yet there was no real precaution taken to see that the food was indeed safe.

A wooden couch had been placed near the *kirtan* for us to sit upon. This body would sit on the couch and time and again hurry to the kitchen like a small child. In the course of all this nobody noticed when exactly this body came to lie motionless on the couch. When the *kirtan* ended and it was time for the singers to be fed, it was discovered that a dog had entered the kitchen and spoiled everything that had been cooked. On seeing this, Bholanath became furious and started looking for me. After much searching he found me lying unconscious on the couch. On calling out to me he realized that I was indeed senseless. On whom could he then vent his anger? In the meantime the people next door quickly cooked fresh *kitchuri* and other things and somehow fed the singers. But I remained unconscious during the whole night. When I did not come to my senses even the next day, Bholanath called the singers together and resumed the *kirtan*. When the *kirtan* had been continued up to 3 p.m. my consciousness returned.

From that time onwards people would look upon this body's *bhāvas* as a form of hysteria. Bholanath duly wrote to the parents of this body. They also became anxious on hearing the news. But this body's mother did not come to see me. She felt that if these *bhāvas* were a help on the spiritual path, why should she take a wrong step in being an impediment to it? Thus pondering over the matter she did not visit me even after learning of my so-called illness.

Later on, when coming to Bajitpur after leaving Vidyakut, (of course quite a lot is being omitted that happened in between) then also this sort of *bhāva* occurred again and again. Bholanath always used to take precautions to keep this secret from neighbours. When *kirtan* was sung I was not allowed to go outside. The doors of the small room in which I was staying were kept shut. I used to roll along the floor of that room. However, in spite of all precautions, a rumour spread that Ramani Babu's (Bholanath's) wife had been dancing during *kirtan* with a drum on her shoulder!

Just at about this time the Gurudeva of the local sub-registrar's mother arrived. He was a worshipper of *sakti* and used to wear bright red robes. On being told of my condition he expressed the wish to see me. So Bholanath took me to his residence. There I was made to sit beside an image of Śiva. Since arriving at Bajitpur this body used to regularly repeat the Name while sitting in a yogic posture. At such times various

bhāvas used to pass through this body. For instance, suppose I was seated repeating the Name, I would spontaneously start to spin round, still locked in a yogic *āsana*. So when being made to sit near the Śiva Linga, this body automatically assumed yogic postures and spun round once or twice. The Gurudeva observed this. Thereupon he kept on sending me messages through others to the effect that he was a *Siddha Puruṣa* (perfected soul) and, if I so desired, could be instrumental in communicating to me the direct vision of God. I merely listened to all these messages.

During his next visit to the house of his disciple, he told Bholanath that he wished to perform a *pūjā* in our house. When I heard of this, I pointed out to Bholanath that if the Guru was coming to perform a *pūjā*, he should also be offered a meal. Bholanath thought this very appropriate. So he invited the Guru to a meal and made all necessary arrangements. But owing to his work in the Court he could not remain at home during the visit. As Bholanath was leaving for the Court, I asked him: "I am remaining alone here, what should I do when the Guru comes?" Bholanath replied: "What can you do? Give him what he asks for and do as he tells you." Although this body was a very young housewife, yet Bholanath never felt any qualms in leaving me alone. Even when going on tour to the district, he never arranged for anyone to stay with me. For this reason people used to speak ill of him, but Bholanath had seen enough of my

bearing to realize that this body was fully capable of taking care of itself.

So in due course, after Bholanath's departure, the Gurudeva arrived. I had previously kept ready everything that was necessary for his *pūjā*. So he started on his worship, and I was busy cooking the food. At the conclusion of his *pūjā* he called me. I veiled myself and came and stood in front of him. He asked me to sit on the *āsana* (carpet) of the *pūjā*. I complied as I had been told by Bholanath to do as the Guru requested. When I was seated on the *āsana*, he asked me to perform the *achaman*¹. As this body was not in the habit of doing *pūjā* or any other ritual, I asked him how exactly I was to perform the *achaman*. He sat on his stool and showed me with his hands how to do it. Now it so happened that as soon as this body was seated on the seat for *pūjā*, its behaviour suddenly changed completely. The correct posture for *pūjā* was automatically assumed. There was then no question of shyness or modesty. My hands also started performing certain *krīyās*. On beholding all this the Gurudeva became frightened and at once asked me to get up from the *āsana*. This is why it is said that if something is genuine, there is nothing to be feared. Even if you fling it into flames, it will not burn ; even if you throw it to the tiger he will not be able to swallow it. However this may be, just then Bholanath returned and the Gurudeva, after having his meal, departed.

1. *Achaman* Preliminary purification with water before performing any ritual.

On his next visit to the town he again wanted to see me, so Bholanath brought him to me. He started talking of various subjects, including how he had attained to perfection by worshipping the Goddess Bagalā¹ and another Deity as well. Now it can often be seen that when one lives in the shelter of Truth, the power of Truth automatically manifests. This is what happened on this occasion. As soon as he mentioned that he had achieved *Bagalā Siddhi*", this body retorted with extreme vehemence : "What ? You have attained to *Bagalā Siddhi* ? This is a complete lie !" Thereafter the actual facts of how he had gone wrong in his efforts on each and every occasion were loudly divulged through this mouth. On hearing all this the Gurudev became bewildered. Bholanath kept on asking me to keep quiet. For fear that someone might hear what I was saying he shut the doors. But what was the use of crying : "Shut up ! Shut up !" Whatever is meant to happen through this body is bound to come about. Bholanath had on previous occasions tried many times to stop me by force, but to no avail. So then the Gurudev was compelled to confess to this body that he had not got any *Bagalā Siddhi* or any other *siddhi*, but he wanted to know from this body what he had to do in order to attain to it. The funniest part of the story is that, as soon as he asked this question, this body at once furnished him with the complete

1. *Bagalā* One of the ten *Mahāvidyās*, forms of Devi in which She manifested Herself to Śiva. *Siddhi* means Realization, fulfilment. Also occult power gained by yogic practise.

details of the mantras and methods of worship required by him.

Just now something else comes to my *kheyāla*, so I shall tell you about it. Quite often nobody was allowed to touch this body. But the reason for this restriction was not understood by people. This was enforced because they did not possess the power to bear it. What happened once ?

There was a young man in Bajitpur. He was married but had no children. This is why his father wanted him to marry again, but the boy had no wish to do so as he wanted to remain with his first wife. When his father continued to press him on the subject, he finally resolved that when I (Ma) would get up from my *āsana* after *pūjā* he would touch my feet and mentally pray for a son. But at that time it was forbidden to touch my feet. Therefore after consulting Bholanath, he resolved to offer his mental prayers while touching my feet. So one day as soon as I got up from *pūjā* he came and touched my feet. He at once fell down unconscious and therefore could not offer the prayers as decided. Hour after hour passed but he did not return to his senses. Bholanath became frightened and requested me to see that he became all right. The young man was a Government Treasury worker and Bholanath's friend. When after a long interval he regained consciousness, he said it was impossible to describe the blissful ecstasy he had been plunged in all that while. Even though he had been unable to pray for a son as planned, yet because it had been in his mind while touching me, he later did have children.

Previously I mentioned that ever since coming to Bajitpur I had the *kheyāla* to perform *japa* regularly day by day. The room occupied by me was always kept spotlessly clean. Care was taken to see that there was no direct contact between the room and even a single blade of grass outside. In the evening burning incense used to be taken round the room from outside, since it was veritably a temple in which the Name was daily being recited. But so far no initiation had taken place. Even though every evening I sat down to do *japa* it was nothing else but just "*Hari bol*". Whatever state this body had already reached at that time had been brought about by virtue of the Name.

One day Bholanath said to me: "We are *śaktas*¹, why do you always repeat "*Hari bol, Hari bol*"? This is not fitting." I replied: "Then what should I chant? "*Jai Śiva Śankara, Vom Vom, Hara Hara*"? This body did not know any mantras, so whatever came I voiced. Bholanath was satisfied and said: "Yes, just recite this!" So from then onwards "*Jai Śiva Śankara*" was being recited. But already when repeating "*Hari bol*" this body had spontaneously assumed various yogic postures and this gradually was being intensified. With the repetition of "*Jai Śiva Śankara*" it became even more intricate. So many different *āsanas* came about of themselves, one after the other—such as *siddhāsana, padmāsana, gomukhi āsana*, etc. The strange thing was that while repeating the Name there was a sudden change in this body: yogic

1. *Śakta* Worshipper of *śakti*.

postures formed spontaneously and then, with an audible sound in the spinal column, this body would straighten out naturally into a completely upright pose. There was no force or compulsion, no uneasiness in this. In such a condition this body could not be moved or bent in any way. It seemed as if this body had been screwed down into this position. Thereafter the repetition of the Name would cease by itself and some kind of absorption (*tanmaya bhāva*) ensued. After some time in this state, the Name would be resumed, the *āsana* would slowly become relaxed and the body return again to its natural state. Some time passed in this manner. There are many details in this connection that cannot be revealed, and even those that can be, will not all be dealt with now.

So, omitting many things, I shall now speak about the *dīkṣā*. This body's *dīkṣā* took place in the night of *Jhūlan Pūrnimā*.* In order to see the *Jhūlan* festival, many people had dined early and then gone out. Bholanath had also had his evening meal. A hookah was got ready and given to him. He lay down smoking and watching what I was doing. The care with which I had wiped the floor of the room and then sat down in an *āsana* seemed somewhat unusual to him. But after watching for a while he fell asleep. Here also, the curious thing is that the *yajña* and *pūjā* that have to be performed during initiation were spontaneously carried out by this body. The *yajña sthalī* (vessel) was placed in front ; all the various ingredients necessary for

*The fullmoon night on August 3rd, 1922.

the *pūjā*, such as flowers, fruit, water, etc., were already there; although not everybody could see them, yet there was no doubt about their actual existence. The *dīkṣā* mantra emanated from the navel and was pronounced by the tongue. Then the mantra was written by the hand on the *yajña* vessel and *pūjā* and fire sacrifice were duly performed over the mantra, that is to say all the rituals prescribed by the *Śāstras* for *dīkṣā* were duly gone through. Later when my fingers were moving to count the *japa*, Bholanath woke up and saw me perform *japa*. This body had never before performed *japa* counting with the fingers neither had anyone taught me how to do it, yet the fingers of their own went through the movements of counting. Bholanath was exceedingly surprised to see all this. But the next day when I went to do *japa* of my own volition, I found everything turning topsyturvey. However, soon this body again entered into the previous state and the *japa* came about of itself. This is how this body became initiated.

Sudhir Gopal : The *dīkṣā* mantra manifested indeed; but did the Guru's manifestation occur?

Mataji : Yes, that also happened.

Sudhir Gopal : Was the Guru in clear evidence (*pratyakṣa*)?

Mataji : Yes, that was so.

Sudhir Gopal : Please describe the Guru a little!

Mataji (smiling) : I always say that during childhood this body's father and mother were the Guru. When marriage was performed my parents told me that the husband was now the Guru. So

after marriage the husband became the Guru. Thereafter all who exist in the world are this body's Guru. From this point of view I can say that the *Ātmā* is in fact the Guru, in other words, this body is itself this body's Guru. Furthermore, about *pūjā* I always say that when a particular Deity is to be worshipped, this particular Deity emerges from this body and after being worshipped disappears again into this body. Thus you can infer something similar in the case of the Guru. In this way I have just explained how at the time of *dīkṣā* flowers, fruit etc, whatever was needed for the *pūjā* and the *yajña*, everything came out of this body ; so cannot the Guru have also issued out of this body ? Now you have been told everything that was asked concerning this body's initiation. Do you now understand how the *dīkṣā* took place ?

Sudhir Gopal : Yes, I have understood.

Mataji : What have you understood ?

Sudhir Gopal : I have understood nothing at all. (Everybody laughs loudly.) I shall ponder over what I have heard and then see. Later I shall question you again regarding this subject.

Nepal Dada (now Swami Narayanananda Tirtha) : When the mantra emanated from within you, did you know which deity's mantra it was ?

Mataji : No ; but immediately on receiving the mantra the question arose within me, "Whose mantra is it ?" And then quite clearly the reply came from within that it was of such and such a Deity. This is why it is said that once a genuine question arises with urgency from within, it does

not take long for it to find a response. But you are not truly receptive. If there is real enquiry there can be no delay in the answer.

Sudhir Gopal : Kusum Brahmachari says, your *sādhana* was no real *sādhana*, because all the obstacles and difficulties that arise from within us when we set out to practise *sādhana* were non-existent in your case.

Mataji : Why should this be so ? When the play of *sādhana* commenced within this body, did it not live with a good number of people ? This body resided in the midst of Bholanath's large family. Every type of work was performed by this body. But when this body played the role of a *sādhaka*, it assumed every detail necessary for each particular *sādhana*. For instance, marks on the forehead like *tilak*¹, *svarūpa*, *tripundra*², all appeared one by one.

There was a man in Bajitpur who later became a judge. He also used to give *dīksā*. On being told about my condition he suggested that I should wear a string of beads. In reply I sent a message to ask : "Should the necklace be worn outside or in the mind ?" On hearing this he declared there was no need for me to adopt a strings of beads.

About the *āsanas* that formed spontaneously I have already told you previously. Some people spends a lifetime in acquiring the art to perform one such *āsana* to perfection. But when this body became a *sādhaka*, it was seen that one *āsana* after

1. *Tilak* Mark on the forehead.

2. *Tripundra* Three curved horizontal marks made on the forehead by the worshippers of Śiva and Śakti.

another was executed and each of them to perfection. All your questions have now been replied to.

While conversing thus, evening had descended on us. Mataji got up. I performed my *praṇāma* to Her and returned to my residence.

*No heaven can come to us unless our hearts
find rest in it today.*

Take Heaven.

*No peace lies in the future which is not
hidden in this present instant.*

Take Peace.

*The gloom of the world is but a shadow;
behind it, yet, within our reach, is joy.*

Take Joy.

*And so, at this time, I greet you, with the
prayer that for you, now and forever, the day
breaks and the shadows flee away.*

—Fra Giovanni
A.D. 1513

MATRI SATSANG

Swami Bhagavatananda Giri

(Translated from Bengali)

Agarpara, Calcutta, May 4th, 1958

Question : If birth inevitably leads to sorrow, why do people celebrate birthdays ? The cause of sorrow is karma.¹

Mataji : Who is celebrating whose festival ?

Question : This is again Advaita philosophy ! Declaring the world to be illusory and therefore non-existent !

Mataji : The festival is celebrated by the parents.

Question : Why do they celebrate ?

Mataji : Because it gives them happiness to celebrate. If festivals led to sorrow they would not observe them. Nevertheless, who is the father, who the mother, and who celebrates whose festival ? Where there is but one Brahman without a second, there no question can possibly arise.

Question : If there is but the one Brahman, from where has language originated ?

Mataji : To talk (*kathā*) means to remain without advancing (*thākā*). Where there is talk, one remains on the surface.

Questioner : This is all due to your power to play !

Mataji : You are all learned people. But because you love this little girl you make her sit on a pedestal.

1. Karma The results of one's actions.

Question : Can the mind be brought under control ?

Mataji : Yes, certainly.

Question : How can this be done ?

Mataji : To do just a little something has no effect. Total effort must be made.

Question : Why do we suffer pain and sorrow ? Millions of people are in dire distress.

Mataji : "I" and "mine" cause sorrow.

Question : There are so many great supermen in the world. In spite of this fact, why do we continuously face grief ? For what reason do we then exist ? Can't you destroy our karma ?

Mataji : If you have faith in God, where is the room for sorrow ? When the cat carries its new-born kitten from place to place, the kitten mews but feels perfectly safe in its mother's custody. So must you place your complete trust in the Almighty.

Questioner : I do have faith.

Mataji : If you have real faith there is no need to say anything. As long as you say "I do", it means that the ego has remained and so there will be sorrow. There is no safe refuge except to depend entirely on Him. While walking on the road you will stumble. So long as you carry the "three bundles" (*triputi**) with you, there will be sorrow.

Question : Suppose I obtain a mantra in dream, may I use it for japa ?

Mataji : Yes, some people do.

**Triputi* The distinction between the doer, doing and the done ; or the knower, the act of knowing and the known, etc. which is of the mind. In Reality these three are one.

Question : Is this a dream-delusion ?

Mataji : Whether it is a dream-delusion or not will be understood according to the stage one has reached. Sometimes it happens that what one has thought about in the day one sees in the night in dreams. Suppose you have seen a horse and a flying bird in the day, so you may dream of a flying horse. From the viewpoint of philosophy the states of waking and dreaming are one ; in your *Śāstras* the world is said to be constituted of both, the states of waking and of dreaming. In dreams some receive instructions and initiation and this may also be efficacious.

Question : Is there any method of testing this ?

Mataji : Someone told this body that he had been initiated in dream by a great Being. He dreamt the same thing for three nights in succession. The first two nights he did not accept it but in the third night he was initiated. This was undeniable, exactly as *dīkṣā* is given in waking—his hairs stood on end !

Question : Is it necessary to take initiation ?

Mataji : So long as you have no desire for it, do not take *dīkṣā*. But since you have already done so, why do you ask about it ? This only means that you still entertain doubts in your mind.

Question : Are desire and faith one and the same ?

Mataji : These are two different words, the meanings are also different. Action dedicated to God is right action and to act from a worldly motive is wrong action.

Question : I have practised *japa* of many mantras ; yet why have I not attained to the perfection (*siddhi*) of my Guru ?

Mataji : This body does not reply to this kind of questions. From where *dīksā* is derived, on what level, whether actual *dīksā* has taken place or not, the initiator and the initiated—all these are indeed He Himself. Whatever anyone is fated to receive, circumstances will lead to its coming about.

Questioner : There is a story in the Upanishads that a certain disciple came to his Guru who gave him some work to do and also placed his hand on the head of the disciple who thereby became a Knower of Brahman.

Mataji : The word of the Guru is itself a mantra. Suppose the Guru sends his disciple to tend cattle, this very thing may accomplish what is required. The Guru can communicate power by touch or by sight. The Guru is one in essence. Gurus are not separate individuals.

Question : How are the Gurus of different people one ?

Mataji : Just as you are mother, father and son in the same human form.

Questioner : I am not a mother !

Mataji : Certainly you are a mother. The mother-power (*Mātri Śakti*) is definitely deep within you ; otherwise how could you recognize a mother.

Father, son and husband are all contained within you equally. Whatever relationships there may be, all of them and also death are present within you.

Question : If we are scions of the Immortal, why do we suffer ?

Mataji : Where coming and going is, this points towards death. But when you speak of being scions of the Immortal, the question of death does not arise at all. If you look at it from the point of view of Advaita (non-duality) there is no birth at all. Who takes birth and where ?

Question : Ma, you seem so simple, how is it that you talk on the science of logic ?

Mataji : This body does not know what is called logic¹ or illogical (*nyāya* & *anyāya*).

Question : From where does inspiration come ?

Mataji : From within you.

Questioner : I have heard that if one person attains to liberation, all are liberated.

Mataji : If you all could sit in silence there would be no further questions.

May 6th, 1958.

Question : If by the will of the Almighty, the One has become the many, then due to His attraction the many may again become the One ?

Mataji : Do you not declare that the world has been created according to His will ? It is He Himself who appears as the world. Where there is 'you' and 'me', ascending and descending has remained.

Questioner : Please do not go into the realm of Advaita philosophy again today—do remain in the sphere of duality !

Mataji : Baba, whatever you say, let it be so. You are calling out to your own Self. "Ma"

1. *Nyāya* means logic as well as lawfulness, *anyāya* means unlawful,

means “*mayi*” (all-pervading) and also the Being who bestows to everyone in the right measure.— She apportions to each one strength or infirmity, attainment or non-attainment, everything !

Question : Some say, Ma is powerless (*abalā*). How can she have become powerless ?

Mataji : A state of powerlessness denotes presence of ultimate power. The Mother appears also as error and as shadows.

Question : If She is Power personified (*Śakti Swarūpā*) how can She be weak ?

Mataji : The strength of the strong and of the weak is of two different kinds. Wherever there is a woman, there is Gouri.

Question : In the *Sāstras* it is written that when the Gods were vanquished in battle, the strength emanating from each of them coalesced to give birth to the Great Mother. And it was She who defeated the demons.

Mataji : Whatever you say, so it is. That great Power is the Power of the Almighty. In the guise of the weak and of the strong, in fact in all forms that exist, is He and He alone. Be it Mother, Father, Friend or Master, it is He in His totality.

Question : Human birth is a great boon. Yet, although having obtained a human body, people are mostly afflicted with sorrow.

Mataji : What kind of human body is obtained depends on one’s actions in former births. In God’s kingdom reigns the most precise justice. “Body” (*sorira*) means what wastes away (*sora*) and body (*deha*) means “*deo*” give ! The body has come into being so that one’s wants may be

fulfilled, so that one may obtain what one lacks. The body has been received so that one may experience bodily enjoyment and suffering. This leads to changes and to coming and going.

The real asking (*deo, deo!*) starts when the desire to be established in one's true Self is born. "Oh Lord I only want Thee and nothing else!" Everything is contained in everything. Whatever anyone says is correct according to the state in which he happens to be. Genuine asking will come when mind, body and intelligence are in abeyance. There no conflict, no argument exists. Thus it is appropriate for each one to advance along his own line, whether it be that of "Master and servant" or the line of Vedanta. There are as many paths as there were *Munis*. Without his own philosophy none could be a *Muni*. God appears in infinite manifestations. Along whatever line anyone advances is correct for him. The power of the Guru will open up the road to progress. The method and the path of each one depend on the stage he has reached.

The question is often asked: "What is your *gotra* (geneology)? *Gotra* refers to the relationship which connects you with the ancient *Munis* and *Rishis*. Some say: "God does not exist", others declare, "God does exist!" But God is far above both, existence and non-existence. He is present in existence as well as in non-existence. Thus whatever anyone says is correct from his point of view. Until you realize your Self, the asking for more ("deo, deo") will not cease. What is the ego?

Who am I ? What is God ? This is what we must come to know. One's own pilgrimage is the pilgrimage to one's own Self. Those who have not been blessed with a Guru have to travel along this path practising the constant presence of God. If you seek the company of fellow-pilgrims they will show you the way. All names are God's names. Try to sit still for some time repeating God's name. This will foster patience and forbearance in you. If you really yearn for God, it is just impossible that He will refuse His touch to you.

Sit at the feet of Mahātmās who may be compared to mighty trees. Just as when sitting under a tree, it not only gives you shade but also itself in the form of fruit, so Mahātmās bestow on you real peace by leading you to the one Self (*Ātmā*). Who is a Mahātmā ? He who desires nothing but the Great (*Mahān*), the Supreme *Ātmā*.

If questions arise within you, so much the better. Those who practise *sādhanā* are bound to have questions. Two kinds of people have no questions : the ignorant fool and the one who has passed all his tests. To think that God is far away is gross stupidity and this is indeed the root-cause of all misery and misfortune. For how many ages have you not remained tied to the round of births and deaths ; now sit down and be aware of God's presence. If you really desire God and God alone, He will be found.

May 7th, 1958.

Question : What is the ultimate question of human life ?

Mataji : First of all one must ponder over what is the aim of human life. The majority of young men and women nowadays ask : “Where is God ?” and “What does He do ?” The straight and simple reply of this body is to realize one’s Self is to realize God and to realize God means to realize one’s own real Self.

Question : “To realize one’s Self”—what exactly is the meaning of this ?

Mataji : You are indeed the King of all learned men (*pandits*) ! (Everyone laughs)

Question : Can a *pandit*’s daughter be ignorant ?

Mataji : Baba seems to feel proud of this body.

Question : What exactly do you mean by the expression : “To realize one’s Self” ? “Who am I” ? In this sense ?

Mataji : First of all one must find out “Who am I” ?

Question : Has one to know : “Who am I ? What is my name ? How did my birth take place ?”

Mataji : Baba is proud of this body. As you play the instrument so you will hear the sound.

Question : “*Bhidyate Hridayagranthi : Chhidyate sarva sangshayāh, kṣīyante chāsya karmāṇi, tasmin driṣṭe parāvare.*” (“All the knots of the heart are undone and all doubts clarified. All karma is annulled by the glance of the Supreme.”) Is it possible to be liberated from all karma in one life ?

Mataji : In this kingdom everything is possible. In God’s kingdom the possible can become impossible and the impossible be rendered possible.

Question : Why is memory obliterated when migrating from one body to another ?

Mataji : The fact is that the world is in continuous flux and what is bound is the *jīva* (individual). The world is in constant motion. This is the abode of forgetting. You have been born to fulfil your cravings and desires. Just as yesterday it was pointed out that the sense of want (“*deho, deho!*”) produces a body (*deho*). Desires and cravings that remain unfulfilled in this life provide a “return ticket” for the next life. The changes which the body undergoes are also some kind of death. Actually so long as *triputi* (actor, acting, action) remains and your bundle of longings and desires, so long going and coming are bound to continue.

Question : But why is there no memory of past lives ?

Mataji : The level on which you exist is the place of forgetfulness. When residing in the realm of ignorance, that is to say in the region of the mind, there is forgetting.

To concentrate the mind on God is called *mouna*. *Mouna* means to abstain from speech. Disciplining your mind, speech and body, fix your thought on God. Engage in *japa* and meditation. By this kind of practice the fact that you are in constant communion with the One will become clearly revealed. So long as you dwell in the realm of the mind, there will be both—remembrance and forgetting. By *japa* and meditation the remembrance of God will be awakened. When the veil of ignorance is removed, the memory of past lives will be aroused. But what is the use of the mere awakening of memory ? You will have to go beyond both memory and forgetting. God alone exists and

nothing else at all—so long as this Illumination does not dawn there will be birth, death, remembrance and forgetfulness ; and misfortune and calamities will also not cease. When the path is wrong there is bound to be danger and oblivion.

PRAYER TO MA

May I learn how to appreciate
 And receive Thy Grace so Truly Great
 Then if it should be Thy Holy Will
 Others may share and receive their fill

Dear Sri Sri Anandamayi MA
 Thou Art The Living Breath That Says, 'Ah !'
 Thou Art the three letters A U M
 Thou Art the Holy Love That Shares Them

May I have pure constant love for Thee
 From form-name-self Set Completely Free
 Thou Hast Dearly Made us for Thy Grace
 And each in Thy Heart has a True Place

Beyond Time's Dream of Seeming to Be
 Safe In Thy Holy REALITY
 Spontaneously Doing Thy Will
 Yet In Thy Wholeness Remaining Still

Elwood Decker

THE TEACHING OF MA ANANDAMOYI

Jean and Josette Herbert

(Translated from French)

Jean Herbert was a writer and translator of world-repute. He rendered invaluable service to humanity by making available the wisdom of the East to the French speaking people. He compiled and translated some forty volumes and wrote about 25 himself. Already in 1943 his translation of Bhaiji's collection "Sad Vani" appeared under the title "Aux sources de la joie" and has had several editions. After a long and very active life of ceaseless service Jean Herbert passed away in Geneva in August 1980. Madame Josette Herbert is carrying on his work.

A book of Mataji's teaching in French¹, compiled and translated by Jean and Josette Herbert, appeared first in 1974. This volume of nearly 400 pages has had a 2nd edition in 1980. The following is a translation of a small portion of the Preface to this book.

.....Mother has no particular teaching or doctrine of Her own, although She may advise one or the other according to personal needs. She knows that "there are many mansions in my Father's house" without forgetting that the house is one.

Mother says that the teachings of all teachers, provided they are genuine and proceed from the

1. "L'enseignement de Ma Anandamoyi", in the series "Spiritualite's Vivantes", Collections Publiques sous la Direction de Jean Herbert. Editions Albin Michel, Paris.

right sources, are correct and should be followed by those for whom they are meant. They may be in opposition to one another, but that does not detract from each its peculiar value as a distinct path leading to the goal set before it.

But each doctrine and discipline can lead to imperfect achievement only. She keeps on repeating : "Where doctrines are, there will be differences."

In Her presence, parties and sects, intolerant beliefs and philosophies disappear. Mother's views are so catholic that men of all shades of religious thought and belief come to Her, and everyone feels satisfied and stronger, with beliefs purified and reinforced. A Vedantist, for example, when talking to Mother for the first time, will feel convinced that She is a pure *advaita vedantin* ; a *śakta* may say that She is an incarnation of the Divine Mother, while a *vaiṣṇava* will see in Her a great *bhakta*, and so on. One day, when speaking to two visitors, She surprised people who were familiar with the general trend of Her answers to typical questions who noticed that She was branching off into new channels and using unusual phrases and terminology. They found out that the visitors were Buddhist *bikshus* who went away, convinced that Ma had an extensive knowledge of the Buddhist Scriptures. One morning two Jain *sādhus* attended the satsang and Mataji had the *kheyāla* to disclose for the first time some interesting details of the Jain *sādhanā* She had practised at the time of Her *līlā* of *sādhanā*. She shows Christian visitors how to deepen their vision and make the most of it.

To Her all rites and attitudes have their value at a given plane, in a given situation and at a certain time.

Within each religion or tradition, She stresses that people have different temperaments and intellectual approach and, consequently, must be guided along different paths. Therefore, to monks as well as to people living in the world and in charge of dependants, She often gives contradictory replies :

Mother says : “God’s world is made up of both, people who understand its nature and who do not. They have to be kept satisfied with just the toys they want.”

Although Her replies are based essentially on the Indian wisdom of the *rishis* and *munis*, it is impossible to fit them into a philosophical system. She never forces one solution to a problem but mentions several ways of dealing with it. A student recalls : “She has asked me to study hard and finish my educational career before I think of doing anything else.” To another student She says : “Education is not important. This education will help you to earn material wealth only. You must strive for spiritual wealth.”

Three heads of families ask Her if they should give up everything to seek spiritual development. She replies to one of them : “The time has not yet come for you to do so since the question arises in your mind whether you should or not.” The second one She advises strongly against the breaking up of a home, adding it was of no use arguing

that difficulties could be solved only by going away. The third man She advised that "no duty is binding for one who goes forth in quest of God." On another occasion She said: "The call of the Divine must be felt as a compulsion. A man who hears this call leaves all behind even as a dry leaf falls from its branch."

To questions which are not bonafide in nature but are either academical or intended to elicit opinions likely to hurt the feelings of others, She maintains an attitude of strict reticence replying with 2 or 3 words only, making the conversation a non-starter. A research student of the University one day came and posed many searching questions and tried to have a lively argument with Mataji. Finally Mataji said to her: "Listen first to all I have to say and do not contradict just yet. Think it over quietly, and if you have any questions left, we shall discuss again to-morrow." The next day, the girl returned, saying that all her doubts had been solved.

Ma replies only when prompted to do so by Her *kheyāla*. It happens that if She has no *kheyāla* to supply answers, She stops short right in the middle of a discussion. One day, when asked to speak through a microphone, since Her replies usually addressed to one specific person and not to a crowd, She spoke in monosyllables in a most inaudible manner. At times, She observes silence which nothing can upset. In fact, when She answers questions it is not through Her intellect; She expresses Herself in very simple words which cannot

always be grasped by the mind. The words She utters are very meaningful and full of common sense—they are never lacking in humour. She says: “This body does not know how to give instructions. It simply converses with its fathers and mothers and does not feel timid. You all are this body’s fathers and mothers. The children are all my friends. Everywhere is only the home of the ONE. Everything is contained in everything. Thus this body does not go to anyone’s house, does not eat anyone’s food. Neither does this body give instructions or orders. From what this body says, take that which leads to your ultimate good, not what is merely pleasing.”

Being in *sat-chit-ānanda* consciousness, She “dissolves” problems put to Her by people seeking Her advice. For him who sees Ma and is permeated by Her grace, all desire disappears. Thus Her replies at such different levels give us an inkling, however difficult to grasp, of the road yet to follow.

“This body responds strictly to the line of thought and to the spirit in which a question is asked. Consequently, what is the opinion of this body and what is not? If there is a line of approach, there must be a goal to which it leads, and beyond that is the unattainable. But where the distinction between the attainable and unattainable does not arise, is THAT Itself.”

When someone complained to Anandamayi Ma about Her unwillingness to give clear-cut answers to problems, She retorted: “At least you have understood that there is a state where problems

are no longer settled in any particular way.... But now you will have to realize that no solution is ever conclusive; in other words, you will have to go beyond the level where there is certainty and uncertainty. The solution of a problem arrived at by the mind must of necessity be from a particular point of view; consequently there will be room for contradiction, since your solution represents but one aspect."

Although Ma's teaching is so diversified and adapted to everyone's possibilities and needs, and although She acknowledges as valid all true search for spiritual development, one should not conclude that Her teaching is vague. On the contrary, it is extraordinarily definite and precise.

To Her the only aim of human life is to "realize the Divine" and since "to be born as a human being is a rare boon", one must direct all of one's energy here and now towards this achievement.

Her conception of the Divine—similar to that of Sri Ramakrishna, Sri Aurobindo, Swami Ramdas and other great Hindu sages of our times—is both clear and all-embracing. She views the Divine both as static and formless (which justifies *Jnāna-Yoga*) and dynamic and with form (which justifies *Bhakti-Yoga* and *Karma-Yoga*) and also as within man which justifies both *Jnāna-Yoga* and *Karma-Yoga*). Each of these yogas leads to a realisation of one aspect of the Divine, but this is not the final aim, which is to realise the Divine in oneself and in the cosmos and in the Absolute, or rather as being both the Self in man, the world of multiplicity

(including one's neighbour) and the unconditioned Absolute—and to see that all three are one and indivisible.

In order to go through these successive experiences, man must strive to reach a state of actual obsession, which can be achieved by moral discipline, the company of saints and sages, study of Scriptures, meditation, prayer, constant thought of God, repetition of one of the powerful Names of God, by reaching beyond the intellect, dropping the ego, gradually destroying all attachment to things of this world, offering to God all one's actions, by total unconditional surrender to the grace and love of God, by intense craving for God, which can be achieved in the world just as well as in solitude.

Thus only can man reach the supreme, ineffable and imperturbable Happiness which is hidden within everyone and to which we shall all attain.

In this search, in this effort to tear asunder the veil of ignorance which alone prevents us from seeing our real Self and from living according to our true nature, the only guide is God, the supreme Guru. In order to make our work easier, the supreme Guru becomes manifest in a human guru, whom we must trust and obey when we have found him. Thus it becomes possible, in due course, to leave behind all ritualistic practices and the study of Scriptures—whose only purpose was to set our feet on the path.

A wonderful teaching indeed, which brings to us the understanding that all truths are true, because each one is only a facet of the one Truth and the

various ways of viewing It are equally valid, each one being adapted to a particular angle of vision. Thus each and everything finds its place in the whole, nothing is destroyed any longer, integration replaces opposition.

Thus everything opens up, an ever wider understanding awakens within us and enables us to discover treasures and unsuspected sources of joy in every aspect of life.

Before us Ma stands as a mirror to our real Self and makes us unearth in ourselves ever new potentialities.

Sitting at the feet of Ma pulls down the veil and many people become capable of concentration and prayer. Her mere presence, Her smile, Her expressions are a teaching in themselves. Her protection is actually felt as soon as our thoughts and actions are pure and free from egoism. Pure desires are fulfilled.

In Her proximity miracles appear natural. In everyone She brings out the best, and whatever ought to happen does in fact happen. Her greatest miracle, however is that She gives to every one exactly what he or she needs at that precise moment in life. Each gets from Her satisfaction and blessings in proportion not only to his or her sincerity and devotion but also to his or her capacity to receive at the time.

To someone who complained he had not received total and immediate enlightenment, as Krishna had given Arjuna, She simply replied : "Bring me an Arjuna, and you will see what you will see !"

People wishing with all their might and love to see Ma, often wait patiently and are suddenly immersed in joy and feel Her blessings on them. An encounter with Ma is never a chance meeting, unless chance be God's will ! When the time has come—sometimes after years and years of suspense—the meeting takes place with all propitious prerequisites. On that day Ma, who is always surrounded by a crowd, is suddenly alone to welcome Her visitor—and the crowd comes back just as the visitor leaves.

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

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

MA, THE UNIVERSAL MOTHER

Anil Ganguli

Crowned with the halo of spiritual glory, Ma is, as it were, the unofficial Sovereign of an unlimited Empire of *ānanda*, a Sovereign who neither rules nor reigns but remains enthroned in the hearts of millions of men and women.

Some of the stages through which an almost illiterate Bengali village girl emerged as the Universal Mother have already been noted*. Thus, the motherliness of the Ma of Shahbag, to start with, attracted some emotional ladies of the middle class of Dacca and then some Professors and members of aristocratic families of the city. Universally respected saints such as Ram Thakur of Bengal and Balananda Brahmachariji of Deoghar discovered the Divine Mother dwelling in the Ma of Shahbag. Again, eminent delegates to the Indian Philosophical Congress held at Dacca in 1929 were deeply impressed by the ease and confidence with which She gave brief and correct answers to abstruse questions raised by erudite scholars.

It has also been noted how the Mataji of Northern India came to be appreciated in the holy city of Varanasi, the leading centre for centuries of culture, scholarship and spirituality; how She

*Ananda Vārtā, Vol. 25/1, p. 23 ; Vol. 25/2, p. 81

adopted a life of penury and austerity in the seclusion of Raipur, off Dehradun, and how She suddenly became prominent in the public eye with some notable devotees and admirers at Her feet such as some respectable Kashmiri families settled in Dehradun and specially Kamala Nehru (wife of the late Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru). She also arrested the attention of eminent leaders like Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya, Seth Jamnalal Bajaj and Mahatma Gandhi. A notable person to play an important role in Ma's emergence as the Universal Mother was Durga Singh, former Raja of Solan, to whom belongs the credit of bringing the princely classes of India under Ma's influence and of founding and organising the great institution known as *Shree Shree Anandamayee Sangha*.

In course of time, the Mataji of Northern India, more widely known as Ma Anandamayi, had the *Kheyāla* to embark upon a new chapter of life—a chapter of going forth into the world. Thus, the Supreme acted through Her to accord relief to humanity in agony. She has never spared Herself in traversing the length and breadth of this sub-continent over and over again, carrying the message of Love, Joy and Peace. She has also inspired religious centres and institutions of abiding value from the humanitarian point of view such as hospitals and educational institutions.

The citizens of this Empire in both the hemispheres are blessed with torrents of *ānanda* showered by Ma. Is the showering temporarily suspended when Ma seems to be transported to another

world? A specific question of this nature was once asked by Professor Amulya Datta Gupta,—“Ma! when you are in communion with the Absolute, do you at all take notice of us?” The gist of Ma’s answer that welled up spontaneously is given below :—

“I am conditioned, as well as unconditioned. I am neither infinite nor confined within limits. I am both at the same time. My will would be irresistible if I expressed it. My being has existed before there was any creation, duration or dissolution of the world. If you say I am conditioned, then you confine me within a limit; again, if you say I am limitless, even then you are restricting me.” By way of illustration Ma said that She used to take food, a fact which might show that She was conditioned, and added that She was not at all in need of food and that in that sense She was above conditioning.*

According to the *Upanishad*, one who has realized *Brahman* has, as it were, himself become *Brahman*. Such a person is fully conscious of his *Being*, and, in some cases, gives expression to this realization. Thus, in the *Kausitaki Upanishad*, Pratardan declares : “I am the *Prāṇa* (the vital breath, explained as *Brahman*). I am the conscious Self. Worship me as life. He who worships me as life, has immortality, obtains full life in this world, and immortality and indestructibility in heavenly regions.” Similarly, in the *Devi Sukta* of the *Rig Veda*, Vak, (*a seer*) (daughter of the seer Ambhrin), announced with supreme self-confidence that “she was all in all, the Supreme

**Sri Sri Anandamayi Prasanga* by Amulya Kumar Datta Gupta, Vol. (1st Ed.) I, P-114.

Being.” Moreover, representation of a personality as identical with the Supreme Universal Self, wholly or partially, is familiar to Hindu thought. Krishna and Rama are examples.

In every home, the word *Ma* (mother) is, as it were, the name for the Almighty on the lips and in the hearts of little children. The Divine Mother, embodied as their mother in a human form, is all-love for them. In their interest she sacrifices her I-ness and willingly undergoes endless suffering. What prompts her to do so is not any compulsion from outside but an impelling urge from within which makes her task easy and pleasant, automatic and inevitable. Selfless love of a mother for her own child rules out the possibility of a conflict between her interest and duty. The affection of a *mother*, gifted with genuine motherliness does not remain confined to the children to whom she has given birth, but extends to other children in the family and in the neighbourhood and even beyond. The larger the sphere of her love, the stronger is her claim to be a human representative of the Divine Mother.

Anandamayī Ma’s grace is not confined to a particular family or group. Her stretched out arms embrace all. She has made it perfectly clear that no particular abode can contain Her. She once said: “I find one vast garden spread out all over the universe. All plants and animals, all human beings, all higher mind bodies are playing about in this garden in various ways, each having its own uniqueness and beauty. Their presence and variety give me great delight. Everyone

of you adds with his special feature to the glory of the garden. I move about from one place to another in the same garden.”*

The nature of the relation between this Universal Mother and Her ‘children’ has been revealed in the following saying of Ma : “Just as a human body has different parts such as the head, the hands, thighs, feet, fingers and toes, I find all of you representing my various limbs. You all belong to one body, each one has to do work of equal importance.”**

Why is Ma accepted by different classes of people as the Universal Mother ? The mystery was once explained by Ma in course of a conversation with a venerable old gentleman of Varanasi :

Questioner : How is it that so many people, old and young, are attracted to you ?

Ma : This child is very small and does not belong to anyone in particular, so all come to her. It is also like this : one who owns nothing and claims none in this world as his own, finds that all are his own.

Questioner : Now you say that you belong to nobody, whereas usually you call everybody your father and mother.

Ma : This is also true. All are my fathers and mothers, and this is why they come to see their little daughter.

Questioner : That is what you say. But we cannot look upon you as our little child.

Ma : Well, then you come because you are so merciful, so compassionate ; you just take pity on this tiny child.

Questioner : No, certainly not, I am neither merciful nor compassionate. Under no circumstances shall I accept this kind of explanation.

The venerable old gentleman was desperate—he was determined to have a straightforward answer to his direct question.

**Mother as Revealed to Me* by Bhaiji (4th Ed.) P. 104.

***Mother as Revealed to Me* by Bhaiji (4th Ed.) P. 100.

Ma : All right ; look here, is it not natural to come to one's own Self ? Does it require any reason or explanation ? The most natural thing for everyone is to come to his own Self.*

If *Ma* can indiscriminately love all, it is because She can see the Self in everyone. In fact, She has repeatedly confirmed that She does see the One in all. As She puts it in Her broken English in a sweet and simple manner, native to Her, "All One, All One." And *Ma* not only preaches this principle but lives it. This is why She is the Universal Mother.

In the sunshine of *Ma*'s grace it is possible for each of us to see *Ma* even from the level of our own I-ness. She has confirmed again and again that to everyone She is what She is taken for. An advanced *sādhaka* meditating on Her unfathomable inner Being may be lost in himself and feel like repeating what Edwin Arnold said in a different context :—

".....Measure not with words
Th' Immeasurable ; nor sink the strings of
thought
Into the fathomless. Who asks doth err,
Who answers, errs. Say nought."

In Her outer manifestation, *Ma* is "*Jemon bājābe temoni sunbe*" (you will hear exactly as you play). Every "child" goes on playing the musical instrument that is *ma* and, in the process, hears ever-renewed notes of music according to his need. He sees light, not hitherto seen, according to his lights.

Let me crave the reader's indulgence for expressing my personal experience. To me, Ma is, first and foremost, a Mother—loving *me* to perfection.

“If I were hanged on the highest hill,

Mother O' mine, O mother O mine !

I know whose love would follow me still,

Mother O' mine, O mother O mine !”

Ma was the *Ma* of my parents, since deceased. She has been my *Ma* since my first *darśana* in 1947. She is also the *Ma* of my children and grandchildren.

This anomalous experience is shared by innumerable families in India and other countries. To me, personally, this perfect *Ma* has revealed Herself as a phenomenon existing simultaneously on two different planes—one comprising Her outer manifestation and the other Her inner Being. The former is wonderful and usually within the range of my power to comprehend in my own way. The latter is bewildering and enigmatic. It completely baffles my understanding and is too remote to be reached. The outer manifestation appears to be very human, though endowed with superhuman qualities of head and heart. I see therein an embodiment of a dynamic personality at whose feet have bowed down in profound salutation, millions of men and women including top-ranking persons in all spheres of life such as religion and philosophy, education and literature, law and medicine, trade and industry, politics and administration, science and humanities, art and culture, etc. Besides, the outer manifestation seems to have a

tremendous will-power which, if used, can work wonders at ease. The inner Being, on the other hand, seems to be completely different from a normal human being. It has no I-ness, no my-ness, no desires, no emotion. It is not suggested that the outer manifestation also is not free from I-ness, desires or emotion. But it seems to me that the outer manifestation assumes different roles on the stage of life and acts in a manner which appears to be somewhat akin to the behaviour of human beings. The inner Being, on the other hand, appears to be inexpressible, unthinkable, unfathomable, a simple Impersonality, as distinguished from the dynamic personality of the outer manifestation. Again, contrary to the indomitable will-force of the outer manifestation, the inner Being seems to have no will of its own. Through it the Divine Will flows spontaneously.

Of course, I do not expect my readers to agree with what I have stated above. In fact, I myself may have to revise it in the light of future experience when, if at all, I may attain a higher degree of spiritual maturity.

Ma Anandamayi fully justifies Her name—She is steeped in joy and radiates joy. She lives in an atmosphere of cosmic peace. Hers is not the peace of unconscious sleep nor of a self-satisfied inertia producing indifference to the world. Anandamayi Ma is impervious to extraneous disturbances. In fact, for Her there is nothing extraneous and what is ordinarily termed 'disturbance' is only a particular facet of *ānanda* (bliss). Suffering and misery

may be worldly realities which God calls into being to purge the impure, or for some reason or other over which philosophers wrangle. For Ma, however, suffering and misery are non-existent except as gentle ripples on the vast ocean of transcendental bliss and harmony. In terrifying lightning and thunder, in devastating storm and earthquake, She only beholds the benign hand of the great Architect of the destinies of mankind in whose scheme of creation there is only *ānanda* and nothing but *ānanda*. This *ānanda* is not pleasure as distinguished from pain. It is Bliss which is above both, untained by either. 'Beatitude', says Ma, 'is the only Reality ; all else is mirage'. And Ma is the embodiment of Beatitude.

In conclusion, let me present before the reader pen-pictures of Ma as seen by some of Her admirers, each from his own point of view.

Bhaiji, author of *Mother as Revealed to Me*, has said in unmistakable terms that "The Holy Mother is the embodied manifestation of all we can possibly conceive of as the Godhead or Divinity. Her physical form, actions and playful moods are all supra-natural and extraordinary ; if, established in this conviction, we realise that in all our action, meditation and knowledge She is the sole and supreme object of adoration, and we finally focus our concentrated attention on Her holy Lotus Feet, then we shall require no other haven or refuge in our journey of life towards ultimate spiritual enlightenment and emancipation.

“If we are not able to comprehend Her as a transcendental personality, unfettered by the trammels of flesh, then we must hold up before us as our ideal any of Her manifold qualities, such as, Her high sense of duty, perfect beatitude, serenity, liberality, equanimity, etc.”

Professor Collin Turnbull came to India because he had the conviction that in this country he “would find not only what I myself wanted but what the whole of the western world needed.” He was fortunate in coming into close contact with Ma and he had the right approach. “Mataji”, he observes, “is everywhere and at all times, for those who want Her, and nothing is more delightful than complete surrender, and a great plunge into the ocean of Truth, Goodness and Beauty with which Mataji surrounds Herself. *** It is in the eternal Truth which is so perfectly revealed in Mataji that the world to-day will find the foundation on which to build a happier future. Mataji has a message for each one who comes to Her but in Her very being She is a message for the whole of mankind.”*

Another western seeker of Truth, Ethel Merston, saw the loving Mother in Ma : “From the world over Mataji attracts seekers : French, German, Austrian, English, Dutch men and women are to be met in Her *ashrams*—all are welcomed by Her loving radiance. How often do we not come to Her, worried by the cares of life, puzzled about ourselves and others, and in Her presence our problems resolve themselves, we find peace in the glory of Her smile and, relaxed, we face life’s cares afresh, energy renewed, understanding of ourselves and others deepened.

And even when devotion is not our *dharma*, and we cannot follow the *marga* of worship and *japam*, we recognize

* *Mother as seen by Her devotees—Mataji* by Collin Turnbull, M.A., Ph.D. p. 52.

the greatness of all such Beings as Mataji, and, along with Her worshippers, but on our own path, find help and stimulation from the force of that Love which passeth understanding and which is Her Grace." *

Arnaud Desjardins of France has recorded his impressions of Ma as follows :—

"The most remarkable characteristic of Ma Anandamayi—and this is probably Her most important mission—is to awaken or intensify the keen desire for the spiritual life in all who approach Her. In this sense, how many retractions, how many conversions has She not effected ! "What we lack most is that desire more powerful than all the others. Thus, Ma Anandamayi simply makes you long for Reality. The more we see Her life before us, the more the Love, the Joy, the Wisdom, the Serenity, the Freedom and the fundamental absence of all fear that emanate from Her make us yearn for It—yearn more than anything else.

"We feel that these qualities have their source in something which is not an individuality—however exceptional—but that we are face to face with a reality of another order.

"In Her presence we feel that we are required to "seek first of all the Kingdom of God and its justice", without the slightest thought at the back of our minds that "all the rest will be added unto it." **

To Father Enomiya—Lassale, Professor of Tokyo University, Ma was revealed as the Mother working for world peace. Originally a German Jesuit father, he was teaching Zen Buddhist meditation in Japan as well as in various countries in Europe, when he had Ma's *darśana*. After having miraculously survived the atom bomb disaster in Hiroshima, he had felt inspired to build a "Cathe-

* *Mother as seen by Her devotees* (2nd Ed.) *An Indian Sage* by Ethel Merston, O.B.E. p. 59.

** *Mother as seen by Her devotees* p. 60 and p. 70

dral for World Peace" there, to which people from all over the globe contributed. His talk with Ma prompted him to exclaim ; "Ma is doing more for world peace than all the politicians and peace workers put together." *

Principal Ganga Charan Dasgupta, an eminent educationist and a worthy disciple of Swami Bholananda Giri, observes : "Mother, works quietly and almost unnoticed among all classes of people. Like the life-force of Nature, Her influence penetrates the supra-physical plane of existence, in the region of man's motives, purposes, and principles. It transforms his being, all invisible like the cosmic radiation from above. *** She possesses the Supreme Power of healing all wounds, sorrows and bereavements ; so She is often called the 'Great Healer' of men's wounds." †

The impressions of Sri Subimal Dutta, I.C.S., some time Ambassador of India to U.S.S.R. and thereafter to Bangla Desh, have been recorded by him in words as follows :—

"It is impossible to faithfully describe the feeling one has in Mataji's presence. To call it one of deep elation would be inadequate. One might call it a mystical experience, but this expression has been debased in popular parlance by associating it with display of supernatural powers. If such is the standard, I must say I personally have had no such experience.

"Yet to watch Ma in action is an experience by itself. Nothing is too insignificant for Her. She gives the same attention to, say giving direction as to how a particular vegetable should be prepared in the kitchen, as to the elaborate ceremonials to be observed at a *pūjā* or to the service of a *Mahātmā*. And it is not uncommon to see Her go into a sudden discussion on abstruse philosophy while engaged in

* Ananda Varta Vol. XXIII No. 3, P. 205

† *Mother as seen by Her devotees* (1967 Ed.) p. 83

an apparently routine conversation. One has the conviction that She is in constant communion with the Divine and is a vehicle of expression of the Divine Will. This, to my mind, is the real meaning of the word *kheyāla* which Ma so often uses.

One common experience with Mataji is that She answers questions and resolves doubts unasked. I can recall many incidents of this kind within my experience. In the early days before I knew Ma well, during a visit to Baghat House at Hardwar, I thought it very odd that some foreign devotees were served food in the courtyard while the rest of us were having ours on the temple verandah. The same evening Ma suddenly turned to me and said that She did not believe in discrimination of this kind personally (I have seen foreign devotees putting sugar puffs into Her mouth), but many *Mahātmās* believe in restrictions of this kind, and if these were not observed in the ashram, we would lose the privilege of visits from them and their company. I found a complete answer to my unspoken doubt.

“Again and again it has been my experience that Mataji’s company has such an elevating effect for the time being that one feels one can face all the problems of the world with the greatest ease and nothing in the world need daunt one. Equally it has been experienced that away from Ma the old doubts begin to assail us again. Swami Paramanandaji rightly says that we should charge our batteries from time to time in Mataji’s company. Does Swamiji know that many of these batteries are old and contain ingredients of poor quality? All the more reason for frequent resort to that fountain-head of inspiration.” *

Dr Alexandar Lipski, Director, Religious Studies, Professor of History, California State University, has described his first *darśana* of Ma

* Souvenir volume (1975) published on the occasion of Ma’s eightieth Birth Anniversary by Swami Swarupananda Giri from Calcutta.

as follows :— “For the first time in my life I was encountering someone who was the very embodiment of the Holy, the ‘wholly other’.” “And yet”, he continues, “Anandamayi Ma was so close and accessible.*** It was a delight to listen to Her pearly laughter and I was struck by the ease and assurance with which the almost illiterate Anandamayi Ma responded to the most recondite questions of erudite scholars. A highlight of my stay with Anandamayi Ma was my personal interview during which I was alone with Her except for the presence of an interpreter. Facing Mataji I felt I was mentally stripped naked. It seemed to me that She could see into the innermost recesses of my mind. I asked Her to tell me what were the chief obstacles on my spiritual path. In response She revealed to me some glaring short-comings of which I had been hitherto totally unaware. What She said was in no way flattering, in fact painful, but Anandamayi Ma said it so compassionately, although firmly, that I did not feel condemned. I realized what true loving detachment was.” Professor Lipski has written a book entitled “*Life and Teaching of Sri Anandamayi Ma.*”

Arnaud Desjardins, the well-known producer of spiritual films and the author of several books on spiritual subjects, had Ma’s first *darśan* in September 1959. Thereafter he came all the way from Europe again and stayed with Ma for long periods. “From the first day”, he says, “I have had the conviction that I was not in the presence of a human being, however extraordinary, but of a Being of an altogether different order. *** She has gradually made me understand the meaning of the Gospels and the message of Christ. Thanks to Ma, the word of Jesus has now for me become the word of Life. *** *** My gratitude to Ma is as great for what I feel I have received from Her in Paris than for the extraordinary moments experienced in India. I do not seek any explanation. The oneness of the Self, the awakening of

the inner Guru are enough. But the fact remains : after returning to Europe from my first trip to India my relationship to my own surroundings of which I had suffered for so long changed radically. I have understood that our being conditions our life. I know that by the grace of Ma Anandamayi and Swami Ramdas something has been transformed in my being.

“Since my first visit to Ma at Varanasi, I have discovered the Life in myself. I can understand that certain people negate the existence of God or the *Ātman*. But Life? Who can object to opening himself to Life and to letting himself be transformed by It? The Christ said : “I am the Life. I shall give Life to all who come to me.” I know that Ma is Life and that She gives Life to those who come to Her.

“How many times in France has one not put me the question : What have you received from this woman saint? One expects a reply, I know that will conform to what one reads in books about the *chakras*, *kundalini* or *nirvikalpa samādhi*. But the answer is much simpler : ‘What I have received from this woman saint is myself. I was dead and I have come back to Life. I was born of the flesh and I am born of the Spirit.*

Miss Blanca, an Austrian musician, who had her first *darśana* of Ma in 1943 and is now known as Brahmacharini Atmananda, has expressed her impression of Ma as follows :—

“It cannot be denied that in Mother’s presence is reared that flaming aspiration for the Divine which makes one forego and forget all comforts, be they physical, psychological or intellectual, and which is the most powerful means of breaking up the ego. But this is certainly not the only way in which Mother’s influence manifests itself, it is only one aspect of what She does. Nine years spent in close contact with Mother

* *Teaching without Words* by Arnaud Desjardins—
Ananda Varta XIII/1/4.

have given me the conviction that She has the power to reveal to every human being the "Secret of the Golden Flower" hidden in his heart. Be he a Hindu or a Buddhist, a Christian or a Jew, A Mohammedan, a Parsi or an Atheist, an introvert or an extrovert, an intellectual or an emotionalist, be he a *Yogi*, a *Bhakta*, a *Jñāni* or a *Tantrika*; a fastidious artist: an eminent scholar or an illiterate: whatever his upbringing, his traditions, his prejudices, from whatever school of thought he may hail; be he a beginner or highly advanced in his search, however tormenting his difficulty, however deep his error—for every seeker after Truth Mother has the right word at the right time in the right manner. "What has puzzled one for years", she continues, "what has seemed an insoluble problem, an insurmountable cliff, a most exasperating issue, it suddenly becomes so simple. Her solution is so obvious, so convincing, it gives instantaneous relief to a mind in agony, to a heart in distress. One hears Her utter a few clear and simple words—but miracle of miracles, they are not pronounced by another; one feels them emerge out of the depths of one's own being. Something in one whispers: 'This is what I have always known, what I have always wanted. How strange that I could not discover it myself'".

"Her (Ma's) message" observes Dr. Alexander Lipski, in the Preface to his book mentioned above, "is particularly appropriate in a world where the notion of progress is no longer taken for gospel truth and the whole array of our 'modern values' is undergoing an agonizing reappraisal. Anandamayi Ma diagnoses the present disease of civilization as 'over-secularization'. She suggests that the cure from our severe illness cannot be brought about by engineers, sociologists or psychologists but by doctors of the soul. She prescribes a drastic revolution in our views and attitudes from outwardness to inwardness, from materialism to spirituality and from man-centredness to God-centredness. Her totally

**The Supreme Teacher I found in Sri Sri Ma Anandamayi* by Atmananda—*Ananda Varta* II/1/93.

uncompromising transcendent point of view is truly a shock therapy for problem-solving oriented, pragmatic Americans."

And Richard Lannoy, an eminent English photographer and writer, has observed with reference to his first *darśana* :—

"That someone so great, so full of love, someone with such a power immediately to inspire all those around Her, should really exist filled me with amazement. Anyone from any part of the world may come to Her and receive guidance which no scholarship can ever hope to give. For my own part it has been such a deep experience to be near Mataji, because She is so clear and direct. "If the path of *sādhana* be hard to live up to, something has been illuminated in the hearts of those who visit Her and which cannot be obliterated by time ; this is such a great love which She gives to all that at once the difficulties of sincere aspiration become simplified.*** *** If anything is new it is surely Her own unique way of helping you to realise, instantly, at once and for all time, how to kindle the inner flame. Her genius suddenly lights you up with happiness, inner and abiding happiness, the vitality of Joy, and shows you that this can never come from cinemas or a fat bank balance, but from within, She gently guides you to the point where you can know without fear that this Joy comes from God. Many people balk at the word 'God' and profess atheism or agnosticism, but that which one can receive from Her has nothing to do with any 'ism'".

Let us have a picture of Ma as drawn by Melita Maschmann a well-known German writer whose books have been rendered into foreign languages. Her novel entitled "*The Thirteens*" has appeared in half a dozen translations, including English. She states that what she experienced at the first

*Ananda Varta II/1/77.

darśana of Ma “cannot be conveyed to a person who has never known anything similar. I can only relate outer signs and speak in metaphors. Just imagine that a tree—a beautiful, strong, old beech for instance—approaches you with calm steps. What would you feel? ‘Have I gone crazy?’ you would ask yourself. “Or perhaps I am dreaming?” Finally you would have to concede that you had entered a new dimension of reality of which you had hitherto been ignorant. This exactly was my position.”

“According to western thinking,” continues Melita Maschmann, a human being is characterized by his ‘I’. In his existence as a ‘*Persona*’ Christians recognize the mystery of his immortality. Here I was suddenly confronted with a human being of whom I felt that she had no ‘I’ anymore. She seems to be a human being without an ‘I’ belonging to the category of Mata Ganga or Pita Himalaya.*** “Looking at Her one feels that She must have transcended good and evil. Although millions of men and women of all strata of society fell at Her feet, I could never detect even the faintest trace of pride, neither also of humility in Mataji”.

Ever since her first *darśana* in 1962, Melita Maschmann has had the good fortune of *matrisanga* from time to time. She has expressed the benign influence of Ma on her as follows :—

“In Mataji, God allowed me to see Him with the closeness of intimacy. During the Cuban crisis it became clearer than ever to me how much I owed to Mataji. Just like everyone else I saw the dreadful danger of the situation, but quite contrary to my attitude in similar crises hitherto, I did not feel afraid. Perhaps I have grasped—not with my mind but with my whole being—that even the most cruel outer destruction does not touch that which we ARE in Reality. May I be able to preserve this knowledge !”*

* *Mother as Seen by Her Devotees* : “Mataji gives Darshan”, p. 73, 80.

In his Foreword to *Mātri Vānī* (a collection of Ma's sayings) Vol. 2, Dr. Lipski has observed :

“Mother's message is both timeless and timely, for a world filled with tensions and confusion needs to be constantly reminded that all our suffering and tribulations can be traced to one primary cause : alienation from God, the source of our being.....”

Let me conclude the gallery of pen-pictures with a passage by Jean Herbert, born in Paris, who sat at the feet of almost all the great Hindu sages of the first half of this century, translated some forty volumes of their teachings and wrote about twenty five himself. He toured and lectured extensively in Europe on various aspects of Indian Philosophy.

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

firmly based on Joy which overcomes all conflict and on Love which realizes all unity.”*

The civilization of the twentieth century is dominated by spiritual dwarfs wielding the power of nuclear giants. Thanks to science, man has, to a large extent, succeeded in conquering nature but he has neglected the art of conquering his own nature. No wonder, there is constant fear of total destruction on a global scale. The only hope lies in the ways of Wisdom, Joy and Love of which Ma is an embodiment.

HASTY POSTSCRIPT

DEAR MA, I've loved Thy Words and collected many,
I've worshipped Thy Images and can't spare any,
But I have slipped on the ice and the time seems late,
Please have Mercy and Show me how to meditate !

I have no doubt about Thy Kind Inspiration
And I am grateful for my Art Education
But now I desperately need a complete Rest
Where Thy Loving Omnipresence Is At Its Best.

Elwood Decker

* Translation of the Preface of the French edition of *Sad Vani* published in the series "Leo Grands Maitres Spirituels", dans 'L' Inde Contemporaine, 1943.

MĀTRI LĪLĀ IN MY HUMBLE LIFE

Abani Mohan Sharma

(Translated from Bengali)

At the end of July 1925, I was promoted from the post of District Sericultural Officer, Bankura to Behrampur as the Superintendent of the Central Sericultural Nursery. At that time the Bengal Sericultural Department was under the Agricultural Dept. with the head office at Dacca. Jyotish Chandra Roy, J. S. O. was Personal Assistant to the Director of Agriculture.

After my transfer to Behrampur, I called on Sri P. C. Choudhury, the Deputy Director of the Silk Department. He blurted out abruptly : "Do you know that Jyotish Roy has fallen into the clutches of a female saint?" Greatly surprised, I replied : "No, I am not aware of it." Sri Jyotish Roy and myself were born in the same village on the bank of an extensive lake in Bengal. He was ten years my senior. I had been blessed by his loving care since my childhood. My job and my promotion were due to his friendship. On hearing the remark of Sri Choudhury, my mind was in a turmoil. I was certain that his character was not so weak as to fall under the influence of anyone unduly.

I had to visit the Head Office in Dacca several times a year on official duties. During these visits,

I used to stay with Jyotish Chandra Roy. His wife was like an elder sister to me, I used to address her as *Bara-didi* (elder sister) and Jyotish as *Dada-Babu* (elder brother). His paternal home was about three furlongs to the west of my birth-place. I had spent the last eight years of my student life under the care of his father, the late Jogesh Ch. Roy.

In the beginning of 1926, I went to Dacca on important official work and put up at Bhaiji's house. When I reached there at one o'clock in the afternoon, Jyotish-dada was in his office. I asked his wife : "I hear that Dadababu is under the influence of a woman saint!" She replied curtly : "Open the right-hand drawer of your Dada-babu's table and see for yourself." Eagerly I opened the drawer. What I saw was indescribable : the photo of a young woman who emanated glorious divinity. I was wondering whether She was human or a divine being. Utterly dumb-founded I shut the drawer. In the evening, I learnt from Dada that Mataji had gone to Mymensingh for five days. I did not have the good fortune of Her *darśana* as I had to return to Behrampur after two days. To my eager questions regarding Sri Ma, Dadababu answered laconically : "When you will have the good luck of Her *darśana*, you will gradually find out everything. All I can say is that She is the wonder of wonders."

At the end of May 1927 I took leave and went to my village. One evening as I was going towards the house of Dadababu's father-in-law, someone came from behind and covered my eyes with his hands.

I turned round and found Dada smiling at me. He also was going to the same destination. "From where have you come so suddenly?" I asked. "Oh! I accompanied Ma and Pitaji four days ago, with just the clothes which I had on, travelling from Dacca to Adinath Kshetra Siva temple at Cox-bazar. There I left them and returned only to-day. I have no opportunity to take leave from office so will have to go to-morrow to Dacca."

Next morning I went to his house and asked him how I could have Sri Ma's *darśana*. He wrote a letter to Pitaji and told me: "Go via Cox-bazar to Adinath and give this letter to Pitaji. Do not lose such an opportunity of having *Mātri-darśana*." I went to town and met the photographer Sashibhushan Das Gupta on my way to Cox-bazar. He was a resident of my village and a relation of Jyotishbabu. He had already met Ma at Dacca. It was decided that we would go to Adinath next day. The steamer for Cox-bazar left the Sadarghat jetty at 9 a. m. I bought a basket of liches and hiring a carriage went towards Sadarghat. Unfortunately after a while thunder and a rain-storm started. I got completely drenched. On reaching Sashi Babu's house I found that he had already left. I was shivering with cold and fever, so I returned home and informed Dadababu of the mishap. Later I went to Dacca two or three times but always found that Ma had gone to Calcutta or some other place. Deeply disappointed I feared that I was not fated meet Her.

Ten years passed. By that time Sri Jyotish Chandra Roy had retired from office and taken to travelling with Mataji and Pitaji to different places in Utter Pradesh. In December 1935 he wrote to my officer Rai Bahadur Surendra Nath Basu: "I am with Ma at Tarapith, try to come. If possible, inform Abani. If convenient, come after *Paush Sankranti**." The Rai Bahadur was the officiating Deputy Director of Sericulture and lived in the government bungalow. He was in touch with Jyotishbabu through official work. He summoned me and said he could not leave the head-quarters before the 12th of Magh. I was extremely disappointed at not being able to see Ma. I was also eager to meet Dadababu again, so I took two day's leave and the day after Paush Sankranti travelled six miles on a bullock-cart via Rampurhat towards Tarapith. Sri Dharendra Lal Choudhury, a loyal devotee of Ma, had been posted at our head-office. He had come to Rampurhat to check the accounts of the office. He, Sailendranath Chatterjee and myself travelled three miles and crossed the Dwarka river. My mind was in great agitation, I felt an acute desire to see Ma. I thought travelling by cart would take a long time and so, in my eagerness, I ran the rest of the way. Within thirty or forty minutes I reached the pond adjoining Tarapith temple.

Having washed my hands and feet at the paved *ghāt* of the pond, I was on the way to the temple when I met a brahmin. "Is the Mother of Dacca

*Winter solstice, 14th January.

here ?” I asked. He said : “I have not seen Her attendant devotees for five or six days, perhaps they have gone elsewhere.” Crest-fallen I sat down on the veranda of Sri Tara Ma’s temple and shed profuse tears of disappointment, thinking that my fate would never allow me to meet Ma. But luckily, as I left the Tara temple, my eyes fell on Dhiren Babu and Sailen Babu talking to a bearded gentleman in the shade of an old banyan-tree. They had just alighted from the cart. I called out to them : “See Dhirendra, what happens when you accompany an unlucky person like me. I learn that Sri Ma has left this place and so we are deprived of Her *darśana* this time also.” The old man said : “You are wrong, Mataji is here. Jyotish Babu has left for Puri and Pitaji and some others have gone to Gangasagar.” He pointed to an old ramshakle small room and said : “Ma is there.”

The door was half open and there was a small window. I looked through the window and saw a thin, folded blanket spread on the floor. He told me to enter and sit down. Sri Ma had gone for a wash and would be back soon. Accordingly I went in and sat on the floor. Suddenly I felt as if a ray of sunshine entered the room. Needless to say who entered. Ma wore a clean white sari and Her jet black hair was falling over Her shoulders. Giving me a sweet smile, She sat down on the blanket with folded legs. Spontaneously my head bowed down and my hands touched Her feet. As I raised my head, I heard Her divine voice : “Father, are you from Behrampur ? Is your name Abani ?”

I said : "Yes !" Again She said : "Father, I know you !" I was struck with joy and wonder. After collecting my feelings, I asked eagerly : "Ma, shall I know you ?" She did not reply but smiled.

Again I asked : "Ma, is there any hope for this humble person to make progress on the spiritual path ?" Though I am a brahmin, aged forty-five, uptil now I have not made any effort in this line." She said : "You have received mantra *dīkṣā* (initiation) from your *Kula-guru*, haven't you ?" I said : "Yes, Ma, eight or ten years ago. Ever since I practiced japa twice daily according to the rules but without much faith in either the guru or the mantra."

Sri Ma spoke with firmness : "Father, always remember that the World-teacher has taken the form of your *Kula-guru* and bestowed on you the invaluable gift of the sacred mantra. Keeping in mind that the guru, the mantra and your *Iṣṭa-deva* are one and the same ; go on repeating the *Iṣṭa-mantra* with deep faith. By this everything will be accomplished." She also gave me detailed instructions how to live a religious life.

It was evening now. There were three ladies and two men with Sri Ma. One of them was Khukuni Didi, now called Gurupriya Devi. A few days previously she had been invested with the sacred thread and had become a formal brahma-charini. The other lady was Sailabala Devi known in the Ashram as 'Baby-Didi', the wife of the zamindar of Malkhanagar, Dacca. She was the mother of the Deputy Commissioner of Jabalpur, Sri

Sukumar Bose, I. C. S. The third was the grandmother of Sri Ma's brahmacharini Udasji. The men were the bearded old Sri Nishikanta Mitra and Manik, a young devotee of Ma. Jyotish Babu, after he had left his family, was travelling with Sri Ma in Uttar-Pradesh. The devotees of Dehradun had begun to call him "Bhaiji" and he was now known by this name. Ma used to fast on alternate days and take a small quantity of milk and *roti* every second day. It happened to be Her day of fast, so there was no *prasāda* for me. Khukunidi prepared vegetables and puries for the three of us. Ma was sitting with Babydi and asked me to sing God's name. Like a heretic I said : "What name ? Here Krishna ? I do not like to sing as itinerant ascetics do." Ma exclaimed : "Do you mean to say you do not like God's name ? Have you any objection to listening if someone else sings it ?" She became silent and after a while Herself began to sing with a most wonderful divinely sweet voice : "Hari bol, Hari bol, Hari, Hari bol, Keshava Madhava, Govinda bol." She sang entrancingly for about half an hour. I became intoxicated with the melody. This was the first time in my life that I heard such divine singing of the Lord's name. I felt certain that Sri Ma in Her graciousness towards this unbeliever had bestowed on me the name of the all-forgiving Hari. After some time I said, "Ma, my old mother and family are in Behrampur, will you not be so gracious as to come and give them *darśana* ?" Ma said : "Father, this daughter is always eager to visit her father's home, but the

father has to consider the expenses that would be incurred. Well, whenever you take me, I shall come. Let Jyotish return from Puri and do try your best to come again ; then we shall decide.” I said, “Ma, on January 26th I have a holiday for Saraswati puja, I shall try to add a few days’ leave to it and come ; but there is one difficulty, I have to take my family to Chittagong on the 3rd of February for a wedding. So you will have to come before then.” Ma insisted : “We shall decide when you come again.”

I did obeisance at Ma’s feet and left at 10 p. m. by cart for Rampurhat, with a discontentment in my heart for not getting any *Mātri prasāda*. We had travelled about half a mile, when suddenly a torch was flashed on our cart. I heard Manik’s voice : “Abanida, Ma has sent me to tell you to try your best to come once more while She is at Tarapith.” Why Sri Ma was so pertinacious She alone knew.

I reached Rampurhat at about one o’clock in the night. The next day I was to spend at Sri Lalateswari temple at Nalhati and return to Behrampur at night. I had heard that Pitaji and Sri Ma along with Bhaiji had spent many days there. On the way I met Dhirendra who said : “I am going to see Ma at Tarapith. Go to Nalhati ; when I return in the evening we shall go to Behrampur.” So saying he started walking towards Tarapith. I reached Nalhati at about eight in the morning, spending the whole day at Sri Lalateswari temple. In the evening Dhirendra returned and

brought me Ma's *prasāda*, pieces of *roṭi* soaked in milk, wrapped in a banana leaf. He said : "Ma has given this *prasāda* for you with Her own hands." My heart was filled with gladness, Sri Ma made me understand that She knew even the unspoken wishes of a devotee. The evening before, my mind had been hankering after this *prasāda* ; Ma compassionately sent it as a blessing to this humble servant.

I returned to Behrampur and the remaining seven or eight days passed quickly in the hope of seeing Ma at Tarapith during Saraswati Puja. Unfortunately two days earlier I was entrusted with official duties and it became impossible for me to leave. My officer, Rai Bahadur Surendra Nath Bose, went to Tarapith and had the delight of *Mātri darśana*. Two days later he told me that he had met Bhaiji who, on his return from Puri, had fallen seriously ill and was saved from death only by Sri Ma's grace. He was still very weak and could hardly speak. I felt greatly disturbed, and wanted to see Bhaiji but found it impossible as I had to go to Chittagong within five days.

We were all ready to start on February 3rd, but on the 2nd I received a telegram from my father-in-law that my brother-in-law's marriage had been postponed by three weeks. I felt as if I held the moon in my hands. Sri Ma's desire would now be fulfilled. It was wonderful how Her will worked and made the impossible possible. When I had requested Ma to come to Behrampur before February 3rd, She had smiled and said : "Wait and

see what happens.” When I received the telegram I understood that Ma with Her divine insight had already foreseen everything.

The full-moon fell on the 12th of February. I took five days’ leave, started in the morning and reached Tarapith in the evening, having paid my homage at Lalateswari Temple in Nalhati on the way. Sri Ma with Her companions was staying in the ashram of the late Mahatma Sri Vamakshepa. The room was crowded. I did *praṇāma* at Ma’s feet. She smiled, saying : “Father, how is it that you have not gone to Chittagong ?” I explained. Then She asked : “Are you returning today ?” I said, “No, Ma, I have taken five days leave.” Ma was pleased : “Very good ! So you can attend Maroni’s wedding.” I saw Bhaiji sitting on the right side of Ma. He looked rather emaciated. I did obeisance and asked him about his health. He said : “We shall talk later,” and, giving me his seat, went and sat on the other side of Ma.

Ma and the devotees kept silent. Kumari Bhramara Ghosh whom Ma called ‘*Bara Ma*’ sat in front of Ma. She was a first class first M.A. and a grand-daughter of Rai Bahadur Jogesh Chandra Ghosh, a great devotee of Ma. Sri Ma said : “*Bara Ma*, sing to me.” The lady sang with deep feeling in a sweet voice : “Oh ! my divine Mother....” etc. On hearing this I felt a great urge to bow down at Sri Ma’s feet. As soon as my acute desire touched the gracious heart of all-knowing Ma, She placed Her lotus feet which had been on the left side, to the right towards me. I

put my head on Her feet and did *praṇāma*. How the next moments passed in enchantment is impossible to express in words. How long the singing went on, I do not know. As I lifted my head from Sri Ma's feet I saw that all the devotees were doing *praṇāma* one by one, leaving for their respective places. Then Gurupriya Didi went to arrange for Sri Ma's food and rest.

Bhaiji remained seated and I also sat near him. My heart was filled with joy at the thought that this man who had been like a loving brother to me in my childhood and later secured a job for me and looked after my family, today had again acted as a Sadguru and steered my humble self to take refuge at the World-mother's feet. My heart was too full to speak. I was a brahmin and he a *kayasta* but by Sri Ma's grace I overcame this difference of caste and was thankful to bow down at his feet. With a weak voice Bhaiji said : "This was the second time that Ma has snatched me from the clutches of incurable disease and death. One night, about three days after returning from Puri, a terrible pain started in my abdomen. Next morning it became so acute that I fell unconscious. A doctor was called from Rampurhat, who examined me and sent medicines that did not give any relief, so he was called again in the evening. After examining me he said : "Nothing more can be done." Sri Ma then told everyone : "Go and have your food and rest, I shall stay here with Jyotish. Do not enter the room unless I call you." Then in a drowsy condition I faintly heard the words :

“Nārāyana, Nārāyana, Nārāyana”. Slowly my consciousness returned. I saw Sri Ma sitting near my head. I thought my end had come and so Sri Ma was pronouncing the name of Nārāyana. Now I could speak : “Ma, why have you repeated the name of Nārāyana” ? Ma said in a husky voice : “How are you” ? I replied : “Since I have regained the strength to open my eyes and to speak, I can say that I am better.” Ma gave a loud weird laugh. Sri Akhandananda Swami, (retired Civil Surgeon, the late Sashanka Mohan Mukherjee) who was watching all night anxiously outside near the door, thought some calamity had befallen me, when he heard Ma’s strange laughter. Disobeying Her orders, he opened the door and asked : “Ma, why did you laugh in such a peculiar way” ? Ma smiled : “Why shouldn’t I laugh ? Jyotish says he is well!”

The next morning I mentioned to Bhaiji that during my last visit I had placed my humble request at Sri Ma’s feet asking Her to come to my home at Behrampur and Ma had replied : “Let Jyotish return from Puri.” Bhaiji said : “Look, Pitaji is standing under the banyan tree. Go and speak to him.” I had not been introduced to Pitaji, but paying homage at his feet, I begged of him to bring Sri Ma to Behrampur. Pitaji was observing silence, however he joyfully nodded in approval. I went and informed Bhaiji. Next day, Saturday, was Maroni’s wedding. On Sunday the bridegroom’s party was to return to Calcutta with the newly wedded pair. On Monday night Sri Ma was to go to Rampur at the invitation of Her staunch devotee

Sri Trigunanath Bandopadhyā. Bhaiji decided that after a couple of nights' stay there they would go to Behrampur via Navadwip.

The bridegroom's party along with some well-known devotees arrived by 9 a. m. Sri Ma spent all day upto about midnight at Sri Vamakshepa's ashram, and then went to Siddhashram to sleep. Next morning at about eleven I came to Her and saw a lady with a large crimson mark on her forehead, wearing a sari with a broad red border, sitting to the left of Sri Ma. She was distributing *prasāda* to all present. I *praṇāmed* at Ma's feet and was going to take the *prasāda* when Ma, pointing to her, said : "You have not done *praṇāma* to her !" I replied : "But I don't know her !" Sri Ma said : "She is my mother." I did *praṇāma* saying : "Then she is my Didima !" I could not find out more about her. I was staying on the lower floor of a mud hut belonging to Sri Jotin Panda, the head-panda. In the evening I could hear *Tārak-Brahma Mahānām kirtan* being sung on the roof by melodious, sweet voices. I hurried upstairs and found this same lady dancing in divine intoxication to the rhythm of these kirtans. A middle-aged clean-shaven *saṁnyāsī* dressed in saffron robes and a handsome gentleman with spectacles were sitting there. I sat down next to them. After half an hour's dancing the lady dropped down unconscious. Kirtan continued with great momentum. On enquiring I was told that the lady was known as Sri Vimāla Ma, and the *saṁnyāsī* as Sri Anandabhai. He had been the husband of Vimāla Ma, and was the President of the Dakshineswar

Anandapith of Sri Ramakrishna Sangha. The other person was Sri Sachikanta Ghosh, Assistant Income-tax Commissioner, an ardent devotee of Ma Anandamayi and also of Vimala Ma. At Ma's request he had brought them to Her at Tarapith.

When Vimala Ma regained her senses, she in a half entranced condition, asked me : "Baba, you did *praṇāma* to me at Sri Ma's behest, I should like to know more about you." I introduced myself. A strange thing happened. As soon as I said that I was born at Chittagong, she embraced me with eyes brimming over with tears. With a choked voice she said, "Father, you are a brahmin born in the country where my beloved Thakur was born ? You are then my nearest and dearest, that is why Ma Anandamayi has brought us together." I was thunderstruck ! I did not know who her beloved Thakur was. Then Anandabhai explained shortly about Sri Adya Ma, Adyapith and their Guru Sri Ananda Thakur who had established Sri Ramakrishna Sangha at Adyapith. He requested me to visit Adyapith when I went to Calcutta. It was my great good luck that they at this first meeting accepted me as their own. As I often went to Calcutta on official duty, I always stayed for a night at Adyapith with them, paying homage at the temple and spending a pleasant time in their loving company. They also delighted us by their visit for a few days at Behrampur. They have since both found eternal peace at their blessed Guru's lotus feet. Bowing to them in homage I end this sublime topic.

(To be continued)

MĀTRI LĪLĀ

(December 1980—March 1981)

Mataji left Kankhal on November 30th for Varanasi. The large party which accompanied Her went directly to Varanasi, while Mataji Herself with a handful of companions got down at Ayodhya, where She remained for three nights at the invitation and urgent request of the Rani of Makrai. The Rani was one of those who had arranged for the Bhagavata Saptaha at Vrindaban last September when Mataji had travelled so much for the sake of Sri Gurupriya Didi, but in spite of it had managed to be present for all the main functions of the Saptaha.

On December 4th, Mataji alighted at Varanasi. She gave *darśana* every evening and also short *darśanas* in the mornings. From Dec. 12th to 19th a *Bhagavata Saptaha* was observed for Sir and Lady Datar Singh arranged by their daughter and granddaughter who are inmates of the Ashram. Swami Vishnuashram expounded very lucidly in Hindi. From Dec. 15th to 18th, *Gītā jayanti* was also celebrated.

On December 21st, Mataji left for Naimisharanya. Quite a number of people followed Her, including some devotees from abroad. Mataji gave *darśana* on Her terrace but also came downstairs for functions four or five times. She was in an excellent mood and seemed relaxed and was able

to walk more than usual. A number of western devotees had come to spend their X-mas holidays with Mataji. They had collective meditation in Mataji's presence for half an hour each on X'mas day and also on New Year's day on Mataji's terrace and on X'mas day were entertained to a special feast by the Ashram. Many of them had private talks with Mataji. On January 1st, the foundation stone to a Śiva Mandir was laid in Mataji's presence.

On January 5th, Mataji left for Allahabad from where She reached Bombay on the 7th. She had come to attend the centenary celebrations of the blind Swami Gangeshwaranandaji which were held on a gigantic scale. For three days Mataji stayed in Bombay proper at Sri Koteja's on the seventh floor in a new terrace flat and attended the *Sādhu mela* of eight lakhs of people for the Srimad Bhagavata of Sri Dongre' Maharaj. Then Mataji spent three nights in Her cottage at the residence of Sri B. K. Shah in Vile Parle.

On January 14th Mataji motored to Poona. Since She had been through a very busy time in Varanasi, Naimisharanya and Bombay, She remained upstairs for a few days and appeared on the balcony only for $\frac{1}{2}$ hour's *darśana* every evening while everyone gazed from down below. On the 20th some devotees performed *Kumari Pūjā* on the veranda and Mataji watched all the time from the covered terrace opposite. In the evening Satyanarayan Puja was performed. From January 23rd onwards Mataji came downstairs and became quite

active. On Sunday, 25th Jan., the Poona devotees observed one day of Samyam Vrata. Mataji was present for the collective meditation from 3-4 p.m. The same day the well-known Sādhu Sri Ram Baba paid a visit to Ma with his devotees and they all had their midday meal in the Ashram. All arrangements and discipline were as usual very ably managed by the Poona devotees.

On January 27th, Mataji left for Secunderabad at the invitation of Governor Sri Chenna Reddy, who made excellent arrangements. Mataji gave *darśana* twice daily for a whole hour each time. The huge crowd was extremely orderly.

From there Mataji travelled to Bombay to catch the train for Baroda from where She motored to Bhimpura on Jan. 30th. This time Mataji did not remain so secluded there as last year as Her health has fortunately improved. Saraswati Puja was celebrated very solemnly on *Vasant Panchami* day, February 12th, and *Mahaśivaratri* on March 4th by all-night puja in the open. About 150 people took part in the puja sitting in circles round Śiva Linga. Maharaja and Maharani of Gondal had come and did Ma's Puja as well. Ma was present for some time and then retired to Her room.

On March 6th, Mataji left for Vrindaban, reaching there on the 7th evening. She walked up the steps to the temples to visit all the deities. The people who had come for Mataji's *darśana* on Her arrival could not have imagined that Mataji would that very night take the train to Lucknow, where

She spent barely a few hours on March 8th before proceeding to Calcutta most unexpectedly for a flying visit. Mataji went straight to Belur Math. Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa's hundred forty-fifth birthday fell on March 8th. From Belur Math Mataji went to Santoshpur for an hour or two and on the 9th evening boarded the train for Varanasi where She reached on the 10th morning. There Sri Jogesh Brahmachari, one of the oldest devotees of Ma, was given *Samnyāsa* by Sri Narayan Swami. Yogeshda's new name is Swami Niranjānānanda Tirtha. He is 91 years old. The same day Ma left by the Ganga-Jamuna Express for Mathura and reached Vrindaban on the 11th morning, in time for the Bhagavata Saptah that was inaugurated the next day.

Mataji had thus spent five consecutive nights in the train after leaving Bhimpura on March 6th. On arriving in Vrindaban Mataji took up abode behind Chhelia Mandir for the next two days. In the morning of March 12th, Swami Akhandananda Saraswati gave a talk on the *Mahatmya* (greatness) of the Srimad Bhagavata and the same afternoon a Bhagavata Saptaha was started by the well-known *Bhāgavatāchārya* Sri Narayan Goswami who knows the whole of the Bhagavata by heart. He expounded daily in Bengali upto March 19th. Mataji gave darśana every evening at 6 p.m. to a large number of people, including many visitors from foreign countries.

From 19th evening *Nāma Yajña* was performed most enthusiastically. Kumari Chhabi Banerjee

headed the singers from Calcutta. Our Delhi Kirtan party also took part very actively. Thus was celebrated the birthday of Sri Gouranga Mahaprabhu and also of Sri Haribabaji. On March 21st Mataji played Holi, splashing coloured powder and coloured water on everyone. Mataji was in an excellent mood, full of fun and frolics. That day She received the visits of Sri Swami Gangeshwarānandaji and of another centenary.

Many devotees had assembled from even far off places like Bombay and Calcutta. On the 23rd everyone left, while Mataji remained in Vrindaban with a very few companions for a few days of rest. She is expected to proceed to Kankhal about the 6th of April. A very hectic time is awaiting Her there with several functions : another Bhagavata Saptaha, Didima's *Samnyāsa Utsava* on April 13th, the Bengali New Year, etc. and from May 6th (*Akshaya Tritiya*) an *Ati Rudra Mahayajna* and then the celebrations of Her 85th birthday, culminating in the night of May 21st. On this joyful occasion we all join in the fervent prayer that Mataji may have the *kheyāla* to keep Her body in perfect health and bless this strife-torn world with Her benign presence for many more years.

MA

*How can I call your name
So dear to me
That I dare not breathe it
Lest it go*

from me

*Only within the quiet of
My heart*

I sit in meditation

And chant your name

Where it may

not escape

Unheard by any save thee

My own

Enshrined within my heart

I gaze upon the wonder of

Your being

In complete surrender

I have always

loved you

Shraddha
