



ĀNANDA VĀRTĀ

*

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

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“There is, O monks, a state where there is neither earth, nor water, nor heat, nor air ; neither infinity of space, nor infinity of consciousness, nor nothingness, nor perception, nor non-perception ; neither this world nor that world, neither sun nor moon. It is the uncreate.

“That, O monks, I term neither coming nor going, nor standing ; neither death nor birth. It is without stability, without change, ; it is the eternal which never originates and never passes away. There is the end of sorrow.

“It is hard to realize the essential, the truth is not easily perceived ; desire is mastered by him who knows, and to him who sees aright all things are naught.

“There is, O monks, an unborn, unoriginated, uncreated, unformed. Were there not, O monks, this unborn, unoriginated, uncreated, unformed, there would be no escape from the world of the born, originated, formed.

“Since, O monks, there is an unborn, unoriginated, uncreated and unformed, therefore is there an escape from the born, originated, created, formed.”

—*The Gospel of Buddha*

SRI SRI MA'S UTTERANCES

*Reported by Sri Gurupriya Devi in
"Sri Sri Ma Anandamayi", Vol. VII.*

(Collected and translated from Bengali by Bithika Mukerji)

"Just as a hungry person looks for and assembles items of food, so should one search for the ingredients pertaining to the other world."

"But we have no 'hunger' for the other world, so what should we do?"

"That is very true. You have really stated the crux of the matter. If there is no 'hunger' then you must treat yourself for loss of appetite! For this, medicines are prescribed and supportive diet is indicated."

"What is the medicine and what is the diet for this ailment?"

"Repetition of His Name is the medicine and self-discipline is the diet. If you follow this regimen, you will see that 'hunger' is enkindled and gradually it will increase also. In the beginning self-discipline is required. Renunciation and a state of illness (apathy toward spiritual effort) are concomitantly related. As long as one suffers from lack of appetite one must practise the rigourisms of prescribed food and medicine. Haven't you noticed that even when a patient is on the road to recovery and free from his disease, he continues to suffer from weakness for a while? At that time he is given extra nourishing food. He

must become an 'enjoyer' (*bhoktā*)* at that time. And, what is this enjoyable nourishment for the erstwhile sick man ? It is *sadhanā* !"

"The world is a world of duality and therefore a source of pain. If one is out for worldly achievements, suffering is inevitable. Do you know what it is like ? It is like purposely striking against an already existing sore, so that pain is doubled. To move toward God is on the other hand like soothing the sore with an unguent. There is no other mode of appeasing suffering.

"You see, when someone tastes something delicious, he recommends it to his son, father or other dear ones, saying, 'taste this, and see how good it is !' So this body asks all of you to practise the repetition of His Name. It is the only source of peace.

"Set apart one room or one corner of a room for sitting while repeating the Names of God (*japa*) and meditating. Keep this room spotlessly clean, burn incense in it and make it as beautiful as you can. It will acquire an atmosphere, so that as soon as you enter the room your thoughts will naturally turn toward God. Do not worry about being on the right path because in the beginning the variety of ways may appear bewildering. If you sit idle and contemplate the paths nothing is achieved. One must start walking. Once on the road, one meets other wayfarers who give information regarding the journey.

* (A play of meaning of the three words, *rogi*, *yogi* and *bhogi*)

“Pitaji, one has to proceed toward one’s home. The physical body is a house of breath. Repeatedly it is stated (by me) that one must look upon it as an inn. Don’t you assemble things and make arrangements before setting out on a journey? In order to return ‘home’ from this wayside inn, you should also make efforts toward husbanding resources for the pilgrimage ahead !”

“Ma, years ago you told me : ‘The husband is the Guru.’ A few months ago my husband died and now I feel all lost. What am I to do ?

“The husband who is the Guru does not die. Contemplate your husband as the Guru !”

MĀTRI SATSANG

Swami Bhagavatananda Giri

(Translated from Bengali)

(Continued from the last issue)

Kanpur, November 17th, 1958

Before the Mātri Satsang I had requested my brother and sister *vratīs* to make a point of attending the morning and evening *kirtana*. I added that during *kirtana* the ladies seemed to be more prominent while the men's places remained vacant. This caused a brother to say :

Question : Just now the Controller has declared that the ladies are more conspicuous during *kirtana*. Does this imply that their devotion is greater and that they will realize God sooner ? It has been found, not only in India but also in Europe and elsewhere, that religious fervour is more predominant among women.

Mataji : Mothers do have more compassion— for are they not mothers ? They know how to serve and their power of endurance is greater. Not all mothers can afford to keep servants or helpers. Mothers are endowed with compassion and mercy.

You will receive according to your attitude of heart and mind, whether you sit here or elsewhere.

Question : Do we possess less devotion (*bhāva*) ?

Mataji : If your heart and mind continue to be centred here even if you happen to be in your room, then your gain will be total ; while if you sit in the pandal and your mind has remained in your home, you will gain nothing. This reminds

me of something : When God created the universe and made arrangements for everyone, sin approached Him and said : "You have provided a place for everyone, but what provision have you made for me ?" God replied : "You will reside with those who do not keep the remembrance of God in their minds." Wherever you may live, be it in England or anywhere else, you can attain to liberation. It all depends on your attitude of heart and mind, on your intensity.

Question : On the path to God-realization do women precede men ?

Mataji : Those whose aspiration is deeper and stronger will advance further.

Questioner : Women have less intellect (*buddhi*), so they are more religious-minded.

Mataji : Do you want to assert that men will precede because of their brains and intelligence ? Is it not true that your entire intelligence must first of all be dedicated at the Lord's feet ?

Questioner : Yes, Ma !

Mataji : How can you avoid acknowledging this ?

Questioner : Pagal Haranath* has a lot to say in his books in praise of women. He has declared that women prepared *rotis* and fed Sri Krishna, making Him sit by them.

Mataji : Whatever anyone may say is correct from his own point of view. Whose is the *yoga māyā* ?

Questioner : It is God's.

*Pagal Haranath was a well-known Bengali Vaiṣṇava saint.

Mataji : It is God's own *māyā*. Now ponder over this fact.

Questioner : We have all fallen into the clutches of God.

Mataji : When Lord Krishna stole butter from the homes of the Gopis, they caught hold of Him and asked : "Why do you steal from our homes ?" Sri Krishna said : "I do not eat butter belonging to others. I look upon all as my own. It is you who think of others as separate. I never do."

Questioner : Krishna stole and ate butter, but when cornered he declared : "I have not eaten it !"

Mataji : He was caught in His own net. This is quite true. Do not the Upanishads declare : "He has no feet, yet walks, no eyes, yet sees." This is exactly similar.

Question : What is the use of such topsy-turvy arguments ?

Mataji : Whose is the energy (*śakti*) that is working within each one ?

Questioner : It is God's energy.

Mataji : So it is through God's power that all mothers are embodiments of mercy and compassion. You alleged that the intelligence of women is inferior. The less there is of the intelligence (*durbuddhi*) that projects God into the far distance the better. God comes near only when such foolishness (*durbuddhi*) is discarded.¹

Question : What are the means of getting rid of this foolishness ?

1. A play upon words ; *dūra* means far and *durbuddhi* foolishness, evil-mindedness.

Mataji : Dwell in the proximity of Mahātmās. Concentrate on satsang, *japa*, meditation and the reading of Scriptures.

Questioner : We are householders. We do not get any spare time, so we cannot go to Mahātmās. Please tell us how we, in the ashram of the householder, can perform our devotion and worship.

Mataji : God is the Supreme Father, Supreme Mother, Supreme Friend. He is all in all. It is no good saying that you cannot achieve anything where you are placed in life. You will have to make an effort. You may give whatever time is necessary for worldly affairs, but all the rest of your time must be spent in the endeavour to realize God.

Question : I still implore you to tell me what is meant by *sādhana* ?

Mataji : Perform *japa* of God's name, contemplate Him, keep Him in remembrance, and be ever mindful of one important point : do all your duties to the family as a service to the Lord. When attending to your children think that you are serving all these Bālagopāls. Regard your wife as the Goddess, and the wife should serve her husband as a manifestation of the Lord.

Nowadays the Brahmacharya Ashram has been practically abandoned. But it cannot be abolished entirely. (*Mataji* points towards Jogesh Brahmachari.) A real seed is never destroyed—it remains alive in some form or other. The brahmacharya ashram is the very foundation of the life of a householder. It is through this neglect that things have been thrown into confusion. In the householder's

ashram a spirit of service must be fostered. Always think : "I am the manager of the temple that my household represents—not its proprietor." Endeavour to cultivate this attitude of mind.

Just as a clock has to be wound every twenty-four hours, so should you regularly spend some time in the mornings and evenings in *japa*, meditation, reading of religious books ; and whenever you have the opportunity seek *satsang*. The *grihastha ashram* is also a kind of ashram. If you observe its rules and regulations it will certainly become a real ashram. The four walls do not tie you down. The actual bondage is that of the mind. If you worship God wherever you may be, God is bound to be revealed. You will succeed in proportion to your eagerness and the depth of your devotion.

By a life of service your mind will be purified and you should always consider yourself as a tool in the hands of the Lord : He is directing all your movements. Work with your hands and keep your thought fixed on God. Whatever time you can spare try to spend in the contemplation of the One.

Mahātmas tell of the supremacy of God's name. Under all circumstances and in all conditions remember God's holy name. If you have a Guru, use the mantra given by Him for your *japa* and if you have not yet found a Guru, repeat whichever of God's names appeals to you most. Pray to Him thus : "O Lord, I just cannot live without you anymore !" By continuing in this strain your fervour will increase and you will realize God who, when found, nothing more remains to be desired.

Just as fire or even a spark of fire has the power to burn everything to cinders, so can the name of the Lord destroy all sin and evil. Therefore cling to His holy name; this is all your little daughter begs of you. The greater your intensity the quicker will you achieve. By rubbing two substances together fire is struck; by digging the earth water is found; so also if you practise your prayer and worship with deep devotion and eagerness, the way to the realization of God will surely be found.

In course of conversation Mataji said :

“Some people ask why it is considered a sin to emit smoke while enjoying a cigarette? It is not proper to smoke a cigarette and eject fumes of smoke. (Mataji points at Sri Chakrapaniji, a Mahātmā present.) He also stated that people pollute the air by blowing smoke into it.”

Mataji : By the repetition of God’s name, by meditation and *kīrtana* the whole atmosphere is purified. Perform action dedicated to the Lord and have no fear at all : by the execution of His work the road to liberation will be opened up.

Questioner : In this world there are two paths : One—to practise *japa*, meditation and discrimination, and the other—to perform one’s tasks in the world free of egoism.

Mataji : Speaking of karma yoga is a different matter. Beware that in the name of karma yoga the work is not done for the sheer enjoyment of it. You, the offspring of the Immortal, are a servant of the Lord ; by pouring out clouds of smoke from the cigarette in your lips you are merely fulfilling a carnal desire.

The desire to please Sri Krishna is called love while the desire to cater to one's senses is called passion. Remember you are a tool in the hands of the Lord ! Whose is your wealth ? It belongs to God. You are only its manager, not its owner. You have no right to enjoy a cigarette and spread its smoke all around you.

November 18th, 1958

Hari Om Ma

At the request of some devotees Mataji sang kirtan with a very sweet voice in a most melodious tune. The kirtan was so captivating that all present kept on listening spell-bound, repeating each line in unison after Mataji. In this wonderful, heavenly atmosphere deep silence prevailed and waves of immortal bliss poured gently on all present.

November 19th, 1958

Question : Today someone declared that there was no need of devotion (*bhakti*), everybody should just practise yoga.

Mataji : To realize God who is eternally united with His creation is the purpose of yoga. Yoga must be practised in some way or other. Whichever line you may be following can be fruitful. God is infinite and the paths to realize Him are also of infinite number and variety. Whichever line is pointed out to each one by his Guru should be adopted.

One day two men were quarrelling. One said : "My road is correct," the other retorted : "No, it is my road that is correct." This body declared : "Whichever line is chosen is correct for that particular individual." How admirable is the faith of

a person who, so long as he follows his particular line, firmly believes that his path alone and no other is the right one. Those who believe in devotional *sādhana* assert that *bhakti* is the supreme truth and all else false, while advocates of *Advaita* hold that theirs is the only correct path. Disparity arises only while one is still on the way. On reaching the ultimate Destination, it is realized that all roads have led to the one and only Goal there is.

Question : So one must not think of another's line that it is wrong.

Mataji : Who has created "yes" and "no" ?

Jogesh Brahmachari : God has.

Mataji : Therefore there is no place for incongruity. No road exists outside of Him. "Yes" and "no" exist only so long as one is still on the path. You are in the "no" as well as in the "yes". You exist in the minutest and most subtle form as well as in the most colossal—the question of getting angry does not arise at all. Baba, do not get angry ! Whatever anyone says is correct from his viewpoint. You should consider that it is your own beloved Deity that has appeared before you in such a guise.

Questioner : From now on I shall put my *Thakur* (beloved deity) on the shelf.

Mataji : So you will make the Supreme your Guru ? If you have real faith in your Guru it is not fitting to give way to fear. "Hey Krishna ! Hey Rāma ! You have manifested yourself in this form ! O my Lord, my God, it is you yourself who have

come to speak to me in this fashion.” Let others say whatever they please, but you must remain undisturbed.

Questioner : It is said in our *Śāstras* that it is not right to remain where the Guru or the *Śāstras* are maligned.

Mataji : Actually it is not possible for anyone to speak ill of one’s *Iṣṭa* or Guru. Because my Guru is the Guru of the universe and the Guru of the universe is my own Guru. Similarly my *Iṣṭa* is the world’s *Iṣṭa* and the world’s *Iṣṭa* is my own. If you think calumny is being uttered concerning your Guru, it is not right to remain there.

Questioner : During the *Samyam Saptah* it is uncalled for to speak against bhakti.

Mataji : My Guru or *Iṣṭa* is present within all. If you feel that evil is being spoken of your Guru, do not listen to it, that is, do not let it enter into you.

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In course of subsequent conversation Mataji said :

Let me speak of something that I remember from my childhood. When this body was a child, mother had warned us never to lay hands on anything in other people’s houses without their permission, i.e. never to touch anything even if it lay right in front of us. And then she elaborated on this by telling the following story to her little daughter :

Once upon a time a devotee attained to the realization of Bhagavan Sri Krishna by his worship and contemplation of Him. But in the course of this he had incurred a debt ; he owed a paisa

to somebody. However his *sādhanā* had reached such a high level that the Lord Himself repaid his debt. Sri Krishna thus not only showed him the way but made sure of his ultimate achievement.

On the subject of debts or taking loans, this body's mother used to say : "Never get into debt with anybody. Never touch someone else's belongings." Once someone had sent us a *thāli** full of delicious things. The *thali* was emptied and cleaned so as to be returned in good time. Meanwhile someone suggested : "Why not make use of the *thali*? It can be replaced by another household *thali*."

Thereupon this body declared that to use someone else's *thali* originally sent filled with good things would be tantamount to theft. It is not right to make use of any article belonging to another person without his permission.

Question : Please show us a path by treading which every ordinary man and woman in the world can become happy, get rid of sorrow, have peace of mind and tranquillity, so that all may attain to true happiness.

Mataji : Of things divine alone must be right speech, all else is vain and full of pain. Where Rāma is, there is ease and repose, where Rāma is not there is nothing but unrest and uneasiness.

* Hari Om Ma *

**Thāli* metal plate.

THE HERITAGE OF THE HINDUS¹

Bithika Mukerji

On Methodology :

It is well known that the Hindu tradition is the Vedic tradition. The multifaceted religious atmosphere which is so characteristic of our country derives its strength and sustenance from the Vedas. The ancient sages lighted for us the path of reverential worship of deities ; they also indicated the way toward the knowledge of the One Reality which remains hidden behind the many-splendoured world of everyday experience.

It is universally believed that the Vedas are the oldest scriptural lore of a living tradition. Hindus consider themselves Hindus by virtue of this ancient heritage, which has supported them in the past, helps them to live in the present and inspires them to a future of hope and blessedness. Our tradition is unique in the sense that it has remained unbroken down the ages. It can be seen easily that the ever-living fount of Truth, lived and taught by the Vedic seers, has been systematically guarded, preserved and proclaimed by succeeding generations of great exponents of the wisdom. Where traditions are broken or radicalised the recovery of

(1) This is the first of a series of articles to be published on this subject.

meaning of ancient texts becomes an academic process. The strength of the ancient heritage is lost to those who feel severed from their roots. Hindus, however, do not regard the Vedas as 'written books' composed by nature worshippers of an early civilization. They are for the Hindus the embodiment of Reality Itself presented to mankind for contemplation by the 'Seers of truth' (*Rishis*) in the form of inspired utterances (*mantra*), strung together in unique sequence (*krama*) and set to specific rhythmic cadences (*chhanda*). The mantra is the heart of the Vedic literature.

A question may be raised if modern methods of evaluating ancient texts are completely inapplicable here, and if so, is this literature to be taken as an inviolable structure totally unrelated to the requirements of changing times? In order to judge the relevance of this question it is well to remember that modern methodology is itself an outcome of a particular tradition which acknowledges many stages of radicalizations in the developing history of its own cultural pattern. The Western tradition starting from ancient Greece recognises a break between an age of myths and an age of rational hypotheses which led to the birth of science. Modern methodologies reflect therefore an ethos which instead of taking anything on trust, would rather subject all phenomena to rational evaluations and employ verification for gaining exactitude in knowledge.

In this context, it is well to remember also, that rationality is the natural predicament of the human

mind. Man does not choose to be rational ; he cannot but be rational and must relate to all that surrounds him through his outward-going sensibilities. The most natural attitude for man is therefore, a rational appreciation of the world in which he finds himself. This is the foundation on which sciences are built and thus it lies at the root of the Western tradition. This intellectual climate reflects an unwillingness to accept anything outside the framework of finite time, space and modes of verifiability.

If we keep both these points in mind, then we may begin to appreciate the unique message of the Vedas. The crucial point regarding the Vedic tradition is that reverence and rationality are held together in a continuity and not in opposition. That which is to be accepted in a spirit of reverence as Truth Itself, is made plausible and reasonable for the seeker of knowledge. The final state of this seeking lies in certainty, a certainty, achieved in the form of a direct apprehension, or in Self-realization because the goal of Vedic teaching is to indicate the ultimate unity of the Self with Brahman.

The Vedas teach man how to live in the world in which he finds himself ; it also teaches that although the world is desirable, it is not of supreme value because the happiness man seeks, lies beyond it. The teaching which seeks to take man beyond the framework of infinite time-space-objects, therefore, is necessarily of a pedagogical nature only. It has educational value, inasmuch as it is geared toward convincing a mind naturally prone to

worldly affairs, of the necessity for knowing that which lies beyond 'time, space and objecthood'. This pedagogical devise is for awakening an interest in the 'unnatural' rather than the natural; a dimension of total bliss rather than a preoccupation with fragments of bliss; a possibility of gaining a unity which is universal and immortal rather than remain at the level of fragmented existence.

Scholars trained in academic methods have spoken of and written about the greatness of the Vedas as ancient religious texts. They have seen in the books, a pattern of development from the worship of many gods, to the contemplation of the One Brahman; from the preoccupation with worldly affairs and moral social standards toward an a-moral, lonely, asectic way of life; and from the purity of Vedic sacrifices toward a complicated ritualistic mode of worship culminating in the Pauranic tradition of the supremacy of particular gods. Hindus, on the other hand, do not subscribe to this way of understanding their scriptures. The method of understanding which seeks to categorise ancient texts into time elements, becomes quite irrelevant in this context, because these are not "books written by men in bygone days" but they are the inspired songs of such men and women who have been vouchsafed the ultimate vision of Brahman as 'Reality, Knowledge, Bliss'. The realization of Brahman, spontaneously gives birth to beautiful hymns of celebration and joy. There can be no past, present or future as regards these paens of joy which are to be meditated upon,

contemplated and used for holding on to that dimension of life which sets the real meaning to everyday existence. They are the pulsating, living words which overcome all barriers of time and space ; and what can have a greater power of conviction than the direct apprehension of Truth ?

The theme of the Vedas may be summarised by saying that it lies in a message of hope that although Supreme knowledge of Brahman is unknown to man, yet man is the proper candidate for qualifying himself in order that this great Realisation of the unity of *ātman* and Brahman may be brought about. The one question the Vedas deal with is, "Why should I be called upon to know Brahman ? Why should I discipline myself in this enjoyable world in order to annihilate the I-consciousness which I am ?"

Science requires verifiability for its truths. Since the appeal here is to a mind already seized with thoughts about the other world, a reasonable presentation meets the case. The questioning arises because the possibility of the answer is already within the purview of the seeker. This can be stated in different words : all scriptures emphasize the importance of "The desire for Knowledge" (*mumukṣutva*) ; they also maintain that the desire for Knowledge can awaken only due to Divine Grace, so that the questioning is the penultimate situation culminating in the full certainty of Self-realization, a state of Bliss which finds expression in songs of joy and celebration. The scriptures, therefore, are for those who are already in a recep-

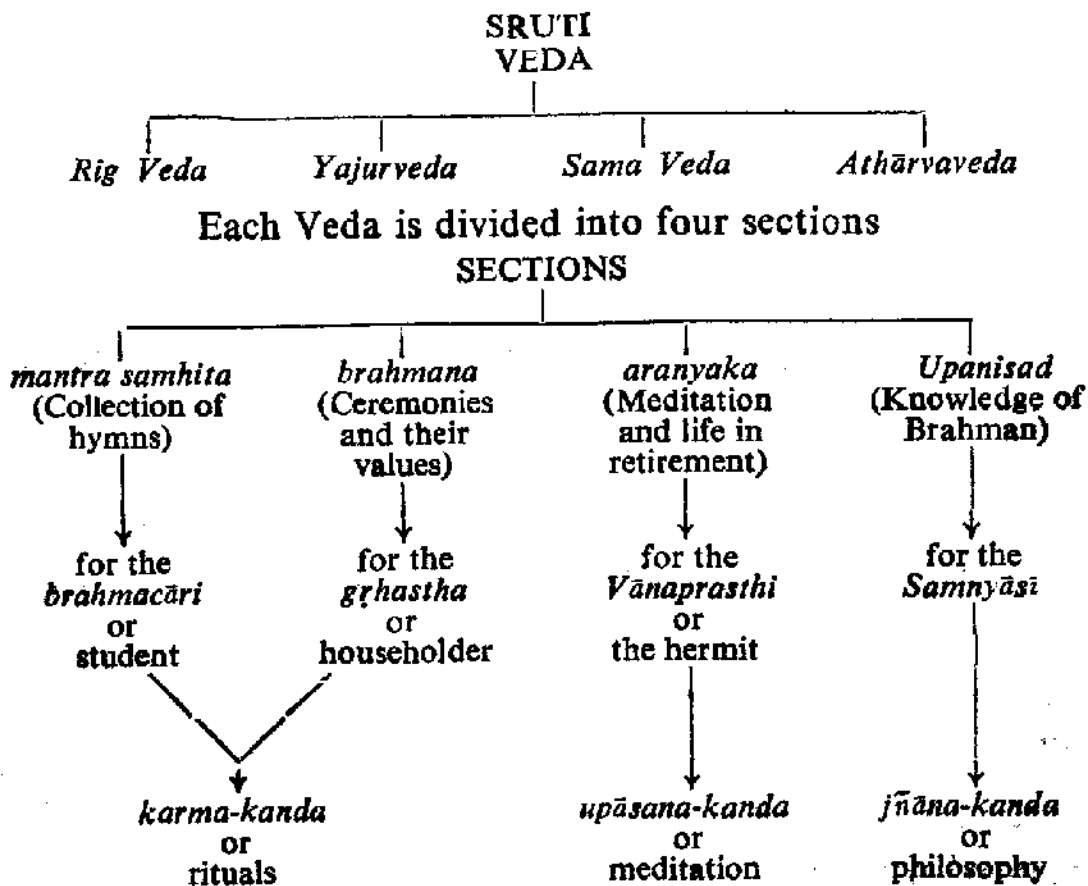
tive mood for the teaching regarding Brahman. They alone may enkindle the desire for knowledge which is the beginning of the quest for the man who is not totally engrossed in the world in the natural way. Like lighting of one lamp from another, the sequence of the transmission of this knowledge has passed from teacher to disciple to form an unbroken tradition from the most ancient times to the present.

In sum, it may be said that the Vedas contain every kind of teaching including the supreme knowledge of Brahman. Nothing which affects the life of a Hindu is totally extraneous to the Vedas in the sense that all teachings down the ages regarding *karma* (social activity) *upāsanā* (worship of deities) and *jñāna* (knowledge) have been in accord with what has been stated in the Texts. The heart of Vedic teaching lies in inculcating a reverential attitude toward the Supreme Being, who is the fountain-head as well as the ultimate resolution of all that there is in the universe.

Structure of the Vedas : The Vedas are stated in Sanskrit and are four in number, *Rigveda*, *Yajurveda*, *Sāmaveda* and *Athārvaveda*. Each Veda is divided into four sections. The first portion is called *samhita* comprising hymns (mantra) to gods. The second section is named *brahmana* ; it contains instructions in prose regarding ritualistic guidelines. The third section is called *aranyaka* or a forest treatise. These deal with contemplative thinking regarding this and the other world. The fourth section, known as *Upaniṣad* is also called Vedanta

because it comes at the end of the Veda in the literary as well as spiritual sense. These contain philosophical discourses between teachers and pupils regarding the supreme teaching of the unity of *ātman* and Brahman.

The divisions are very tenuous. One section flows into another. One *Upaniṣad* belongs in the first section itself. Thus no rigidity marks the divisions. They are fluid in the sense that one may proceed to the forest from the city whenever one feels called upon to do so, otherwise a steady progress is indicated in the passage from the life of a student, to the life of a householder, then life in retirement in preparation for the life of renunciation. The sections may be classified as follows :—



(to be continued)

**MAHĀMAHOPADHYĀYA
Dr. GOPINATH KAVIRAJ:
HIS ORIGINAL CONTRIBUTION
TO PHILOSOPHY***

Govinda Gopal Mukhopadhyaya

Philosophy is a pursuit of truth. The Truth is veiled to the common eye and one has to pierce through the veil to see the face of Truth. To connote this 'seeing' the Indian term for philosophy has been '*darśana*'. The savant, whose life and philosophy this seminar has been privileged to discuss, was a life-long seeker after Truth and as such was a philosopher *par excellence* as well as a *darśanika* in the true sense of the term as he had seen that Truth face to face. In this lies the uniqueness of Mahāmahopadhyāya Dr. Gopinath Kaviraj that he was at once a *srotriya*, well-versed in all the *śāstras*, as well as a *brahmanistha*, firmly established in the supreme consciousness. He was a *Riṣi*, a seer who had seen Truth in all its facets (*riṣir darśanāt*) as well as a *Kāvi* who could communicate through faultless charming expression his realisation of the Infinite. Those who were privileged to sit at his feet and had the good fortune

* Reprinted from Seminar papers presented at the Seminar on the Life and Philosophy of Mahāmahopadhyāya Dr. Gopinath Kaviraj, held from 23rd to 25th November 1978 under the auspices of the University of Calcutta.

of being bathed in the perennial stream of illuminating, vibrant words that flowed from his lips, alone can testify to the truth of the above statement.

To many Gopinathji was a mystic and not a philosopher in the true sense of the term. If a realised soul is termed a mystic, he was certainly one in every sense of the term. But there was nothing vague or mystifying in his expositions of truth. On the contrary, his reasoning was so lucid and faultless as well as logical that even a sceptic had to own the truth of his statements. So he was also an ideal philosopher. But did he contribute anything original in the field of philosophy ?

To my mind his first and foremost contribution in the field of philosophy has been to set forth anew the true aim of all Indian philosophies. In fact he is the only Indian philosopher who has put us over again on the right track of philosophical pursuit. This may appear as a tall claim but to make the point clear let me quote his own words, where he beautifully expresses his own idea about the aim or goal of Indian philosophy :

‘In India, philosophy, especially in its earlier and truer form, was intended to serve a practical purpose. Bare speculation is invariably condemned as waste of energy, in as much as it leads nowhere ; speculation is deemed blind without the guiding light which revelation or Higher Perception alone can furnish. Thus the premises from which reason has to draw its inferences are naturally beyond its own reach and stand outside of itself.’

Gopinathji, therefore, clearly puts forth the role of reason in the search for truth by pointing out its limitations.

To quote again :

‘Reason is, by nature, impotent and cannot in anywise overstep its data. It is not creative nor intuitive ; its function is interpretation of facts. Its ultimate resort is, therefore, nothing short of direct experience.’

But if direct experience is to be adhered to, should we then base our reasoning only on the sense-data, which are limited, distorted and often wrong and confused ? To this he replies :

‘But as human experience is limited in its scope and is liable to error, the experience on which our reasoning is based must be conceived as infinite and free from all the defects incidental to erring humanity. This infinite experience is embodied in the revealed scriptures.’ To those who want to discard revelation as mere nonsense or mental fancy, Gopinathji sounds a note of warning : ‘Reason, unaided by the light of this Revelation, would be a groping in the dark and would never be able to discover the truth which is incapable of analysis and synthesis.’ Precisely for this reason, he points out, ‘to the general Indian philosopher, therefore, seeking to build up his individual system of thought on the bed-rock of supra-rational illumination contained in the Vedas or Agamas, much in the same fashion as to the schoolmen of medieval Europe, reason is subservient to faith. “Believe and then know”,—*Sraddhāvan labhate jñānam*—this seems to be the motto of Indian philosophy.’

In assigning the right role to philosophy, Gopinathji states clearly thus: 'Philosophy, if rightly understood, is then only a step in the cultivation of a man's life. To be at all fruitful it must work in subordination to *i.e.*, on the data supplied by, Revelation. Else it is apt to run astray.'

One may object that this subordination of reason to revelation is practically an abandonment of philosophy but Gopinathji strongly affirms that it is not so but on the contrary only assigns its rightful place. He points out that 'in the general scheme of a man's inner culture the study of philosophy is given a secondary, though a necessary place :

*ātmā vāre draṣṭavyaḥ-srotavyo mantavyo nididhyā-
sitavyaḥ śrotavyaḥ śrutivākyaebhyo mantavyaś
co'papattibhiḥ matvā ca satatam dhyeya ete
darśanahetavaḥ*

This implies that the ultimate source of true knowledge is revelation, but as the facts of revelation cannot be accepted without any questioning in the present state of our life, we have to study them with the help of our reason. As soon as it is brought home to us that these facts are quite possible and not irrational, the function of reason as a factor of our culture is fulfilled.'

What then is the function of reason? Gopinathji sets it forth very clearly thus: 'For this function is simply to beget a notion of *possibility* (*sambhāvanābuddhi*) in regard to a certain proposition, and not of its certainty. Certitude can never be reached by the intellectual faculties (*cf. tarkā-*

pratisthānāt)'. It has, therefore, a limited role viz. removing 'the disturbing factors of doubt (*asambhāvanā*) and perversion (*viparitabhāvanā*)' in order to make the mind fit to 'receive the truth.'

He, therefore, concludes that 'the process of rational demonstration (*manana*), which is implied in all philosophy, aims at removing this element of doubt and producing a belief that the proposition as laid down in the scriptures is likely enough.' He also reminds us that 'the word for philosophy in India variously appears as *nyāya*, *ānviksiki* etc, and the *Nyayavartika*'s statement viz. *Samsayādi bhedānuvidhāyini anviksiki* implies that philosophy is meant for dispelling doubts on the principle that *nānupalabdhe na nirnite nyāyah pravartate*. A categorical enunciation of the truth is not its province—it deals with reasons of things.'

Having properly assigned the place of philosophy and also having indicated its important and indispensable role in the human pursuit for Truth, Gopinathji makes another significant contribution in the field of philosophy, which follows from the first viz. Truth, which is the single goal of all philosophies, is one and indivisible. He had such an all-embracing view that he never looked down upon any system of philosophy nor did he ever think of discarding any as useless. To him all the viewpoints were real and true according to the respective realms from which they originated. To speak again in his own words : 'It is easy to understand how different systems of philosophy, apparently conflicting with and subversive of one another, originate,

The Highest Truth, which lends itself to the light of supra-mental Intuition, is indeed one and indivisible, but it appears in diverse form when looked at from diverse points of view corresponding to the capacities and tastes of the individual *sādhakas*.' The differences in the formulation of the same single Truth are unavoidable because, he points out unerringly once again, 'so long as the individualised consciousness asserts itself—so long as we are unable to dispense with "mind" as an organ of knowledge—it is vain to hope for the attainment of *Absolute Truth*. Relative or partial truth is all that can be reached by human reason. And these relative or fragmentary truths or aspects of the Absolute Truth, are held to be the immediate ends of the different systems of philosophy.'

Does human reason then stand self-condemned by its own intrinsic nature and is there no hope for it to rise above the fragmentary or relative? Gopinathji here presents his all-comprehensive outlook wherein alone lies a great hope for all of us who are bogged in our narrow viewpoints, imprisoned in our hard shell of dogmas, creeds and systems of thought, when he reminds us that 'they (i.e. the different systems of philosophy) represent varying stages in the ascending order of the *sādhaka's* journey in quest of Self-realisation. When pieced together and studied in the light of the resultant whole, they will present a sublime picture of synthesis, fraught with deep significance and interest to humanity. An indirect and veiled picture is this ; but it is the grandest within the

reach of our mind.' In this 'piecing together and presenting a sublime picture of synthesis' lies the most significant contribution of M. M. Kaviraj and he was unparalleled in this field.

From the foregoing account one should not be misled to think that Gopinathji was an advocate of eclecticism. His piecing together was not based on the principle of getting the best out of everything but on the bedrock of a fundamental unity whose golden thread runs through all. He himself propounds the logic behind this synthesis thus : 'One thing remains to be noted. The piecing together or co-ordination of the systems is possible, simply because there is at bottom a real unity. For all the systems pledge unconditional allegiance to Revelation. It is in their mode of interpreting the scriptures, determined by the capacities of the people for whom they are meant, that the systems vary. Even the Buddhist and Jaina philosophies accept in their own ways the necessity of this.' In his unique manner of synthesising the different systems of philosophy, Gopinathji used to invariably point out that the highest truth had been communicated through each of them though sometimes in a concealed or a veiled manner and he, who has the eye to discern, will immediately discover the supreme Reality through any one of them. For instance, we are generally of a confirmed opinion that the Samkhya-Yoga system of thought advocates a sundering of matter and spirit in order to attain *Kaivalya* or liberation. But it was only Gopinathji's discerning eye which could point out

that even a divinisation of *Prakriti* or matter through an absolute purification and thereby bringing it on a par with the self or *Puruṣa* was advocated for the real *Kaivalya* in a sutra of Patanjali : ‘*Sattvapuruṣayoh śuddhisamyē Kaivalyam.*’ In this way, whichever system he taught or explained, orthodox or heterodox, contained flashes of that highest illumination and so he never despised or undermined any system.

This rare phenomenon became possible in him because of his wonderful clarity of intellect, which seized directly the unity behind all the diversities of doctrines or systems. In explaining the unity and the way to attain it, he affirms : ‘The unity, of which Revelation is an expression, is transcendental. The *Rsis*—the Sages and the Illuminattii—split up, by an apparent process of self-division, this unity into concepts of symbolical knowledge, arranged them in a certain grade of increasing purity and laid them before the intellectual faculties to play with. If rightly pursued, these will result in a wonderful clarification of the intellect, when the “mind” will cease to work and vanish. On the bare soul, Truth will then dawn as a flash of lightning, dispelling all doubts and uncertainties.’

Philosophies differ because our intellectual faculties differ, because our patterns of mind differ. We would not have mutually broken our heads if we had that integral vision which looks upon the different formulations of the one supreme Truth as expressions through a certain grade of increasing purity. In this connection, Gopinathji reveals the

secret of *adhikārabheda*, which is a fundamental thing in Indian philosophy. He points out that 'this is the secret of what is technically called *adhikārabheda*, which means that not every man is capable of receiving every form of truth. The faculty of understanding develops gradually, and in the course of this development, truths which once seemed unintelligible and vague begin to assume a depth of meaning and are accepted.' He makes a prophetic statement when he says that 'it is thus that the folly of one age is turned into wisdom in another. So with countries and individuals.' Thus the *adhikāra* changes or shifts not only from individual to individual but even in a single individual according to his progress in *sādhana*. The term *sādhana* may be taken as a taboo in philosophy and we may be accused of treading here on the grounds of mysticism. But Gopinathji understood by it the highest intellectual discipline, which is termed as *sat-tarka* in our ancient scriptures. Through it 'the impediments that stand in the way of a man's knowledge of Reality' are removed and 'the obscure truths are at once illuminated.' This is, however, gradually accomplished as a general rule and that is why 'there are degrees in the receptivity of the mind.' He alone is an ideal teacher who instructs according to the receptivity of each of his students. Gopinathji supports his contention by quoting from two absolutely opposite schools of thought, one heterodox and the other orthodox, to show that this *adhikārabheda* was equally recognised by all

and this *bheda* was only on the surface, on the level of the mind underlying which was the *abheda*, in the realm of the spirit. He says : 'This idea finds excellent expression in the following statement of the *Bodhicittavivarana* :

*desanā lokanāthānām sattvāsayaśānugāh/
bhidyante bahudhā loka upayair bahubhih punah||
gambhīrottānābhedana kvacic co'bhayalaksanā/
bhinnā' pi desanā' bhinna sunyatādvayalaksanā||*

He continues : 'This is from a work on Mahayānic philosophy. The same appears also in an even more precise form, in the words of Madhusudana Sarasvati, who is rightly reckoned as one of the greatest philosophers of India in the last millennium. Referring to the apparently conflicting views of the different Acharyas, he observes :

*Nahi te munayo bhrāntāh sarvajñatvāt tesām.
Kintu bahirvisayapraśānām āpātatah parama-
puruṣārthe praveśo na bhavātīti nastikyanivāranāya
taih prakāranābhedaḥ pradarśitāh.*

Thus Gopinathji's discerning eye discovered 'that there is a real order in the system of Indian philosophy.' He proves convincingly that 'the synthetic consciousness to which such an order reveals itself has ever been recognised in India.' He refers to the *Samksepasāriraka*, *Ātmātatatva-viveka*, *Prasthānābheda*, *Pratyabhijñāhrdaya* and such other ancient texts of philosophy to support his contention and concludes that 'this is merely to point out that there is a real spirit of unity, of aim

as much as of methods, among the diversities of thought and activity according to Indian philosophers.'

We have gone at length to show how Gopinathji realised and demonstrated the fundamental unity behind all Indian philosophies. His own original philosophy was, therefore, *Pūrṇa Advayavāda*, if it can be so termed and the means to realise it he called *Akhaṇḍa Mahāyoga*. Reality was to him one and indivisible. There was no dichotomy of spirit and matter. Matter is nothing but congealed or concealed spirit. There is no doubt an element of *māyā*, which conceals or veils spirit but it is self-imposed and can therefore be removed at will. This *māyā* is deliberately or wilfully imposed to make the *līlā* possible and the world is therefore, not an illusion or hallucination, nor of the same stuff that dreams are made of. The relative world is the play-ground of the Absolute. We suffer because we are being crushed under the wheels of Time. Time must have a stop and the Eternal be manifested here and now. He was as much a realist as an idealist. He never dismissed the reality of the material world but he dedicated himself in discovering the supreme science, which he called *Sūryavijñāna*, which would reveal in its entirety the different steps through which spirit becomes matter, the ideal becomes actual. He was, therefore, deeply interested in the process of creation, which revealed to him how spirit was immanent in matter. Beyond lies the transcendent form, which also attracted him but he was not attached to either of them. To him,

Reality was at once immanent and transcendent as well as beyond both. This he cryptically used to call 'svayam', that is, beyond all formulations. He also felt that without the realisation of Reality *as it is in itself* the redemption of the world will ever remain a far-off dream. There may be individual salvations here and there but to make all free was his sole and single dream. In the fulfilment of that dream lies the consummation of his philosophy. Let us dedicate ourselves to that ideal and by this alone can we truly offer our homage to this unique thinker and philosopher.

What is renunciation ?

“Renunciation is always in the mind, not in going to forests or solitary places or giving up one's duties. The main thing is to see that the mind turns, not outward, but inward. It does not really rest with man whether he is to go to this place or that or whether to give up his domestic duties or not. All happens according to one's destiny. The experiences that the body is to go through are determined when it first comes into existence. It does not rest with you to accept or reject them. The only freedom you have is to turn your mind inward and to renounce activities there.”

—Ramana Maharshi

MA IN SATSANGA*

Anil C. Ganguli

Introduction

Sat means “being” ; “existence” ; “essence” ; “truth”. *Sat* also means “good” and “*sanga*” means “fellowship” or “association”. In ordinary parlance, *satsanga* means being in good or holy company. Ma says that *satsanga* is an association which prepares one for realization of *sat*, the One Being which has no beginning, no end, no change, the Being that remains the same at all times, in all places and under all circumstances. In an applied sense, the word *satsanga* signifies a religious congregation, an assembly providing a forum for discourses on religious and spiritual subjects and *kirtan* (chanting or singing hymns and names of God).

Ma, a fountain of inspiration

Satsanga, in the applied sense mentioned above, is an essential part of life in Sri Sri Anandamayi Ashram. It includes an elaborate programme of recitation of select portions from the *Srimad Bhagavad Gitā*, the Chandi, the *Srimad Bhāgavata* and the *Upanishads*, besides *kirtan* and talks on spiritual

*Based on the writer's informal talks given at the Anandamayi Ashram at Kankhal in 1978 in answer to specific questions asked by some foreigners regarding *satsanga* in general, with special reference to the *satsanga* observed in the ashram.

and religious subjects. If Ma happens to be present, She sometimes sings and answers questions from the audience.

Ma in satsanga is an unfailing source of inspiration to those who seek it. She awakens aspiration for God-realization which She equates with Self-realization, that is to say, knowing "Who am I?" She showers love, peace and joy on all. She wants nothing in return from anybody. If She asks (or rather, "begs" as She puts it) for anything at all, it is that we should think of God and chant His Name. Her teaching is :—

"Bear in mind that God's Name is He Himself in one form ; let It be your inseparable companion. Try your utmost never to remain without Him. The more intense and continuous your efforts to dwell in His Presence, the greater the likelihood of your growing joyful and serene. When your mind becomes vacant, endeavour to fill it with the awareness of God and His contemplation."

The benign effect of chanting God's Name has been described by Ma as follows :—

"As you chant the divine Name or *mantra*, your mind is gradually purified ; love and reverence for the Supreme Being awaken and your thoughts become subtle and refined. Then glimpses of higher places of existence begin to dawn upon you and work for your uplift."*

Let us have some glimpses of Ma in *satsanga*. To start with, Ma in the role of a singer, surroun-

*"Mother as revealed to me" by Bhaiji (1972 Ed.), p. 19.

ded by a group of talented musicians, including some of all-India repute. Occasionally she leads the *kirtan* and others follow Her in chorus. Ma has never had any technical training in music. Renowned musicians, however, unequivocally confirm that her melodious voice is matchless and perfect is its rhythmic movement. Lay listeners feel that her singing not only pleases the ears but also infuses something mysteriously thrilling into one's inner self. Ma sings spontaneously. The verve and vigour and the cadence of Her music are ecstatic. The modulations of Her voice vibrate in the heart of the listener and purify his mind. She gives to almost each word of Her songs a different inflection and each inflection has a special appeal. The emphasis repeatedly put by Ma on a particular word or syllable acts as a key to the understanding of its inner meaning. With Her eyes half closed and Her tiny palms gracefully folded, She keeps on singing and then a wave of *ānanda* sweeps over the ashram and floods the sky above. It lingers even after the sound of the music has faded away. "Her singing", remarked Arnaud Desjardins of Paris, "has such force, such vigour that we are shaken in our entire being. This surpasses by far everything of that order that I have had the chance to experience. Something immense that very nearly causes giddiness makes its presence felt among us. We want even more of it. But we feel that we should be unable to bear it."*

*"Mother as seen by Her devotees" (1967 Ed.), p. 64.

If one's heart is receptive, language is no bar to the appreciation of Ma's singing. Its echo reverberates with a message that can be felt but cannot be expressed.

Ananda is showered by Ma not only through songs but also through silence which can, in a receptive mind, be even more effective and soul-stirring. Silence is an important item of *satsanga* in the ashram. During specified periods, every day every participant is supposed to sit still in one posture, with the mind concentrated on the goal. This discipline is an extremely difficult exercise. The presence of Ma, however, makes it easier for those who make an honest effort. Subtle vibrations emanating from Ma purify the atmosphere and create in a participant's mind a sense of peace and beatitude if he is earnest. It is not the peace of mere quiescence but a peace pulsating with life and generating self-confidence, determination and buoyant optimism.

By far the most interesting feature of *satsanga* is what is known as *matri satsanga* (*satsanga* at the feet of the Mother). It provides the much coveted opportunity of informal conversation with Ma when She is usually in a communicative mood. *Matri satsanga* is free from the restraint generally inspired by Ma's imposing presence as also from the rigid conventions and rituals that mark ashram life as a rule. Ma is a 'fantastic' conversationalist. If She is in a mood to be serious, She keeps the audience spell-bound and there prevails complete silence. If, however, She chooses to be in a lighter vein,

She can raise an uproar of laughter from the entire congregation in response to her keen wit and exquisite humour. During *matri satsanga* Ma is usually very patient and indulgent and more motherly than any human mother can possibly be. She then gives Her 'children' almost unrestrained liberty and sympathetically attends to questions ranging from the sublime to the ridiculous.

Thus, followers of different faiths and sects seek Ma's guidance in *sādhana* from a practical point of view ; learned scholars want clarification of intricate points of philosophy and metaphysics, with an academic approach ; sometimes pretenders venture to propound empty theories with an air of importance, presumably out of sheer bravado. Again, common men of the world feel relief in placing their personal and domestic problems before Ma, whereas fastidious cynics recklessly condemn God and expect Ma to answer for His 'failings'. Thus, the questions cover a large canvas and are of varying interest and value. In the homely atmosphere of *matri satsanga*, Ma generally accepts for solution all bonafide questions, relevant or otherwise, however silly or supercilious, impertinent or irritating.

Ma's answers are as varied as the questions. They are enlivening, scintillating and inspiring. The wonder of wonders is that every question, however difficult, is disposed of without a moment's reflection. Every questioner gets the answer he 'deserves'. Every answer is on the mental level of the particular enquirer, has reference to his peculiar

point of view and corresponds to his own power of understanding. Evidently, most of the questioners receive answers to their satisfaction, and long for *darśana* again and again. No person with a genuine problem has ever returned disappointed. Even if somebody is hesitant or too shy to speak and conscious of being observed by others, his query is often solved in a mysterious manner. Thus, to his surprise, Ma of Her own accord sometimes broaches the particular subject and incidentally clarifies the point involved. Again, one often finds that somebody else has asked the very question over which one had been worrying. Thereupon, Ma gives a reply which, incidentally, solves the particular problem. Then follows Ma's penetrating gaze at the person whose question was answered before he opened his mouth, accompanied by Her significant smile. Is this just coincidence? May be. But then such coincidences are quite frequent.

In *matri-satsanga* questions relating to worldly affairs are not generally encouraged and those on politics and personalities are nipped in the bud whereas queries on spiritual subjects are always warmly received and sometimes discussed at length. Occasionally Ma requests saints who are present to discuss controversial points in the light of the scriptures. They try their best. But the 'best' of the *Vedantists* following the path of knowledge often happens to be in conflict with the 'best' of the orthodox *Vaiśnava*, a votary of the path of devotion. Not unoften barren debate goes on for some

time and then the experts jointly implore Ma to say the last word on the subject and thus to clinch further argument. Ma smilingly sums up the principle in a few short, simple sentences. Invariably She throws a flood of light which satisfies each of the contending parties and illuminates the whole audience. And then the tension is relieved and everybody is all smiles.

Swādhyāya (study of scriptures)

One of the principal objects of *satsanga* is to spread the knowledge of sacred books. Ma strongly recommends *swādhyāya* (study of scriptures) and inspires opportunities for discourses thereon. At the same time She maintains that *swādhyāya* is not enough by itself. In fact, She sounds a note of warning against depending exclusively on mere book-learning. "There are", She observes, "more things to be seen on the road than what is listed in the Railway Time Table which only gives limited items of information ; but when travelling by train, one notices so many things to be seen and known along the way. Can the railway guide mention every detail ? In a similar manner, can you expect all things to be written down in religious texts ? Those who devoutly follow the path pointed out in the canonical books eventually realise that Truth lies beyond what is written there. There are so many things to explore ! What precious little can be written in the sacred texts ? Men of realisation experience much more than that. Still, you are to be guided at the beginning by what is

recommended in the sacred books, just as you have to follow the time-table on a railway journey. But what is discussed in sacred books suggests infinite possibilities underlying. The study and assimilation of sacred texts are useful so long as you have not found your path of life. Once you have started on the right path and commenced your destined work, no more reading of books is called for. Looking into the Railway Time-Table and after proper enquiry, when you are satisfied that this is the train for Dehradun, and you purchase your ticket and take your seat, there is no need for further information—the train will take you to Dehradun.”*

Ma’s method of teaching by illustrations and parables is very effective. The homely illustration of the Railway Time Table mentioned above speaks more eloquently than volumes of sermons on abstract ideas. The upshot of Ma’s teaching is that personal experience is more important in the spiritual sphere than the study of scriptures. Real religion, She says, does not consist merely in intellectual conformity nor in ceremonial piety. According to Her, religion is really a spiritual adventure of a highly practical nature and it is for the brave traveller to undertake the journey in right earnest along some path out of many prescribed in the scriptures, each leading to the goal. Light on one’s spiritual path will, She asserts, come in the fulness of time, if one has faith and determina-

* *Sri Sri Anandamayi* by Gurupriya Devi, Vol. IV, p. 6.

tion, optimism and indomitable perseverance—a going on till success is achieved.

Spirituality

A few introductory words may prove useful to a participant in *satsanga* not familiar with Hindu thought. Spirituality is of a man's life, not a thing apart—Spirit covers his whole existence. His home, his office, the place where he carries on business or profession or works for gain can at best be the “workshop” for a man's mind ; not the home for his Spirit. The home—rather the temple—where man's Spirit is installed is in his heart. Now, what is that Spirit ? Certainly not man's body bearing a specific name and identified with reference to his parents, his age, occupation, residence, etc. His Spirit is no other than the One Supreme Spirit—The Ultimate Truth—called by various names such as *Brahman*, *Isvara* etc. In the *Gita* Lord Krishna told Arjuna, “*Isvara* abides in the hearts of all beings”.*

Brahman, Being Infinite cannot be defined by words. It has no beginning, no end, no change, no form. *Brahman* cannot be perceived by the senses ; neither can the mind comprehend it. *Brahman* has no past, no future, no dimensions. These conceptions are all in the context of time and space. *Brahman* is beyond both. Again, It is static as well as dynamic, yet above both. Though unseen and impersonal, *Brahman* is all-pervasive. Its presence is thus announced : “It is *Brahman*

* *Gita* XVIII/61.

that is below and above, that is to the west and to the east, to the south and to the north. Brahman, indeed, is this whole universe”,* AND “All this is based upon Spirit ; Spirit is the foundation of the Universe, Spirit is *Brahman*”.**

Absolute *Brahman* is too deep, too subtle and abstruse for the common man. To the seers of ancient India *Brahman* was also revealed as Qualified or conditioned *Brahman*, known as *Īśa* or *Īśwara* who is the personified form of the Absolute *Brahman*. “By Him is enveloped everything that exists in this world constantly in motion.”*** The pronoun for *Brahman* is “It”, that for *Īśwara* is “He”.

Īśwara is manifested in different forms such as the God of Creation, the God of Preservation and the God of Destruction ; also as *Śakti*, the Divine Mother.

S'akti

Christians believe in God the Father. To Indians God the Mother, called *Śakti*, has been revealed as Kali, Durga, Saraswati, Lakshmi and other manifestations. Sri Aurobindo has laid down the guide lines for *sādhana* of the Divine Mother in the following words :—

“To walk through life armoured against all fear, peril and disaster, only two things are needed, two

* *Chhandogya Upanishad* VII/25/2 ;

Mundaka Upanishad II/ii/11.

** *Aitarya Upanishad* iii/3.

*** *Īsopanishad* 1

that always go together, the Grace of the Divine Mother, and, on your side, an inner state made up of faith, sincerity and surrender. Let your sincerity and surrender be genuine and entire—when you give yourself, give completely, without demand, without condition, without reservation, so that all in you shall belong to the Divine Mother and nothing be left to the ego or given to any other power. The more complete your faith, sincerity and surrender, the more will grace and protection be with you, and when the grace and protection of the Divine Mother are with you, what is there that can touch you and whom need you fear? A little of it even will carry you through all difficulties, obstacles and dangers ; surrounded by its full presence, you can go securely on your way because it is Hers ; careless of all menace, unaffected by any hostility, however powerful, whether from this world or from worlds invisible. Its touch can turn difficulties into opportunities, failure into success and weakness into unfaltering strength. For the grace of the Divine Mother is the sanction of the Supreme and now or tomorrow, its effect is sure, a thing decreed, inevitable and irresistible”.

A free translation of Anandamayi Ma’s saying on the relation between the mother and the child is given below :—

“While the child is in its mother’s womb, its inner power is united with that of its mother, and thus there is knowledge of Reality. By Yoga one must again reach the state of the child in its mother’s womb. The Yogi must become the child-

yogi in the womb of the Divine Mother. Then the breath will not be broken up anymore. All along there will be one goal, one aspiration, one inner experience, one realization.

“While in its mother’s womb, the individual has no connection with the outer world. There is thus no impediment and the blood circulation is not conditioned by the functioning of the breath but evenly flows straight in and out of the mother’s blood stream. By the sight of outer things and by breathing the outer air, man’s concentration is destroyed and the remembrance of his true nature vanishes. It is necessary for the aspirant to hide himself from the obstacles of the outer world by entering the Divine Mother’s womb in the cave of his own heart. Thereby lost remembrance will be restored. Then the Mother will take on herself all his burdens.”*

As Absolute *Brahman*, the Supreme is the transcendental reality. It transcends all limitations and is beyond human knowledge. As conditioned *Brahman*, the Supreme is the cosmic reality which supports and governs the whole universe. The Supreme has a third aspect—the individual reality, the essence of man.

The Supreme, as the transcendental Reality (called *Brahman* or *Paramātmā*), is Self; so also the Supreme as the cosmic reality (called *Iśwara*) and the Supreme as the individual reality (called *Jīvātmā* or *Ātman* or *Ātmā*). Indeed, the Self—the Supreme Truth—is one and the same. *Aum* is the

**Ananda Varta*, Vol. XVII/4/185.

common sound-symbol for Brahman—absolute as well as conditioned—and for Atman, the individual reality. *Aum* consists of three sounds, rolled into one. According to the *Upanishad*, everyone is justified in saying: “Yes, I am Brahman!” But the common man is not aware of this eternal truth. He fails to say “Yes; I am *Brahman*”, on the contrary, he maintains: “No, I am not *Brahman*!” Why? His ego prompts him to feel: “My self is confined to my body, identified by my name, as distinguished from others.” At the root of such ego there is a veil of *māyā*—ignorance—which stands in the way of light from the Spirit. One who can overcome the ego, becomes a medium for the light of the Spirit.

Scriptures describe the distinction between *Paramātmā* on the one hand and *Ātman* or *Jivātmā* on the other. More often than not books make confusion worse confounded. Ma says: “All one.” Her description is simple and brief to the point and free from any technicality. “The *Ātmā*”, She says, “is indeed the *Paramātmā*. Just as there is pure water and polluted water. The water is the same in both of them. The essential quality of water is equal in both. To drink pure water gives comfort and promotes health. When contaminated water is filtered, boiled and strained, it will be transformed into pure water. Stragnating water breeds germs. The *Jivātmā* may be compared to impure water. By the contemplation of God he is purified and finally revealed as the

Paramātmā Himself. This is why God is in fact the Supreme *Ātmā*”.*

Ma's explanation with the aid of a homely illustration may or may not be accepted by *pandits* bent on establishing a particular theory from a technical point of view. To participants in *satsanga* in general, however, Ma's saying does shed light on the abstruse subject of *Paramātmā* and *Jīvātmā*.

Avatāra

God is unknowable. There are divergent theories as to whether He is formless or with form, nameless or with name, attributeless or with attributes. But authoritative scriptures such as the *Gītā* and *Bhāgavata* unequivocally declare that from time to time He comes down on the earth and appears to live, move and have His being like ordinary mortals; but most of His contemporaries fail to recognize Him as God. He is then known as *Avatāra*, a word frequently repeated in *satsanga*. *Avatāra* literally means “descending”; also “one who has descended”. In the context of religion the word signifies “coming down of God to the earth”; also ‘Descent of God in Man’ an “Incararnation of God”. When does an *Avatāra* come? Whenever there is decline of *dharma*† (righteousness) and *adharma* (unrighteousness) exults in pride, then the Supreme creates Itself as an *Avatāra*. Why does an *Avatāra* come? For the protection of the good and destruction of the evil-doer and for estab-

* *Ananda Varta*, XVII/1/4.

† See Appendix ‘A’

lishment of *dharma* (righteousness).* The *Avatāra* is both a God and a man—a God-man. Rama and Krishna are examples. Such a God-man is different from a godly man. The former descends as a manifestation of *līlā* (divine play) from the Divine to the human plane; the latter ascends, by his personal efforts, from the human to the superhuman level. A godly man is described variously as self-realized, liberated and *sthita prajñā* (a man of steady wisdom). A human being—even a godly man—is bound by the relentless and inexorable law of *karma phala* (fruits of action);† but not the *Avatāra*.

Ma on Satsanga

Let me conclude “Ma in *Satsanga*” with a saying of Ma on *satsanga* with reference to God’s Name :—

“The significance of the Name of God is that its constant repetition will make it easy for the aspirant to advance towards God. It is He who is present in the form of the Name and the *mantra*. Therefore, to be with any of them is also *satsanga*: you have found Him in the guise of the Name. If *japa* is practised with faith, the benefit will be much greater, but even when adhered to without faith it will yield some result. Ever keep the Name in your mind, ever foster it in the depth of your heart. Just as a seed has to be buried in the earth, so the Name has to be firmly implanted in the soil

**Gita* IV/7-8.

†See Appendix ‘A’

of the heart and repeated constantly. As a result, a tree will develop out of the seed. The tree signifies Self-realization. God's Names and forms are of infinite number and variety; by the sustained repetition of His Name His innumerable shapes will be revealed. Having been implanted in the heart the Name will quite naturally reveal its essence. Thus one should proceed by constant practice."*

Faith

"Genuine faith emerges from within by fixing one's mind on the Supreme Being. One's consciousness thereby becomes centered in truth and a deep serenity enters the heart and infuses one with great strength and indescribable peace which is unaffected by the whims of fortune. All spiritual endeavour is based on faith; thus faith is the first necessity. One's search for the Unknown, the Unfathomable has to start with faith and reverence. There is no other means by which to embark on the quest after Ultimate Truth."

—Sri Anandamayi Ma

*Ananda Varta VII/4/168.

IN ASSOCIATION WITH SRI SRI MA ANANDAMAYI

Sri A. K. Datta Gupta

(Translated from Bengali)

(Continued from A. V., Jan. '81)

Saturday, 22.10.1938

Sri Sri Ma's Departure from Calcutta

This morning Ma was taken to Belur. I heard Ma did not remain there for long and did not converse with anybody. Bhupati Babu and I waited for Her at Birla Mandir. Yesterday Ma had told us that today She would talk to us about the Dacca Ashram. Further I had learnt that last night Ma had left Her usual bedroom and spent the night where the kirtana had been performed. On beholding Ma lying down there, a large number of devotees had also spent the night in the same place. Although it was large enough, it was not at all suitable for use as a bedroom. As an apology a few thin carpets were spread over the bare floor. Even these were covered with dust from the feet of a thousand men and women. Around those carpets straw had been spread. On seeing the devotees lying on the carpets, Ma exclaimed : "Oho ! They are used to sleeping in such comfort at home and here they are lying like this on the floor !" On Ma's instructions some curtains were removed from the stage and spread

over the carpets for the devotees to lie on. Ma then warned them, saying : “Wherever this body resides, snakes are known to frequent the place. So you should be careful that while asleep your feet may not touch the straw.” Thereafter Ma went all round the place of the kirtan and then lay down in Her place on the dais.

At 10 o'clock next morning Ma came to Birla Mandir. Immediately on Her arrival, Bhupati Babu, Sachi Babu and myself sat down near Her and the doors were closed. Bhupati Babu then spoke to Ma about Dacca Ashram. Ma listened in silence to all he had to say and gave us some advice. When we requested Ma to draw up some rules and regulations for the Ashram, Ma said in grave tones : “You must not expect any orders from me !” She said this in such a manner that none of us dared question Her any further. It appeared that She had spoken thus for our own good, because none of us had the capacity to obey Her instructions to the letter. Had we obtained any orders from Ma by insisting, and later found ourselves unable to carry them out, it would have been we who would have had to bear the consequences. That is why Ma was not willing to give any direct instructions to us.

After talking about Ashram affairs, the question of proceeding to Dacca arose. After some further conversation, Ma said, “All right, try to leave for Dacca to-night”. Hearing this we stopped talking and came out of Her room. We went to Naresh Chandra Chakravarti's house and requested him

to phone to Dacca the news of Ma starting for Dacca today. He at once passed on the message by phone to his brother Dr. Paresh Chandra.

In the afternoon the sky became overcast and by the evening it started raining heavily. Ma was in Birla Mandir until the evening. Today was Divali. I smelt danger in the face of this adversity caused by the weather. But once Ma had spoken the word She would not deviate. Her departure would not be put off merely by inclement weather. Luckily the skies cleared up by 8 p.m.

I was full of joy on beholding Ma as soon as I entered the platform. A large crowd of devotees had come to the station to see Ma off. Those who were accompanying Ma were happy but those who had to remain behind wore a dejected appearance. Our smiling Mother was looking at all this and laughing. There was no change in Her countenance which radiated joy.

As it was *amāvasya* (new moon night) there were not too many passengers. We spent the night comfortably and reached Goalundoo early next morning. Sri Ma lay down on boarding the steamer. Later She got up and started talking to people. Those who wanted to seek Her advice in private went one by one into Her room and discussed their problems with Her. This continued until we reached Narayangunge.

Sri Sri Ma's Arrival in Dacca

A large number of people had come to Narayangunge from Dacca to greet Ma. Some proposed

to take Ma to Dacca by car. But finally it was decided to continue by train. From Dacca station I went home with my family.

After breakfast I proceeded to the Ashram. On arrival I found Khukuni Didi taking Ma from the kirtan room to the bathroom. As soon as she saw me, Didi said : "Dr. Pant has been sent to your house. Bhupati Babu has accompanied him." On hearing this, I did not waste a single moment but returned home to make arrangements for Dr. Pant's bath and meals. In the evening we again went to the Ashram. Ma was in the kirtan room and the ladies were sitting all round Her, so there was no chance of any conversation. In order to allow sufficient time for rest Ma was soon taken to the Annapurna Mandir.

Sunday, 23.10.1938

Today is the festival of *Annakut*. Although arrangements had been made for Dr. Pant to stay in my house, Ma asked him to spend the night in the Ashram. So Dr. Pant expressed his desire to stay in the Ashram for three nights. This morning I heard from him that he would also have his meals in the Ashram. Since this was Ma's wish I had nothing further to say. After arranging for Dr. Pant's bath and while his breakfast was getting ready, news was received that Sri Ma had arrived at my house. I was exceedingly delighted and surprised. Running to the roadside, I beheld Ma sitting in the car. With Her were Didi, Prafulla Ghosh's wife, Naresh Chakravarti and Sisir Guha,

When I did *Pranāma* to Ma, She enquired about Dr. Pant. I said : "He is having his bath." Ma : "Ask him to hurry up and have his breakfast !" I : "If he learns you have arrived to fetch him, he may want to go with you without breakfasting. So it seems better not to inform him of your arrival here." Ma agreed.

I left Ma in the car and went to look for Dr. Pant. He was still busy with his bath. I started to wonder what I could offer to Ma. On enquiry my wife informed me that there was not a single fruit in the house. I felt aggrieved not to be able to offer anything to Ma. About a year and a half ago Sri Ma had similarly appeared in my house without notice. That day I was not at home and on that occasion as well nothing could be offered to Her. Suddenly I remembered that I may have one or two myrobalan¹ fruits in the house. I resolved to place at least a *harītakī* fruit into Ma's hands. I called my second daughter, asked her to fetch a *harītakī* fruit and presented myself with it before Ma. She was then talking to Satya Babu's wife. When She had finished, I said : "Ma, you always seem to come to my house only to embarrass me. I have nothing to offer you except this *harītakī* fruit." Saying this, I placed the fruit at Her feet and did *pranāma*. Ma (smiling) : *Harītakī* is indeed beneficial. By eating it my digestive trouble will be cured. You have complained that I come to your house only to put you into difficulties, but is it a mere nothing that I come to you

(1) Myrobalan (*harītakī*) A stringent, plumlike fruit.

of my own accord when I find you cannot come to me ?

On listening to this smiling rejoinder of Sri Ma, my heart melted with joy and gratitude. There was no such goodness in me by which I could deserve this unexpected grace from Ma. I wondered how much unsolicited grace I had already received from Her !

Ma was still waiting at my doorstep in order to take Dr. Pant to Siddheshwari Ashram, so instead of lingering near Ma, I hastened to get Dr. Pant ready for his departure. By this time his bath had been completed and, having received news of Ma's arrival, he was hurriedly gulping down his tea, when Brahmachari Jatubhai entered and told us that Ma had instructed Dr. Pant to eat his full before departure because the midday meal was sure to be delayed. Dr. Pant replied that he would eat sufficiently, but actually it was obvious that he was unable to partake of anything substantial, as in Ma's proximity somehow all pangs of hunger and thirst seem to recede far away.

At Siddheshwari Ashram

Ma now proceeded towards Siddheshwari with Dr. Pant. My relative Jatin Mazumdar and I followed in a horse-cab. On arriving at Siddheshwari Kali Mandir we learnt that Ma had gone to the house of the temple Mahanta.

Seven years ago I had also accompanied Ma to the Mahanta's house. Several years earlier, a Mahātmā called Sumeru Ban had performed his

ascetic practices here and attained to *siddhi* (perfection). The present Mahanta also belonged to the Ban Sect. In his house there was a picture of Sumeru Ban Maharaj, which I had seen when I had been there along with Ma. In the courtyard there was a well and a creeper grew up a mango tree. A long standing belief prevailed that as long as the chain did not get immersed in the well water and as long as the creeper remained alive, Sumeru Maharaj would continue to abide unseen in Siddheshwari. I had heard this story on my previous visit.

The Sage of Siddheshwari—Sumeru Ban Maharaj

Now I presumed that Ma must have taken Dr. Pant there to hear and see all these things. We almost ran to the Mahanta's house. On arriving we found Ma standing in the courtyard and Khukuni explaining everything to Dr. Pant. To show him the creeper She took Dr. Pant inside. Ma moved up to the entrance, glanced within and came away again. I also followed Ma. She sat down in the outer courtyard. Some people came forward and offered *Pranāma*. Conversation now commenced regarding Sumeru Maharaj. Ma said : "There is a prophecy prevalent here that so long as the creeper along the mango tree is alive and the iron chain is not completely covered by water, Babaji (Sumeru Maharaj) will remain here. Once upon a time all the surrounding places were areas for *sādhanā*.

Naresh Babu : This must have been long ago.

Mataji : Yes, quite so. However, even though all this belongs to the past, the atmosphere of it can still be felt. Grass grows even on top of burnt soil to the extent of hiding it, although the soil remains burnt below it ; this is somewhat similar.

Myself : Is this atmosphere you talk of due to the transmission from a particular individual or to the ascetic practices carried out here ?

Mataji : This also is due to some *saṁskāra*. The fact that Babaji has stated he will remain here as long as the creeper is alive, shows that Babaji had a desire to be here. Otherwise he could have declared that he is everywhere. Since he has referred to this particular place, it must be understood that he has a predisposition in favour of this very spot.

Naresh Babu : How can this be ? He went down into the well and never came up again. And now he says he is still here ! How can he still be alive ?

Mataji : The story goes that the Babaji travelled to Kashi through the well. When he says he is here, he means he is here in his subtle body. When one has gone beyond birth and death, one can still exist in this fashion.

Myself : Ma, having transcended birth and death, does one still exist in an ethereal body ?

Mataji : The ethereal body also perishes. All the same supermen (*mahāpurusha*) quite often assume special forms. This is due to their inherent disposition. Yet, some even after assuming a particular form can remain immersed in Supreme Being.

Again, the simultaneous existence in a formlessness is also possible.

At this juncture, Khukuni Didi, Dr. Pant and others arrived and all went to board the car. We learnt that Ma would go to Shahbagh from Siddheshwari. We returned to the Ashram to await Ma.

Annakut at Dakur

On returning from Shahbagh Ma sat in the kirtan room. By noon people started gathering for the Annakut ceremony. Many worshipped Ma's feet with flowers. At the same time there was continuous conversation with Ma. In due course *Annakut* at Dakur was discussed. Dakur is a place in Gujrat where there is a temple dedicated to Ranchorji. The image is that of Viṣṇu. During *Annakut*, *bhoga* consisting of 125 maunds of cooked rice is offered in front of the deity. During the last Durgā Pūjā, when Ma had travelled along the river Narmada, She had seen the *Annakut* celebrations at Dakur.

Ma said : "This *Annakut* is a strange affair. 125 maunds of cooked rice are piled into a large hillock. Everybody stands in front with girded loins, ready for action. When it is time to partake of the *bhoga*, they all run up the hillock, fill their clothes with rice and descend, swinging from side to side with their load." Ma actually demonstrated exactly how they walked down with their clothes full of rice. We all laughed hilariously.

Ma added : “In order to approach the image of Ranchorji inside the temple, one has to traverse six courtyards. As soon as a particular courtyard is filled with people the doors are locked and nobody is allowed to go outside until *ārati*, etc is completed. When we approached the image, we of course did not know anything about this practice. But as soon as we arrived, I felt that the doors would be locked. I at once decided to go back. On seeing me turn round, everybody thought that the Pūjā ceremonies had not yet been completed, but on beholding the expression on my face, they somehow allowed us free exit.

Naresh Babu : On reaching Ranchorji’s image, I noticed a change in Mataji’s mood. She was, as it were, trembling from time to time. I then decided that this deity was no common one if it could change Ma’s mood to that extent.

On hearing Naresh Babu’s words, I looked questioningly at Ma who said with a laugh : “There was no change in my *bhāva* ; I returned in the same mood in which I had gone there.”

It was now past midday and so Ma was taken to Her room for rest and we returned home. After a light meal I went back to the Ashram. The ladies were singing in the kirtan-room. During the time of offering *bhoga* Ma went inside the Annapurna temple and then sat with the kirtan party. After a while Ma started singing with Her sweet, bewitching voice : “*Kṛṣṇa Kanheya, venu bajaiya, gaua chareya, Haré ré, ré ré.....*”

On listening to this song, the scenes of Sri Kṛṣṇa’s childhood *līlā* seemed to appear vividly

before my mind's eye. There is a history to the song Ma was singing. Khukuni Didi told me that Ma once said to her in confidence : "One day I saw a large forest. A river was winding its way nearby and a number of people—I cannot tell how many—but there were very many—kept on singing this song : "*Kṛṣṇa Kanhaya Venu bajaiya*" and following this body who was leading them and sometimes playing hide and seek with them behind the trees." After saying this Ma had sung the song to Didi in the very tune which those people had used. Having heard this story from Didi I had a keen desire to hear this song from Ma Herself. Today, after such a long time, my wish had suddenly been fulfilled. The tune of the song was as fascinating as the meaning of the words.

After singing for a while, Mataji went to lie down in Her room. Now groups of people sat down to partake of *prasādā*. This continued nearly up to the evening, just before which Ma was taken to the temple veranda. Although a bamboo barricade had been set up in front of the veranda to keep crowds away from the vicinity of Ma, this was not considered sufficiently strong ; so Ma was made to sit inside the temple, near the entrance, after closing the eastern window. Nobody was able to touch Ma but performed their *pranāma* by touching the walls of the temple with their foreheads before taking their departure.

Photographing Sri Ma with my family

Tuesday, 25.10.38

This morning I was to take photos of Ma. On the day when Ma had been dressed up as Sri Kṛṣṇa by Kumaris in Calcutta for being photographed, my second daughter Kanti had been absent due to illness and had cried desperately with disappointment. When Ma got to know this from my wife on the steamer from Goalundoo, She had told her, "you can try to take a photo of myself in Dacca." There is always such a crowd surrounding Ma in the Ashram that it is no easy matter to take a photo of Her. I felt so helpless that I approached Didi for assistance. So according to Didi's instructions, after informing Coronation Studio, I had arrived there with my family this morning and was waiting for Ma. Didi had told me she would take Ma there at the first opportunity.

At about 10 a.m. Ma arrived at the studio with Babydidi and a number of others. We made Ma sit on a chair and sat down surrounding Her on three sides. When the photographer made preparations to take the picture, Ma smiled and said : "The *yogakriya* is being performed." I could not understand the meaning of Ma's words, but I had no courage to ask Her. When the picture had been taken, Ma said : "As Kanti had shed tears for this photo, you should take another one of me with her only." I told the photographer but he had no more plates ready and sent for more. In the meantime Ma started to speak on various topics.

(To be continued)

MEETING A YOGI

S. C. Jaswal

Ours is a country doubly blessed indeed. This land has given birth to great Yogis, Saints and Sages. I was fortunate to have had the *darsanas* of one such Yogi with whom I had the privilege of a short association.

It was in 1955 that Mataji's birthday was celebrated at Solan. One day Mataji said that every afternoon one of the assembled devotees should relate a story about the *līlā* of the Lord or about a Saint.

I was feeling nervous. What if I were asked to relate a story? I knew none. To prepare myself for such a contingency, I looked over some religious books in the library of Jogi Bhai (Raja Sahib of Solan), but I could find nothing. Every afternoon I was tense and able to relax only when Mataji asked someone else to speak.

But one day my turn did arrive. Mataji looked at me and said, "You tell a story to-day". I got up. There was no story I could tell. I was nervous, beads of perspiration formed on my forehead, I looked at my toes and the bhaktas looked expectantly at me. Then an incident flashed into my mind. I gazed at Mataji. She was giving that benign smile which only She can give and with folded hands I asked "Ma! shall I tell the story of the Mahātmā I met?" "Yes", replied Ma, "do

tell that story". I was relieved, for, I knew that story well. I began thus :

"Mataji has enjoined on us to seek the company of Saints, Sages and seekers after Truth. In the early summer of the year 1954, an acquaintance told me that there was a Mahātmā performing severe penance, residing in a cave about 8 Km from my residence. Mindful of Mataji's words, I decided to go and meet the Mahātmā three or four days hence.

On the appointed day, I along with three or four other people started out in search of the Mahātmā. At a certain place I stopped the jeep in which we were travelling and enquired from a farmer, whose house was on the road-side, the whereabouts of the Mahātmā. The farmer turned out to be one of his devotees. He said the Mahātmā lived in a cave some distance away. When we asked him to take us there, he refused saying that a few days ago he had been expressly instructed by the Mahātmā that any one coming to meet him on this particular day was not to be brought before him. This, although it impressed us, also made us very curious. How did the Mahātmā know we were coming to meet him to-day ? If it was due to spiritual power, he must then be great indeed.

Our pleadings did not affect the farmer. He remained unmoved. Then someone in my party told him who I was. This put the poor man in a quandary. Now he could not refuse to show us the place but on the other hand he could not disobey

the Mahātmā. After some hesitation he agreed to take us up to some distance from the cave but no further. He would then go alone and enquire and if the Mahātmā agreed to see us, only then would he lead us to the cave. This was agreed, for, I also did not want to impose myself on the Mahātmā against his wishes.

The cave was quite some distance away in a ravine. A small brooklet flowed nearby and the place was very, very quiet. The farmer made us stop and went ahead alone. He returned after some time and informed us that the Mahātmā refused to meet us to-day. One of my party told the farmer to go and enquire when he would meet us since he would not allow us to see him to-day. Very reluctantly the farmer went back and came with the news that the Mahātmā had agreed to meet us at once. We were very happy and went ahead. At the mouth of the cave we stopped and saw a young Mahātmā sitting on a very low wooden bed. He appeared to be in his late twenties or early thirties. He had a dark beard and his hair was matted. A rough looking blanket covered his body and he looked very serene indeed. The cave was tiny, just the size of the bed placed therein.

We all bowed to him and he pointed me a place just in front of him at the mouth of the cave which had a small door too. There was place for just one person. I sat there while the others stood behind me. We were rather disappointed to know that he was observing *maunā*. He had a slate on which he wrote enquiring after us and I replied to

his questions. After some time we took leave but before that I asked when I might come again, hoping that he would talk then. He wrote down "8th July".

I had forgotten the date till one day I was reminded of it. By this time the monsoon had started and on the 8th there was a heavy downpour. My companions of the last trip enquired what I was going to do. There was an unbridged stream in spate on the way. They all insisted that we would not be able to cross it in the jeep, but I said that we should at least make an attempt. We would go up to the bank of the stream and if it was uncrossable we would return. On reaching the bank I found that though the stream was in flood, there was a chance of crossing it. Uttering "Ma ! Ma !" I plunged the jeep into the floods. The water level was high but we managed to cross. There was a steep climb and the road was throughout *muddy*. Slipping and skidding we managed to reach the spot where we had to leave the jeep. The rain had now become a drizzle as we walked the distance to the cave. The Mahātma was pleased to see us. He was still in *maunā*. He wrote on the slate that a bhakta of his had expressed doubts whether I would come to-day in such bad weather and that in future I would be allowed to meet him whenever I liked but I should come alone.

This started a new association. I often used to go and sit at his feet. I would ask questions and he would reply by writing on his slate. We also

talked about Sri Ma. He was very much impressed and at one meeting he asked me if I had any photographs of Mataji. "Maharaj", I replied, "I have an album of Ma's photographs". He asked me to show it to him. I brought the album on my next visit. He went through the whole of it, selected two photos and asked me if he could keep them. I was very happy to give them to him.

During early autumn Mataji visited Hoshiarpur and stayed at Sri Hari Babaji's Ashram. I went for Her *daršana* and told Her all about the Mahātmā. Mataji asked, "Does he wear red clothes"? "No Ma", I replied, "he only has a blanket over his body". She did not say anything more. When Mataji left Hoshiarpur I again went to meet the Mahātmā. I told him about Mataji's inquiry. He smiled and wrote, "Mataji asked the right question".

Now the time for the *Samyam Saptah* of 1954 at Juhu, Bombay was drawing near. I showed him the programme of the *Saptah*. He evinced keen interest and asked me many questions about the samyam utsava. Some time earlier he had enquired of me as to what I wanted. The first time he wrote this query I was not prepared for it. I blurted out, "Maharaj all I need is your *daršana* and nothing else." Some time later, on another occasion, he again wrote the same question and I in my ego, as I then thought, could not get myself to ask him to satisfy material needs though there were many. From subsequent events, I have no doubt that my wish would have been granted had

I asked for anything of this material world. But now I think otherwise. I feel it was entirely due to the supreme grace of Mother that I could not get myself to ask for any material gains. Had that happened it may have changed the direction of my life to other channels than the one Mataji wants me to take. My reply was again the same. On my last visit to him, just two days before my departure for Bombay, he again asked me what my wish was. This time I said "Maharaj, if you want to give me something then let Mataji's *kripa* (grace) be always upon me." He smiled and wrote that I should bring cardamoms, cloves and other such things. I left immediately and returned a little later after purchasing the items from the bazar.

He said that he would keep all these things and the next day I was to send a man who would receive the cardamoms from him and that I was to present them to Mataji and request Her to reply by Sunday. I had arranged my programme in such a manner that I was to catch the Frontier Mail at Jullundur on Friday since Mataji was boarding the same train at Mathura on Saturday. I thought that even if I got the reply from Sri Ma how would it be possible to intimate it to the Mahātmā by Sunday? I did not know the answer.

When I was taking leave, the Mahātmā wrote "This is our last meeting." "Why Maharaj", I enquired, "are you leaving this place?" "Yes", he wrote. "Well what does it matter. You have been so kind to me, I shall visit you for your *darśana* wherever you may be." He shook his

head. But I insisted. Finally he wrote "I shall be leaving this body." Shocked and grieved a hope lingered in my heart that I might meet him again. How could anyone predict his own death, I wondered.

Making my obeisance I took leave. The cardamoms were duly delivered to me the next day and on having Mataji's *darśana* at Mathura, I entered Her compartment. After the train moved, I told the whole story to Her and presented Her the cardamoms. I also said "Ma, he wants the reply by Sunday." Mataji placed a few cardamoms into Her mouth and smiled. "Pitaji", She said, "why do you worry, he shall take the answer to his question himself." I bowed to Mataji. I was greatly relieved, for, not knowing the question I did not know the answer. My duty was done. It was on the 4th of December that the Mahātmā left his body and I received the news while still in Bombay. I am told that Mataji's two photographs were not found among his meagre possessions. What had happened to them, who can tell ?

Thus when I ended the story, Dr. Pannalalji got up and in the child-like manner that he always adopted before Mataji, with folded hands asked, "Ma, what was the Mahātmā's question ?" "Pitaji", Mother replied "I have no Kheyāla at this moment."

Jai Ma.

AN ETERNAL QUARREL

Swami Bhumananda Giri

There is an eternal quarrel between Light and Darkness, between Truth and Falsehood. Both are hostile to each other. If Light or Truth is strong enough it will dispel darkness or falsehood. Darkness is a negative entity. Absence of Light is darkness, but absence of darkness is not Light ; because Light has a positive existence and darkness has not. When darkness is dense, it swallows up the Light and then Light cannot manifest itself, it cannot spread out its rays and ultimately the whole atmosphere becomes darkened.

Darkness emanates from Light. When by the evolutionary process Light comes to be superficial, it loses its depth and darkness comes into existence. There is nothing static in this world of ours, everything is dynamic. When darkness comes into existence, it spreads out its influence and ultimately Light loses its hold and an unfathomable darkness prevails everywhere. Light has no death. It simply goes down and is weeping at the bottom.

Now the night of *Kālīyuga* is prevailing over the earth-atmosphere. Day and night come into existence alternately. This is the process of evolutionary movement. In the physical world day and night are produced by the daily rotation of the earth in its orbit. Both are necessary for the growth of consciousness. Consciousness is growing up

from the dark dungeon of matter. It is involved in matter. Without Involution Evolution is impossible. God, the Absolute Consciousness, is playing a game hide and seek in an eternal grove. When there was no creation, God was alone, absorbed in His eternal bliss, enjoying eternal *Ānanda*. Suddenly an overflow of joy took place and the serene atmosphere of *Ānanda* was disturbed and broke into two (*Evoahang Dwaitam Oichyet*). One is Eternal *Purusha* and the other is Eternal *Prakriti*. Both were one and united with each other in a way that the one could not be separated from the other. This is symbolized by the *Jugal Murti* of Radha-Krishna or Śiva-Śakti, the inseparable *Purusha* and *Prakriti*, or Male and Female. In the Absolute stage of Absolute Bliss, Śiva, where there is no distinction between male and female, both are one. If we want to attain to Śiva, we have to go beyond the distinctive consciousness of male and female and for this we should offer the *Tripatra* of *sattva, rajas, tamas* of *Trigunā Prakriti*.

Now, by the Absolute Tendency or Absolute *Sankalpa* i.e. Absolute Will, one God has become two (*Ekoaham Bahushyāma*)—Creation is emanating. One Absolute *Prakriti* or *Para Prakriti* has become four—Maheshwari, Maha Kali, Maha Lakshmi and Maha Saraswati. For the proper functioning of creation they are playing their parts. Maheshwari, the Absolute Authority to control creation is Absolute Will Power. Maha Kali, the Absolute Power of Truth is protecting creation from untruth or falsehood. She is very strong and

forceful in eradicating the darkness of falsehood. She does not tolerate falsehood and is unpardonable and mercilessly destroying the beings of falsehood, the *asuras*. Maha Lakshmi, Absolute Bliss, Harmony and Beauty, is giving the creation harmony, beauty, peace and happiness. Maha Saraswati, Absolute Knowledge, both noumenal and phenomenal, is giving the growth of consciousness in creation.

From *Parā Prakriti* has been emanated *Aparā Prakriti*, that means Upper Nature has given birth to Lower Nature. Upper Nature is flowing upwards, carrying the creation towards God. Lower Nature is flowing downwards, expanding creation. Both the *Prakritis* are in motion, whereas Absolute *Purusha* is totally motionless, there is no vibration at all. Absolute God is reposing in Absolute Peace and serenity.

How did falsehood come into existence? The very moment *Prakriti* is separated from God, the Absolute Truth, *Mahā Māyā*, the mother of falsehood comes into being as a necessity for creation, for playing a game of hide and seek. God hid Himself under the garb of *Mahā Māyā* (*Yogamāyā Samāvritā*). When Absolute Truth hid Himself or fell asleep by the influence of *Yoga Māyā*, falsehood and its beings, *asuras*, were emanated. Madhu and Kaitabha were born out of the ear-filth of *Mahā Vishnu*, when He was asleep in *Yoga Māyā*. In this way all beings of falsehood came into existence.

The two *Prakritis* are flowing in two opposite directions, one the *Parā Prakriti*, or Upper Nature,

is going towards God, carrying the beings to God. If we float in the current of Upper Nature, we reach God. It means that when we attain to sufficient growth in the lap of Lower Nature to transform ourselves into Upper Nature we attain God. This is the transformation of Lower Nature into Upper Nature. In other words it may be called a promotion of the being from lower to higher nature. Lower Nature is our foster-mother (*Dhārti Mātā*) and Upper Nature is our real mother. The work of the foster-mother is to nurture beings in developing the growth of consciousness. When this growth reaches a certain stage, then the beings realise that this lower nature is not their real Mother ; they have to find their real Mother, they must rise to the real Mother's lap and the real Mother will carry them to the Absolute Father, God. So to attain God, transformation of nature is essential.

Absolute quarrel of Truth and falsehood, Light and darkness originates from the opposite movements of the two natures.

Now the night of *Kaliyuga* is prevailing upon the earth. Everything is moving in the opposite direction of Truth. It is the period of *Kālī Rāj*. When *Parikshit Mahārāj*, after the battle of Kurukshetra, was about to kill Kali, Lord Krishna told Parikshit not to kill Kali, as it was his period to rule over the earth. *Dharmaputra* Yudhisthira and all others departed from the earth for heaven. *Parikshit Mahārāj* also left this mortal earth soon after through *Brahma Shāpa*.

Now Mother Earth is writhing in pain. She is suffering from the cancer of falsehood. The whole body of the Earth is in a rotten stage. Allopathic doctors advocate the principle of suppression of disease. Suppressed disease finds various channels to manifest itself in different forms, because suppression is not eradication or death of disease. Everything is in motion. So falsehood will not be stopped, it will carry on its work in various ways. Falsehood is prevailing everywhere and the quarrel between Truth and falsehood is going on eternally. As long as creation will exist, Truth and falsehood will also exist. The quarrel, the clash between the two is helpful in churning the milk of *Kshirod Samudra*, the ocean of consciousness and is giving rise to nectar, *Amrita*, Absolute Consciousness. Thus quarrel or clash is a necessity in the evolutionary movement of the earth. So let it prevail and the Lion Gate of Victory will break open, a new dawn will come upon the earth. Jai Ma, the Victory of the Mother Creatress (*Vishwa Prasavini*) is inevitable.

GLEANINGS FROM THE THIRTY-SECOND SAMYAM SAPTĀHA MAHĀVRATA AT KANKHAL

November 4th—11th, 1981

B. C. Bose

Samyam Saptāha Mahāvrata is one of the most important of the regular annual events of Shree Shree Anandamayee Sangha. It generates interest and curiosity of people of different ages and countries. Devotees from all parts of India as well as from Europe and America come to participate in this week-long camp, so to say, of austerity, meditation, reading of religious texts, enlightening discourses with interludes of devotional songs, in the benign presence of Sri Sri MA Anandamayi who dominates the entire milieu as a master guide to spiritual progress. One finds doctors, lawyers, industrialists, government officials, learned professors, artists, engineers, school and college students, decrepit old men and women, all under the same roof of a tastefully decorated pandal, squatting cross-legged on a simple, prescribed *āsana*.

2. After the week-long function is over the crowd goes away to their respective places of residence. There, they are greeted by others who want to know (a) what “*Samyam*” signifies (b) what

actually happens there (c) what benefit is gained (d) how one feels about it. The meaning of *Samyam* has been explained in great detail on all the previous thirty-one occasions. In short, it means restraint of the senses and the mind, to withdraw them from the distractions of the outside world and focus them inward on that which IS. But this time at Kankhal, MA, during what is known as *Mātri Satsang*, (questions and answers with MA every evening at 9 P.M.), exhorted the erudite scholars and Mahātmās on the dais to give an exposition of *Samyam* from the scriptures. When everyone of them was silent, MA's words flowed as follows—The action or practice to find God or realise Self, the eternal *Atman*, is *Samyam*. This is *abhyāsa-yoga* (sustained practice without hankering after anything else). This week-long practice is a stepping stone to the stage of *Yogayukta*, acceptance of the Eternal *Nityavastu* and discarding of the ephemeral (*anitya vastu*). This is the path, or the course of action to reach the ultimate Goal—“radiant with the supreme light, universal cosmic light” to quote revered Chidanandaji, President of the Divine Life Society, whose very presence emits the spirit of self-surrender.

3. The very presence of MA, as Swami Swatantratanandaji of Gujrat said in his initial discourse, is by itself *Samyam*. One's eyes are fixed on Her, ears turned to Her voice, mind full of the bliss which MA radiates. This is what is gained by a devotee during this “Heavenly week, basking in the radiant light of MA” to quote

Chidanandaji again. A foreign devotee during *Mātri Satsang* asked: "We are always unhappy, we cannot get bliss. Can Mother help us to get real bliss?" MA answered: "Lack of happiness (discontentment) is inevitable for the physical self made up of five elements. Fleeting happiness ends in misery. So listen to the talks of *Mahātmās*—"*Amritvarṣana*—torrential flow of nectar", as Mother refers to the discourses. Try to think about the meaning of what they tell you. Follow the path as shown by the Guru. The path leads in the opposite direction, away from sense enjoyment. But this path never opens up unless one practises self-restraint.

4. A question is sometimes asked as to whether a man of different religious belief or one who has been initiated by another Guru (according to MA, of course, there is but one Guru) can participate in the *Samyam Saptāha*. The answer is 'Yes'. The doors of MA are open to all—the rich and the poor, the spiritually elevated souls, and the condemned social culprits. The galaxy of saffron-clad *Mahātmās* of different denominations who come to MA for spiritual guidance and blessings is to be seen to be believed. The unscheduled appearance of the non-agenarian saint Babā Sitāramdas Onkār Nāth one evening, his obeisance to MA, spontaneous recitation of a self-composed eulogy in verse, transported the gathering to a different world, as it were. To him, as to many others, MA, is the *Ādyāśakti* (primeval energy). Her attraction is such as to cut across all differences of religion,

language and social barriers. Babā Sitāram Dās averred that Mother's pull was so strong that he had to come all of a sudden.

People are likely to misunderstand the restrictions on food and the way of life or the sense of physical purity imposed on the Aśramites or practised by some devotees. In fact, it is a mystery why MA does not permit people to touch Her feet, or to offer floral offerings on them, although people hanker after it. The restrictions imposed on participants of the *Samyam Saptāha* are also awe-inspiring to a layman. This year, however, MA, graciously arranged for all those who cannot, for reasons of health or similar reasons, follow the rigours of *Samyam*, to participate in the event and enjoy the benefit of meditation, repetition of God's name and listening to the discourses. In fact, beyond the enclosure for classified *Vratīs* (participants) there used to be a sizeable crowd even during meditation. This opens a new vista to people of all shades of opinion and religious beliefs to take part in this spiritual exercise.

5. MA had an occasion this time to expound the universality of all religions while answering a question put to Her during one evening's *Mātri Satsang*. She said : "all religions of the world are equally great. What matters is steadfastness and single-minded pursuit". She narrated what late Pran Gopal Mukherjee, himself a disciple of Bālānanda Brahmachāri of Deogarh, but very much attached to MA, had said after having attended a congregation of different faiths. Late Mr.

Mukherjee expressed his appreciation of the sincere exposition of God-head by various speakers in their own way. There is no compartmentalisation in the Self-luminous Self. God appears in all shapes and forms, even formless, says MA, anywhere and everywhere.

6. A couple of significant utterances of MA were heard during the *Mātri Satsang* this time, which reinforced the belief that She is *Brahmamayi* Herself (rests in Brahman, one with Him). Swatantrānandaji wanted to know from which birth (*Janam*) MA assumed this stage of pure consciousness. MA at once seized the pun in the word “*Ja-na-ma*” and asked what does ‘*Na-ma*’ mean in sanskrit, evidently indicating that She has no birth. SHE is beyond birth and death. To another question of the same Mahātmā requesting MA to say, since when She had the inspiration to propagate *Sanātana Vaidic Dharma*, MA gave him a sharp repartee : “Propagation (*Prachār*) assumes two. To whom shall I propagate? Where is the second?” MA asked. The erudite Vedantic Scholar realised what direct knowledge (*aparokṣa*) of Vedanta means.

7. The venue of *Samyam Saptaha* changes from year to year on ardent requests from different religious institutions and according to MA’s *kheyāla*. This, according to a Mahatma, is beneficial as the entire length and breadth of the country gets the spirit of *Samyam* brought to their door step. The venue, this year, was Sri Sri Ma Anandamayi Ashram at Kankhal (U.P.). It was

particularly purifying and propitious as was indicated by revered Brahmachāri Nirmalānandaji in his introductory speech. This site, on the bank of the Ganges is hallowed by its association with the Puranic *Dakṣa Yajña*, and the recent *Ati-Rudra Mahā Yajña* performed in May 1981 under the auspices of MA. The body of Sati, the Divine consort of Śiva, according to Śiva-Purāna, which was expounded in such a brilliant manner by Dr. Vishnu Dutt Rakesh of Gurukul University during the Saptāha, was laid down here. Sati, is the giver of *Brahmavidya* (knowledge of Brahman). In fact, another great Mahātmā, Mahāmandaleswara Giridhari Lal Puriji, who is always near MA but hardly ever delivers a speech, asserted with deep conviction that the grace of MA who is Sati incarnate removes all sin. The success of the *Vrata* is assured as the '*Siddhidātrī*' (giver of success) is present in person.

8. Apart from the holy presence of MA in the pandal, the *vratīs* some of whom were seen doing *pranāma* to the rising sun above the far Himalayas, were charmed by the fragrance of the incense burnt in the traditional *dhupati* carried around by a Brahmacharini of the Ashram. The chanting of Vedic invocatory mantras was done by the young pupils of Shree Anandamayee Vidyapeeth this year. This was very encouraging for the future of the Institution. The Brahma-Sangeet sung melodiously by Brahmacharini Pushpadi set the pace for the day's programme. In the period after the combined recitation of the Bhagwat Gita, the Saptasati

and the Upaniṣad, Swami Swatantranandaji used to explain Manduka Upaniṣad for one hour. He spoke in such a lucid manner that one was hearing Upaniṣad made easy. Mention has already been made of the reading of Śiva Purāna in the afternoon session. Very few people know about these Purānas, except, of course the Srimad Bhāgavatam. The audience, therefore, listened spell-bound to the illuminating exposition given by Dr. Rakeshji.

9. A new feature of this year's *Samyam Saptāha* were discourses by three lady Saints—Revered Gita Bhārati of Bombay, a young lady Saint popularly known as Sāntoshi Mā and Rāmā Devi. Santoshi Ma who expressed her satisfaction over the fulfilment of her long standing desire of having the *darśana* of Ma described by her as the repository of limitless energy and super-power. Her fifteen-minute-discourse on desireless service left an indelible impression on the audience. Gita Bharatiji in her first talk explained the process of awakening the Serpent Power (Kundalīnī). On the second occasion she gave a masterly survey of the eighteen chapters of the Bhagwad Gita.

Swami Narayanananda Bhārati of Sankaracharya Math, Śringheri, was another centre of attraction. Bhajan sung by him in a Karnatic tune and his short and forceful exposition in English of some important slokas of "Viveka Chudamani" by Adi Sankara left a deep impression.

10. The other Mahātmās whose presence and discourses lent lustre to the function in addition to those mentioned earlier were Mahāmandaleswaras

Brahmānandaji, Sri Vishnu Ashramji, Prakasha-
nandji, Amar Muniji, Hansaprasadhanandaji,
Krishnanandji and many others. The writer craves
the indulgence of these elevated souls for not giving
the gist of their valuable and scholarly discourses
for lack of space.

11. Lastly, MA, inspite of Her ailing physical
body amused the devotees every evening by many
narratives and made sure that everybody had a
hearty laugh after the strenuous day. She also was
kind enough to please Her children by singing
Herself. The most important song had the burden
of a prayer to God for bestowing discrimination and
detachment, to arouse Love (prema) and Wisdom
(jñāna) through the nectar of devotion (bhakti).

12. A mention must now be made of the
'Nāmyajñā' which followed the conclusion of the
Saptāha by the ritualistic *havana* on 11th November
morning. MA joined the ladies' *Nām-Sankirtan*
on the 11th night and the gents' on the following
day. MA who had appeared as a super Vedantist
during the *Saptāha* was seen during *Nām-Yajñā* as a
replica of Śrīman Mahāprabhu, overflowing with
mahābhāva, so beautifully depicted through the
medium of Kirtan by Virendā, leader of the singers
duly assisted by Gitaśri Chhabi Banerjee.

MA in all Her diverse facts revitalises the pro-
mise of Lord Krishna : "Ye yathā mām prapadyanti
tāmstatheiva bhajāmyaham"—"As men approach me
so do I welcome them." (*Gita*, IV/11)

If the writer has been able to give a fair idea
of the 32nd Samyam Saptāha, it is due to MA's

grace ; if he has failed, it is because of his personal limitations. The saving grace, however, was given in the opening song of this great occasion which always reverberates in his mind : “*Kuputro jayeta kvacidapi kumātā na bhavati*”. “A son may be bad but never, never the Mother.”

JAI MA.

Vision of God through Love

“God cannot be seen with these physical eyes. In the course of spiritual discipline, one gets a ‘love body’, endowed with ‘love eyes’, ‘love ears’ and so on. One sees God with those ‘love eyes’. One hears the voice of God with those ‘love ears’...

“With this ‘love body’ the soul communes with God. But this is not possible without intense love of God. One sees nothing but God everywhere when one loves Him with great intensity. It is like a person with jaundice, who sees everything yellow. Then one feels, ‘I am verily He’.

—Sri Ramakrishna Paramhansa

MĀTRI LĪLĀ

(October—December, 1981)

As already mentioned in the last issue, Sri Ma arrived at Kankhal on September 28th to be present during *Navaratri* (nine days before *Dussehra* dedicated to Devi) and *Durga Puja* that was celebrated solemnly and beautifully in great style from 4th to 8th October. A large number of devotees had assembled from all over India and a few from abroad. Mataji was present daily for the whole of every single *Puja*. However, She then sat within the enclosure, and although everyone in the hall had Her *darsana*, nobody was allowed to go close to Her except those officiating in the *Puja* and special dignitaries. So, to give satisfaction to the devotees who were eager to do *pranama* and offer garlands and gifts during those specially auspicious days, ever-gracious Ma sat either in the main portion of the hall or in the open courtyard once or twice every day without fail for an hour or more. On *Vijaya Dasami* day, Mataji sang for a short time, extemporizing new words and new tunes. At night Ma sat in the hall for *pranama* and as customary special sweets were distributed to all in perfect order.

On October 13th evening, *Lakshmi Puja* was performed. The *Vigraha* (image of the Deity) was specially beautiful and had been preserved

for next year's *Puja*. Mataji is expected to be present for *Durga* and *Lakshmi Pujas* again in Kankhal in 1982.

It is amazing how full of vigour and energy Ma is invariably during festivals, looking half Her age and attending to everything without ever seeming fatigued.

On October 14th night, Mataji suddenly left for Varanasi. A trunk call had been received that Sri Narayan Swami's (Swami Narayanananda Tirtha) condition was very serious and there was no hope of his recovery. Sri Ma never spares Herself. Tired out as She must have been after all the festivals and attending to the demands of the multitude of devotees who had flocked from far and near, Mataji undertook the tedious journey to Varanasi. There She spent some time daily with Narayan Swami who was confined to bed in our Charitable Hospital. His health improved to some extent, so that he was able to enjoy Sri Ma's *Darsana* in full consciousness. When She returned to Kankhal on the 21st of October morning, She said : "Let us see for how many days he can hold out!" He passed away during the *Samyam Saptaha*.

Narayan Swami, (his original name had been Nepal Chakravarty) was one of Sri Ma's earliest devotees. He had his first *darsana* in 1927 when Mataji was staying in the house of Gurupriya Devi's uncle at Ramapura, Varanasi. He immediately felt profoundly impressed and irresistibly attracted. He spent the rest of his life (54 years)

at Mataji's feet. He travelled with Her a good deal and after some time joined the Ashram. He acted as the chief priest during the "*Akhanda Mahayajña*" for four years (Jan. 14th, 1946 to Jan. 14th, 1950) and, following Mataji's advice, became a *dandi Swami* soon after. Throughout his long life he was entirely devoted to the search after Truth. He had no other interest. Sri Ma said of him that he was the embodiment of renunciation, ("*tyager-murti*").

For the last few years he was, due to failing health, unable to accompany Ma on Her peregrinations with a very few exceptions. He lived mostly in his little room in our Varanasi Ashram and spent his free time in writing and translating spiritual books.* In response to numerous requests he wrote down his memories of Ma in two volumes "*Santan Vatsala Sri Sri Ma Anandamayi.*" These are much in demand so that the first volume has had to be reprinted within two years.

His passing is an irreparable loss to all of us. He was a rare example of single-minded dedication to God and Truth. He will long live in the memory of all who knew him.

* * *

On arriving back at Kankhal on October 21st., Mataji went to rest in Didima's *Samadhi Mandir* for some time and after sitting in the courtyard for a while, ascended to Her room upstairs and until *Kali Puja* on Divali night, She remained

*See list of Publications "at end of Ananda Varta". There are 8 books by him in Bengali.

there giving *darsana* only through the window, Those who had just arrived from far off places or were leaving were allowed to go upstairs for a little while.

On the 27th., Mataji shifted to Her room near the hall and was present during the entire *Kali Puja*. The next day was *Annakut*, the festival of Annapurna, the Goddess of Plenty, when 108 varieties of dishes were offered to the Deity and then distributed to all. Ma returned to Her abode upstairs.

Prepartions for the *Samyam Mahavrata*, that was scheduled from 4th to 11th November, had been in full swing already for some time. 800 *Vratīs* from outside were expected, beside the Ashramites from all our Ashrams, about 45 foreigners, and local visitors from Kankhal, Hardwar, Rishikesh, our spacious hall thus would have been quite insufficient. Therefore the banyan-tree in the middle of the courtyard between the *Yagnasala* and the hall had to be uprooted and the platform around it scrapped, so that the entire space could be covered by canvas and converted into a beautiful pandal with sitting accommodation for about one thousand people. For 2 or 3 days before the function started, continuous torrential rain threatened to damage the pandal, but fortunately the weather cleared up at the beginning of the *Vrata* and the minor damages could be repaired very easily.*

*See article on "Samyam Mahavrata" by B. C. Bose on p. 73 of this issue.

Just as every year, the *Samyam Mahavrata* proved the most successful, elevating and enlightening function. Mataji was in great form, gracing the pandal for 7-8 hours on the first day and for 4-5 hours or more on all other days. In the short intervals between the *satsang*, She also gave *Darsana* in the hall or in the open air, where everyone was able to approach Her freely and offer *pranama*, garlands, etc. at Her holy feet and to have a little word with Her personally. After the collective midnight meditation in Sri Ma's presence on the 10th night, everyone queued up to do *pranama* and received *prasada*. Ma patiently sat through all this until the small hours of the 11th morning.

The *Samyam Mahavrata* has already for the last few years become a world-wide function. Not only is it observed as far as possible, in all our Ashrams, but we receive letters from devotees of foreign countries who make it a week of retreat in their own homes, keeping the meditation hours, the restricted diet, listening to tape recordings from former *Samyam Vratas*, not going out or telephoning, etc. They feel with us in spirit and regret when the week is over.

As usual the seven days of self-restraint were followed by a *Nama Yajna*¹ starting on the 11th night. Mataji was of course present for the *adivāsa*² at about 9 P.M. and later walked round

1. *Nama Yajna* Uninterrupted Kirtan, usually for 24 hours, while circum-ambulating round a circular altar.

2. Preliminary Kirtan, invoking the presence of the Deities,

with the women for a short while, when they took over for the night, after which She retired to Her room. The following day, Mataji again graced the function once during the day and also at the conclusion at sunset.

The following two or three days were very busy for Sri Ma, as everybody wanted to farewell before leaving. On the 13th and 14th November there were functions in connection with the foundation-stone laying for a permanent building for the *Ati-Maharudra Yajna*, which is to be erected. After the function Mataji still attended to private interviews that had been over.

On November 14th night Mataji boarded the train, some thought for Naimisharanya, others for Varanasi. Actually She motored straight to Vindhyachal from Varanasi Station, where She alighted on the 15th evening. Only a few accompanied Her, the rest of the party remained at Varanasi.

After a few days of repose and quiet in the salubrious surroundings of Vindhyachal, Mataji proceeded to Patna on November 24th., where a *Bhagavata Saptaha* was held from the 27th in a pandal. Swami Akhandananda Saraswati enlightened and delighted the congregation by his lucid Hindi exposition. Mataji attended daily from 10-11 a.m. and 5-6 p.m. Many guests came from Calcutta and Mataji again had a very full programme.

On Dec. 6th., She was taken to Hathwa Raj, about hundred miles from Patna. On the 7th Gita Jayanti was celebrated there. After returning to

Patna on the 9th., Mataji left for Rajgir. Her sojourn there was kept secret as far as possible to give Her some rest, as Ma's health was indifferent at least for the first few days.

Mataji reached Vindhyachal on the 25th to stay there for a few days only and is scheduled to reach Varanasi before the end of December. She is expected to remain at Varanasi and also at Vindhyachal according to HER Kheyal until Jan. 9th., and then proceed to Allahabad, where She has been requested by the Sadhus to open the *Kumbha Mela* on January 10th. She is expected to remain in Allahabad until the end of January. *Saraswati Puja* is to be celebrated there on Jan. 31st. Mataji may move to Gujrat thereafter.

By the end of February She is expected to arrive at Vrindaban where two *Bhagavata Saptahas* are to start on Feb. 27th. Holi also will be celebrated there followed by a very big function of 108 Bhagavatas.

In April Mataji is due at Kankhal for Didima's *Sannyasa Utsava* on the 13th. Her birthday will also be celebrated there in May.

The next *Samyam Mahavrata* is to be observed in November, 1982 in Jullundur (Punjab) at the kind invitation of Mahamandaleshwara, Swami Niranjanananda.
