



ĀNANDA VĀRTĀ

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

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There is no Bondage

“Bondage is of the mind and freedom is also of the mind. A man is free if he constantly thinks I am a free soul. How can I be found, whether I live in the world or in the forest? I am a child of God, the king of Kings. Who can bind me?”

—Sri Ramakrishna Paramhansa



“Total self-giving to Krishna places one above the disputes of the vedantist and the vaishnava. The vedantist says, “I want to be one with the Supreme.” The vaishnava says, “The Supreme is honey. I don’t want to be one with honey — I want to enjoy Honey.”

“But it is not a question of what I want or don’t want. It is essentially the question of what Krishna wills. This is Parabhakti.”

—Yogi Sri Krishnaprem

SRI SRI MA'S UTTERANCES

(Reported by Sri Gurupriya Devi in "Sri Sri Ma Anandamayi", Vol. VI.

An aged *sādhaka* residing in Vindhyachal wished to know if he should spend his last days at Kashi.

Mataji: Do you know what the fact of the matter is? Kashi is within you. Not of everybody can this be said, but for you Kashi is the same as Vindhyachal. Keeping this in mind, you should remain in peace in the place where the effort toward keeping alive the remembrance of God can be maintained. You yourself do not know what it is to be aware of the inner wealth which is already within you. To be in possession of the inner treasure is real richness.

Nobody can guarantee whether the next breath will be drawn. With every incoming and outgoing breath, should one not keep alive the remembrance of that One Supreme Reality? Only the witness who is within may know the extent of inner wealth and prescribe accordingly.

Not that this body always speaks in such clear terms about injunctions, but for you it is being said that Vindhyachal is equal to Kashi.

[*Mataji's* words seem to suggest that a *sādhaka* may attain a state when he does not need to distinguish one place of *sādhanā* from another. He may attain the goal independently of the spiritual aura pertaining to a particular holy site. *Mataji* emphasizes that this teaching is not meant for every-

body. In general holy sites are to be preferred for *sādhanā*. Of course Vi ndhyachal is also a special place of pilgrimage.]

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Question : Is it really necessary to make contact with a Guru ?

Mataji : Yes. There can be no progress without some support.

Question : How can one recognize a Sadguru ?

Mataji : To tell the truth, is it possible for students to recognize their teacher ? This is why some are of the opinion that a person who wishes to choose a Guru should be in close contact with him for one year before making up his mind. But even this, is it enough to recognize a Sadguru ?

There is another aspect to this question : Whatever is learnt from any source, know that to be ordained as such. Events sometimes so arrange themselves that a temporary relationship is established between teacher and pupil. It may happen that a disciple no longer wishes to remain under the tutelage of his guru. However, it must be understood that the disciple did receive what he was meant to receive through this temporary relationship.

Just as for example, you take a cab to the railway station. On arrival there you dismiss the cab and board the train. But don't forget that only with the help of the cab you could catch the train. Another example : A pupil first studies at a primary school. This awakens the desire in him to study further and so he proceeds to a higher secondary school and then on to a college. Thus

no stage is irrelevant or negligible. They are all equally important and indispensable in their own places. Truly the Sadguru Himself inspires the disciple to go through the stages of seeking. It is the very nature of the World-teacher to shower His grace on all. In the ultimate analysis Guru, mantra and *Ista* are one.

“A man who is looking for anything but God and the salvation of his soul will find nothing but sorrow and distress ; neither can anyone long remain in peace, unless he is striving to be the least, subject to everyone else. You came to serve and not to rule. Understand that you were called to suffer and to work, not to waste time and to gossip.

“Here men are put to the test like *gold tried in the crucible*. Here no one can last unless he is prepared wholeheartedly to humble himself for God.”

—*The Imitation of Christ*

MĀTRI SATSANG

Swami Bhagavatananda Giri

(Translated from Bengali)

(Continued from the last issue)

Rishikesh, April 18th, 1959

Question : Ma, about whom do you think when you shut your eyes ?

Mataji : What I do with open eyes, exactly the same I do with my eyes shut.

Question : Please explain, so that we may understand what you are doing.

Mataji : To understand is useless, for to understand means to stand under a new load.* Have you understood, Babā ?

Questioner : No, I have not !

Mataji : It is of course the "I" that does not understand.

Questioner : I am such a well-known doctor, yet I have failed in your test.

Mataji : The doctor for dealing with Supreme Truth is different.—Whether my eyes are closed or open, it is all the same. I am speaking the complete truth. Sitting on the bank of the Ganges I do not tell lies.

Question : Whom do you contemplate ?

* A play upon words : *bojha* means to understand and also load or burden.

Mataji : At the time of meditation I do exactly what I am doing now. The question of contemplating someone does not arise : the Self reposes within Itself. There—where is a second ? It is duality that breeds sorrow, fear and conflict.

Question : Some of the Mahātmās speak on very lofty subjects, but at the slightest provocation get angry.

Mataji : Wholeheartedly put up with all this. You have come here to be at peace and keep quiet.

Question : Why have we come here ?

Mataji : We have come here so that the stream of true Knowledge (*Jñāna Ganga*) may manifest.

Questioner : Please, ask everybody here why they have come.

Mataji : They have come to practise *Samyam*.

Questioner : They have come because you have called them. By performing meditation and other spiritual exercises in your presence power is gained, this is why they are here.

Mataji : They gain their own power.

Question : We should all become like Rishikesh. How can this be done ?

Mataji : Rishikesh is within you. This is why you have come here. Everything is in fact present within you.

Question : What *darśanas* have you had to-day ? Please tell us !

Mataji : During silent meditation I saw someone standing dressed in white. Another person was seated. Perhaps they had come to participate in the silence.

Question : Do they also derive benefit from the *mouna* ?
Who are they ?

Mataji : It is they who are present in each of these forms.

Question : Then why did they come in two different forms ?

Mataji : Why have you come here in so many forms ?

Question : Were they Guru and disciple ?

Mataji : No.

Question : I saw pigeons flying about during silent meditation.

Mataji : Did you see the pigeons after the meditation ? Then your meditation was successful. Father used to say that in the christian religion pigeons or doves are considered to be the emblem of peace.

Question : A snake had entered Ma's room. Was it a Mahātmā in the guise of a snake ?

Mataji : Yes, sometimes they do come in this guise.

Question : During meditation, between 3-22 and 3-25 p.m. I felt very hot. I opened my eyes and saw a mahātmā in white robes, with white hair, sitting by the side of Ma. You were in meditation but the mahātmā was speaking. Later he disappeared. I saw this with these very eyes. Afterwards I beheld Haribabaji.

Mataji : You have seen very well. Continue with your devotional practices and the vision for *darśana* will open up.

Question : Who came in the guise of doves ?

Mataji : So many come in various forms. Some may also come and conceal their identity.

Question : Who was the superman in white robes ?

Mataji : One of your own innumerable forms. Each form is your own, is it not ? In order that your own Reality (*svarūpa*) may be revealed, the observance of *samyam* is imperative.

Question : When these visions take place, why do they last for such a short while only ?

Mataji : Visions occur in accordance with the state that has been attained.

Question : Do visions come when the eyes are open or shut ?

Mataji : They may take place while the eyes are open and also while they are shut.

Question : There must surely be some special kind of eyes to perceive all this ?

Mataji : Those eyes are called eyes of inner knowledge (*jñāna chakshu*)—the eyes that never undergo any change. For the sake of obtaining those eyes one must observe *samyam*. By the sustained practice of self-restraint (*samyam*) your true eyes will be opened.

Question : But these special eyes of inner knowledge have to be granted, have they not ?

Mataji : Why granted ? They are in fact within you. Only the covering screen has to be removed.

Questioner : In the Bhagavad Gita, Sri Krishna said to Arjun : “*Divyām dadāmi te chakṣu*” (The divine eye I give to thee !) So please remove the veil of ignorance !

Mataji : It is true that the Lord granted Arjuna divine sight ; but why did Arjuna get frightened ? He became afraid because although special eyes had been granted to him, he was not yet fit for them. Had the eyes of true knowledge really manifested Arjuna would not have been riddled with fear. Who feels afraid and what does one fear ? Had those special eyes led to the revelation of his true Self, he could not have harboured any fear. To obtain true knowledge of the Self is to realize God and to realize God means realizing one's true Self.

Question : Having had the vision of God, will liberation be attained in this very life ?

Mataji : To realize one's own Self does indeed mean liberation.

Question : What has been the benefit of attending this week of *samyam* ? I have not gained anything.

Mataji : Don't behave like a shop-keeper or business-man !

Question : I do not seem to have made any progress in my *sādhana*. What am I to do ?

Mataji : *Samyam* must be observed for its own sake ; do not worry about what you have gained or not gained. God is the very life of our lives, live a life of self-mastery in order to realize Him !

Questioner : I feel deep within myself that I have not made any progress.

Mataji : Without becoming desperately eager nothing can be obtained. Just as, when someone is about to be drowned, he tries with all his might

to gain the shore, of such intense eagerness must you be possessed to realize God.

Question : How can this intense eagerness be acquired ?

Mataji : Continue to seek satsang and to practise meditation, *japa* etc. If you feel you are not getting anywhere, this is not a bad sign in itself, namely the feeling, I have engaged in so many devotional practices, yet I do not seem to have gained anything substantial. But never think of relaxing your efforts ! It is not right to look for results. "To contemplate God is my bounden duty." If for any reason you have not been able to do so, you should feel deeply distressed.

Some people complain : "So and so has got a very good job, why can't I get a similar one ? What can be the reason ?" You are not qualified for it. You have not reached the competence that makes you fit for the job. According to one's capacity one receives. God is not merciless, He is full of grace, the ocean of compassion. When you are ready for it, He will most certainly give you *darśana*.

Just as a mother does not provide the same kind of food for every one of her children. She may give the eldest fried rice and the youngest only milk. To accuse the mother of partiality would surely not be right. Similarly God never shows partiality. A mother thinks carefully before she gives. The mother-cow cleanses her calf by licking up all the dirt. So does God swallow our pride, passion, anger, and so forth. Sometimes he teaches

us a lesson by a thorough shaking or by giving us a slap.

Mahātmās declare that the whole universe is God's empire, everything belongs to Him only. Therefore never look upon anything as your own. Where the sense of "I" and "mine" is, there indeed is death. While by looking at everything as God's very own, death is conquered, "*Merā, merā*" ("mine, mine") means "*marā, marā*" (to die).*

April 19th, 1959.

To-day at about 4 p.m., after the collective meditation a very strange incident took place. Arundā† had gone to bathe in the Ganga. After his bath he noticed that he had lost the key to his room. Being a very old man, he became very nervous. He searched all over the place, but in vain. So in sheer desperation he sat down on a rock and started praying to Ma. There was nobody to be seen anywhere near. He felt utterly helpless. Suddenly he saw a hill-woman dressed in a fine sari, with sandals on her feet, coming towards him. She asked Arunda : "What has happened ?" When he replied that his key was lost, the woman went near the Ganga and without any seeming effort picked up the key from somewhere and handed it to Arunda, who said : "Ma, many thanks to you !" She retorted : "You are calling me "Ma" and giving me thanks as well ?"

The key was covered with mud, so he started washing it. When it was clean he looked up—nobody was to be seen ! On returning to his room he started pondering over the fact that he had got his earthly key returned to him after crying for it so vehemently, but when and how shall we find the key to our lives that we have lost ?

* A play upon words : *merā* mine, and "*marā*" to die.

† Arun Prakash Banerjee, an old devotee.

Mataji : Here in Rishikesh you are observing *samyam* on the bank of Ganga. This is the proper place for you to obtain the key to your life. By practising japa and meditation here on the bank of Ganga there is hope of discovering the real key.

Question : Does one become transformed by *darśana* ?

Mataji : He could not recognize whom he saw. So was this a genuine *darśana* ? Whatever it was that he beheld, so much for the good. As a result he at least started pondering how to find the real key—this was the direct benefit. He beheld someone who later disappeared. Why did the thought of how to acquire the real key enter his mind at that very moment ?

Question : Ma, who was that woman ?

Mataji : Ganga Devi (goddess Ganga) bestowed her grace.

Question : He had *darśana* over an ordinary room-key, so why does one not obtain *darśana* for gaining the real key to one's life ?

Mataji : Who is keen to have *darśana* ? When the yearning for it becomes profound, *darśana* will most certainly take place.

Arunda then related a dream of his. In this connection a devotee asked : Ma, are dreams something real ?

Mataji : That you are here, is it not a dream as well ? The dream of the waking-state.

Question : What is the necessity of entering the state of dreaming ?

Mataji : Why does one enter this dream of the waking state ?

Question : Was losing the key then a dream ?

Mataji : Does one dream while one is walking ? If waking is a dream then what you say is also a dream.

Question : So, until one realizes one's essential Being everything is a dream. In this condition, can there be *darśana* of the supernormal beyond the range of imagination ?

Mataji : If he had already had true *darśana*, why should he continue to search ? This was a dream within a dream. There are infinite varieties of dreams. The fact that we are sitting here on the bank of Ganga, all this is within the dream of waking. All these things here are imaginary and therefore perishable. Whatever you see around you is subject to constant change, nothing at all will remain. In this world inhabited by living beings (*jīva-jagat*) everything is doomed to perish.

Question : Does Mother Ganga visit a meeting like this ?

Mataji : The real Ganga is *Jñāna Ganga* (the Ganga of Knowledge) which washes everything clean. Leading a life of *samyam*, meditation, japa, satsang, etc. are also a kind of fetter but this bondage has for its purpose the shaking off of all shackles. What really matters is to become obsessed with the longing to contemplate God.

People find it very tasteful to listen to stories and to gossip. They spend hour after hour at cinemas and other entertainments. But how much time is devoted to God ? One must sit perfectly still during meditation and japa. So long as the posture does not become fixed correct japa and meditation cannot come about.

SOME TYPICAL DIALOGUES WITH SRI MA

Anil Ganguli

(Continued from the last issue)

On Suffering

Misfortune is a problem which baffles many. Misfortune — for instance in the history of peoples or in the lives of families and individuals, seemingly senseless destruction — how are these facts compatible with the idea of a God, whom we should like, not only to fear but also to love? With reference to a question somewhat like this, one day Ma had a dialogue with Melita Maschmann, the gist of which is given below :—

Ma : Do you believe that God is the Creator of this world and therefore its Lord ?

Questioner : Let us anyway in our discussion take this for granted.

Ma : Very well. If God is the Lord of the world, He can do with it as He pleases. Suppose you have grown beautiful flowers in your garden, but decide to plant fruit-trees their in place, would'nt you have to remove the flowers ? If you have a fine house, but wish to build a larger and better one on the same plot, you will be obliged to demolish the old one. The freedom that is yours in small things, God exercises in great ones. In both is He, in destruction as well as in construction. The

history of nations, families and individuals is the great *līlā* that He stages with Himself.

Questioner : What about evil in the world ?

Ma : When you have realized God, then good and evil do not exist for you anymore.

Questioner : Do you mean to say that I should refrain from fighting the evil in my surroundings ?

Ma : Serve human beings as much as you can ; but do not identify yourself with their wants and needs. You must go beyond all this and seek God.

Questioner : Where does the source of evil lie ? If *Brahman* is all in all, as Hinduism teaches, then evil must also derive from Him and occur with Him.

Ma : Good and evil are distinctions that arise in human thought and experience. Only when entering the world of duality we begin to distinguish between good and evil.*

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For the spiritually advanced

Referring to Pandit Sunderlal's statement that Mataji was immersed in *samādhi* Mahāmahopadhyāya Gopinath Kaviraj once remarked that *samādhi* signified the mind's absorption and the consequent abeyance of all its activities (*nirodha*) but so far as Ma was concerned, there was no question of mind or overmind and therefore one could not either speak of *samādhi*. Thereupon Ma observed :—

*From the Diary of a European by Melita Maschmann—
Ananda Varta XIII/3/94.

Ma : Look, just as this body is seen in various attitudes, such a laughing, speaking, moving about, etc., so you may, from your angle of vision also perceive this body in the postures of *samādhi*. In concord with the rhythm of the breath it assumes various postures or attitudes. Change or changelessness, concentration or abeyance of activity — there is simply no question of all these.

After a short pause, *Ma* spoke again :—

“Baba, here everything is perfectly open and unconditioned. But ordinarily the rhythm of the life-force depends on one thing in the field of *sādhanā* and on a different one in the field of worldly life. From the worldly point of view one thinks : ‘my home, my wife, my son, my enemy, my friend’. Thus the idea of the ‘I’ conditions the rhythm of the life-force. Whereas in the field of *sādhanā* it is conditioned by the aspiration towards Realization. The *sādhaka* is ever concentrated on his goal and, therefore, while advancing, he is not aware of the details of the path. If he could once reach the goal, he would be in a position to describe the path, for then everything becomes illumined by the one Light. *Baba*, in reality there is only One Thing. The path, the aim — call it what you will — nothing whatsoever is apart from the Self.*

For beginners

It is by no means easy to understand *samādhi* or “illumination by the one Light” mentioned by

* *Ananda Varta*, Vol. XI, No. 1, p. 37,

Ma in the dialogue with the Mahāmahopadhyāya nor to appreciate her mystical experience disclosed to him. But Ma's answers to a beginner's question are generally clear and simple. Thus, a student had been confused by two apparently self-contradictory propositions in the *Gītā*. Ma removed his difficulty and incidentally explained certain general principles for the guidance of all students of the *Gītā*.

Questioner : At one place in the Gita we are asked to engage in karma, or perform ceremonial rites, and at another place to give up karma. How are we to reconcile these two contradictory injunctions ?

Ma : Judge for yourself at what stage you are, when to practise sacrificial rites and when to give them up, throwing yourself wholly onto His mercy. These are stages with their appropriate duties and responsibilities. If you are asked to rely absolutely upon Him, is it possible for you to do it all at once ? You have to train your mind and body by constant practice and to purify yourself by spiritual exercises. Read the *Gītā* every day. You will find God revealing Himself through His words recorded therein. A doubt may arise in your mind 'How can words reveal Him ?' You know the book containing the text of the *Gītā* has to be worshipped. By book is meant His words and their import. As you continue to practise day after day, you will gradually reach a stage when absolute reliance on God will be your final achievement ; there is nothing higher than that.

This body tells you again — read the *Gītā* every day and do some spiritual exercise, you will find answers to your queries revealing themselves to your mind. If your desire to know Him is sincere and earnest and comes from the heart, the solution must come. It is inevitable. Without concentration on one aim, without *ekāgratā* (single-mindedness) no real result can be achieved. Our mind is the swiftest thing in creation. Let the mind move at its own speed constantly towards the One Aim, which is God. He will reveal Himself. As long as He is not revealed through His words in the *Gītā*, never give up the practice of reading sacred texts.*

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Again, in answer to questions asked by a Professor at Ranchi, presumably for the benefit of his pupils, Ma uttered, in simple language, some eternal truths in a homely manner appealing to all.

Questioner : What actually is 'ānandamayī' ?

Ma : "You yourself are 'ānandamayī' (permeated by Bliss)."

Questioner : Well, then our relation with that aspect of ourselves has so far not been consciously established !

Ma : The relationship that is eternal exists here and now. There is only One Self.

Questioner : Yet we are not aware of it.

Ma : This is why effort is necessary. The false idea that your Self is far away is the cause of your misery and of the ceaseless round of births and

*Ananda Varta 1/4/199.

deaths. It is, therefore, important to take refuge in the Guru and endeavour to become possessed of supreme knowledge. This knowledge will come to you if you keenly aspire after it. Relationship means, the One reposing in Himself is ever bound up with each and all. In the various relationships such as those of mother, father, Lord, friend and so forth, the One is united with each. You also are ever and eternally united with the One. In order to realise Him you have to study, exert yourself and engage in spiritual practices. The great is contained in the small and the small in the great ; the drop in the ocean and the ocean in the drop.*

* * *

Simple-minded beginners, sincerely eager to learn, sometimes ask Ma elementary questions. Ma patiently listens to them with an encouraging smile and gives clear-cut answers in simple words. But questions not prompted by depth of feeling or lightly asked just for the sake of asking questions, have every chance of being treated on a different footing. Here are a few instances :—

A German : What is the difference between prayer and meditation ?

Ma : When praying, one asks for the fulfilment of one's desire, even though it be the desire to become one with God or to serve Him or realize Him ; whereas meditation (*dhyāna*) means to be absorbed in the contemplation of Him. In this there is no room for desire.

*Ananda Varta

Questioner : How can one attain to such meditation ?

Ma : It comes spontaneously. At first you remember Him and ponder over Him and then contemplation sets in of itself. While sitting here the remembrance, the thought of your home and children comes to you, unasked and you cannot help pondering over them. By *sāadhanā* the contemplation of the Beloved comes naturally, of its own accord.*

* * *

Here are Ma's answers to some questions which are as European as Indian :—

A German Lady : Again and again it occurs to me that I should stop praying altogether. Whether intentionally or not, our prayer usually becomes a petition. Does this not amount to some kind of interference with God's Will ?

Ma : You should pray, in fact you can never pray enough. And you may also ask for something, but ask only for God Himself, for His advent. When the time comes for you to cease from praying, you will stop of your own accord. Then the question whether you should pray or not will not arise anymore.†

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Questioner : How can our minds be free for prayer and meditation when we are so much burdened with various kinds of work, including

* *Ananda Varta* X/1/33.

† *Ananda Varta* XII/3/92

domestic duties? What should we do in that case?

Ma: Let the work be done mechanically without your exertion. Work without the feeling that it is you who are working. Take it as if it is God's work, done through you as His instrument. Then your mind will be at rest and at peace. This is prayer and meditation.

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A Punjabi lady: I do *japa* regularly, but my mind does not become still.

Ma: All the same you must not give up the attempt.

Questioner: My children are so noisy; not always, it is true, but no sooner have I sat down for my *pūjā* than, without fail, they get quite uproarious.

Ma (with a smile): Suppose you stand by the seashore wishing to go into the water, can you wait until all the waves have subsided?

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For non-Hindus

Ma's dialogues with non-Hindus are based on fundamental truths acceptable to all. They bear the stamp of her catholicity. Her advice encourages everyone to be constant to his own faith and imperceptibly assists every spiritual aspirant in his onward march along the path suitable for him.

An American lady: Mother, I want initiation from you.

Ma: What faith do you profess?

Questioner : I am mentally a Hindu.

Ma : What faith do your parents profess ?

Questioner : They are Christians.

Ma : Have you faith in Lord Christ ?

Questioner : Yes.

Ma : Lord Christ is your *Iṣṭa*. If you worship Lord Christ, you will see light.

Questioner : But mentally I am a Hindu.

Ma : One who is devoted to one's *Iṣṭa* is a good Hindu. This body does not advice change of *Iṣṭa*.*

* * *

A European lady who had come all the way to India to study Buddhism asked *Ma* : Have you anything to say to me.

Ma : Live the teaching that you profess.**

* * *

Ma's sayings are usually centred on God. She has also a special message for the sceptical youth of this age of science who proudly professes atheism and shows symptoms of psychological allergy at the very mention of God's name. Once a party of about fifty American tourists visited the Vrindaban Ashram and had a heart to heart talk with *Ma* on religious topics. They were happy with *Ma*'s easy solution of problems which had been worrying some of them. The Americans were overwhelmed with joy. An Indian youth who happened to be present, failed to profit from *Ma*'s words which

* *Ananda Varta* II/3/278

** *Ananda Varta* III/1/33

had touched the hearts of the foreigners. After their departure he had a dialogue with Ma.

Questioner : I do not believe in religion, nor in God. All that I want is prosperity in life and freedom from misery and suffering. Could you help me?

Thereupon Ma explained to the smart young man the six-fold path, namely, (1) Truth, (2) Straight-forwardness, (3) Discipline, (4) Service, (5) Satsang and (6) Study of the Scriptures.

On the face of it this may be taken for nothing but enumeration of certain oft-repeated words of wisdom. In this case, these words are invaluable as they come from one who knows to perfection each path as also the common Goal.

Ma lays special emphasis on the first-named path, namely, Truth, which is at once the means and the end. Although she has not read the scriptures, she does not say anything that is not borne out by the śāstras. Thus, according to the *Upanishad*, Truth is Brahman. Again, the opening hymn of *Srimad Bhagavata* is on meditation on Truth which is the same as *Brahman* or *Bhagavān*. Ma adds that if one could achieve success in the pursuit of Truth, eventually misery and suffering—in fact, evil in all forms—would be ruled out of one's life. Thus Ma's advice to the Indian youth was definitely centred on God. Only she adopted a language which would not repel a person bent on out-Heroding Herod in the craze for atheism dominating the world of today.

Ma has the right word at the right time in the right manner for every seeker of Truth, be he a

believer in any faith or an atheist, a beginner on the spiritual path or highly advanced.

Admonition and guidance for *sādhana*

A *sādhaka*, disheartened by his poor progress on the spiritual path, placed his problem before Ma and got answers regarding *sādhanā* from a very practical point of view ; and got also an admonition.

Questioner : For the last thirty years I have kept *satsanga*, yet my mind is not at peace. Like an ox that turns the wheel of an oil-mill it revolves and revolves. How can I find peace ?

Ma : You have indeed kept *satsanga*, but you have not reflected upon what you have been told. You have listened to words of wisdom, yet have not acted according to the injunctions of the wise ; you have not thought deeply, not contemplated as advised. How will you win the Guru's grace ?

Questioner : Why should the wise not let me have a share of what they have earned ?

Ma : So you wish to enjoy the fruit of another's labour ? So long as you do not meditate and act upon what you have been told, how can the path open out for you ? If you practise whatever *sādhanā* that suits your temperament and is within your capacity, your inner power will develop and increase. God is the Life of life, the Self. In order to realize it, to know it, you must resort to the spiritual exercise that appeals to you from deep within you.

Ma concluded her reply with an admonition somewhat to the following effect :

Ma : What have you done to find Him ? How much work you do for worldly ends and how much trouble you take ! Have you made a sustained effort to realize your *Atman* ?

Then followed Ma's peremptory injunction :

Ma : Start right now some spiritual exercise for the purpose of this revelation. God has given you so much capacity to work. Dedicate at least a little more time to Him. And all the work you do in the world lay as an offering at His feet. Regard yourself as His manager, don't feel that you are the boss. As the Lord's manager, serve Him in every human being. In your own home there are the Goddess Lakshmi, Kumari Devi and Bal Gopal. Do service to them, do not neglect them, and you will be at peace. And whatever time you can spare morning and evening, sit in solitude in your shrine-room and contemplate God's divine form, meditate on Him, worship Him. Start today, do not waste any more precious time.*

Some curt replies

Questioner : Who is called a mother and what are the characteristics of a mother ?

Ma : Nobody is called a mother. A mother is just a mother. Those who become her children know what she is like.

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* *Ananda Varta* XIII/4/137.

Questioner : God has given us the sense of "I". He will remove it in time. What need is there for self-surrender ?

Ma : Why do you ask ? Just keep still and do nothing.

Questioner : How can one possibly keep still ?

Ma : This is why self-surrender is necessary.*

* * *

Questioner : Ma ! so many people come to you and offer you pūjā or worship. How do you feel about this ?

Ma : If you worship this body, it feels just as you feel. But, of course, it goes without saying that you worship God, not this body.**

* * *

Questioner : If our heart is full of faith, is it necessary to practise *japa* and meditation ?

Ma : The fact that you ask proves that you have no faith. If you had genuine faith, this practices would be unnecessary.

* * *

Questioner : It appears that your gracious benediction is often bestowed on people of questionable ways of life who seem to have no moral or spiritual moorings. Is not this rather strange ?

Ma : Should the doors of a hospital be banged shut against persons suffering from serious maladies ?

* * *

* *Ananda Varta* II/4/385.

** *Ananda Varta* IX/3/118.

Questioner : Ma, Krishna, Rama, Shiva — What's the difference ?

Ma : (Without a moment's reflection and with a winsome smile) "You are at the same time, son, father, husband — what's the difference ?

Ma is unparalleled in the art of story-telling. A summary of some of Her parables is given below :

(1) "A large lotus was growing in a pond. A wanderer passed by who had never before seen a flower of this kind. Struck by its beauty, he stopped to admire it. He noticed that a frog and a fish were living in the water just below the lotus. 'What is this wonderful plant right above you ?' he asked the frog. 'Well' was the answer, 'what should it be ?' It is nothing very particular, just the ordinary thing', and he turned away to hunt for insects. Disappointed, the man addressed the fish who replied, 'Have you not heard what my friend the frog told you ? It is the common, every-day thing, nothing special'. At that moment the wayfarer saw a bee flying at great speed towards the lotus. He tried to stop it in order to inquire. 'I have no time now, wait a little', so saying, the bee sat down right in the heart of the blossom, sucking nectar for a long time. Then he flew back to the man, 'Now you may talk to me'. The wanderer repeated his question and added : 'Tell me what have you been doing there for so long ?' 'Don't you know ?' said the bee joyfully, 'this is a lotus full of delicious nectar, which I have been sucking and now I am a changed being.' "

“It is possible”, commented Ma, “to live for a long time in close proximity to *Sādhus* and *Mahātmās*, Sages and Saints, without being able to recognise their true quality, whereas one who has the *adhikārā*, who is inwardly prepared and really ready for such a contact, may come from a great distance and within a minute know the Great and Holy for what they are — it depends on one’s capacity to penetrate to the essence of things.”*

(2) “Once a great *bhakta* of Sri Krishna was walking absorbed in the contemplation of his Beloved, completely oblivious of his surroundings. Without noticing it he stepped right over the newly washed clothes that had just been spread out on the ground to dry by a washerman whose work had thus been spoiled. Getting hold of a stick he was about to beat the *bhakta*.”

“At that moment, Sri Krishna was having food with Rukmini. All of a sudden he jumped up and without explanation hurried away, returning after a short while. ‘My Lord’, questioned Rukmini, ‘why did you leave so suddenly in the middle of your meal and how is it you have returned so speedily?’ This is what Sri Krishna replied, ‘A very dear *bhakta* of mine was in danger of being belaboured with a stick, so I hastened to his rescue. But when I got there I saw that he had picked up a stone ready to throw it at his adversary. Since he was protecting himself, there was no need for

* *Ananda Varta* III/1/34.

me to intervene and hence I returned to you without delay.”*

(3) “A precious necklace could be seen flashing from the bottom of a lake. Many dived, greedy for the beautiful ornament ; but the strange thing was that when they reached the bottom, no necklace was to be found. Yet it was clearly visible to everyone from the edge of the lake, there was no mistaking. Finally a Mahātmā passed by. He was consulted in the matter. ‘The necklace cannot be at the bottom of the lake, it must be somewhere else’, he said, ‘what you see is its reflection in the water’. He looked up and soon discovered the precious ornament hanging from a tree. A bird had picked it up from somewhere and deposited it there.”

“The Eternal” concluded Ma, is the treasure-house of real happiness. In the objects of the senses this happiness is merely reflected. The individual, misled birth after birth, by experiencing glimpses of this reflection, thinks that the real thing is to be found in the objects of sense. So long as one believes that true happiness can be had in this world without searching within, one will remain in bondage.”†

(4) “An earthen jar that had been given *Prāṇa Pratiṣṭhā*‡ related the story of its life. ‘At first’,

* *Ananda Varta* II/2/189-190.

† *Ananda Varta* IV/4/343.

‡ Sometimes, instead of an image representing a deity, an earthen jar filled with Ganges water is used as a substitute when doing pūjā. Before the actual pūjā starts, the jar has through the appropriate rite and through mantras, to be

it said, 'I was a part of the earth. I was happy and at perfect peace. But, one day a man came with a spade and dug me out. Oh dear, it hurt terribly ! Then he carried me away and left me in a heap in a corner. Now, I thought, I shall have peace again. But how badly mistaken I was ! Early next morning I found that he had brought a hammer to crush me into fine powder. What dreadful suffering I underwent ! However, having become powder, my hopes rose high. Now I shall surely be left in peace ! But no, more pain was in store for me. The next day I was mixed with water and stamped on. When this ordeal was over I expected to have found lasting peace. In vain—is there, no end to misery ? I was put on a potter's wheel and turned round and round at a maddening speed till I was formed into a jar. Now I felt quite certain that thereafter I should be left alone. But again I was wrong, for a new kind of torture was to be my lot. Every day I was exposed to the scorching rays of the sun and every night stored away in the house. This went on for some time, only to end in worse luck. Oh Hari, one fine morning I was put into fire and baked. Feeling sore all over, I comforted myself : What more can they do to me ? This no doubt marks the end of my tribulations and henceforth I shall enjoy undisturbed peace. Far from it ! Lo and behold, I was subjected to a new kind of trial. I was

brought into living relation with the particular aspect of Divine Power, so as to become a living focus for it. This rite of vivification is called *Prāṇa Pratiṣṭhā*.

taken to the market and many people came and banged on me to see whether I was without a hole. Finally someone bought me and took me home. He filled me with Ganges water, placed me on a pedestal and performed *Prāṇa Pratiṣṭhā* and this is how I am able to speak now.”

Ma added, “When in this manner one has matured and been made perfect, one will be filled with the waters of the Ganges (of wisdom) and awoken to Divine Life. Then one will be able to speak.

Ma’s method of teaching by parables is amusing and inspiring. In particular Her style of narration is superb—it is a thing of beauty, a joy for ever. Even if the same story is repeated by Her again and again, its charm increases.

Conclusion

One thing that is abundantly clear from the dialogues and parables narrated above is that Ma constantly keeps on harping on one string—God. Her frequent repetition of the same idea in season and out of season has been retained in this collection because undoubtedly every reader with an open mind will benefit therefrom. Repetition has been recognized from the earliest times as a necessary and useful method of teaching, adopted in our sacred books such as the Upanishads, the Gītā and the Bhāgavata. Sunrise is repeated day after day. Its light is seen by all, except the blind, and is welcome on the morrow to everyone, including

the blind who receive from the Sun immense delight though not its light. The charm never passes into nothingness. Again, repeated opportunity for *Matri Daršana* is the heart-felt desire of every earnest devotee. Does not the same principle apply to Ma's invaluable words? Every time a saying wells out of Ma, even by way of repetition, it has a message which instils new light into the listener's mind, if not closed. True, printed matter is a poor substitute for Ma's utterances. Still, repetition of Her words, in print, or otherwise, reminds, refines and revives.

"And now it wasn't a question of looks, something had melted away, and there were no longer two of us — Thérèse had simply disappeared, like a drop lost in the ocean; Jesus only was left, my Master, my King. Hadn't I begged him to take away my liberty, because I was so afraid of the use I might make of it; hadn't I longed, weak and helpless as I was, to be united once for all with that divine Strength?"

—St. Thérèse of Lisieux
(*Autobiography of a Saint*)

THE TEACHING OF SRI ANANDAMAYI MA

Ma Suryananda Lakshmi

(Translated from French)

(Continued from the last issue)

Eighth rule : “Be truthful in speech and action.”

Obviously this is essential ! To be *truthful* in our speech, in our acts ; to abstain from speaking or acting when we are not sure we can be true ; for, very often : where is Truth ? Only God Himself, and His silence in us, know. “Be truthful in words and deeds” : sincere, tolerating no tricks, no cunning, no falsehood. Truth implies also humility, the most perfect simplicity.

Ninth rule : “Speak little, and only when necessary”.

What a lesson !

In certain professions this is indispensable ; if we let ourselves go and speak too much and continuously, work becomes impossible. But it is specially true in spiritual life where discretion and reserve are the conditions for our progress and our integrity.

“Speak little, and only when necessary”.

Tenth rule : “Be always cheerful”.

“Be ye always of good cheer” affirms St. Paul as well. For joy is the very nature of the Divine and therefore one of the fundamental rules of godliness.

Eleventh rule : “Remain calm, serene, firm and serious”.

Be *serious* :—To my knowledge, Ma is the only one to use this adjective, which confirms in this fashion her rejection of mockery. We must not seek to distract ourselves ! While it is true that life is the Lord’s *Lilā*, His divine Play, yet the counterfeit of this *Lilā* which is man’s pastime, does not give a correct idea of this sacred Play. To be serious means to be *attentive*, by no means sad, but concentrated on what Ma, later on, calls “*the Supreme Quest*”, the search for God. To be serious, also implies being sincere and persevering, one-pointed, tenacious as regards our inner task. Because actually, the quest of God is the discovery of our own profound, essential and total Reality, which is the only thing that can satisfy us and give us Peace.

Twelfth rule : “Talk to everyone with calmness, serenity, steadiness and equal consideration.”

Once again the respect, and always this emphasis on *speech* ! Ma really seems to say that our way of expressing ourselves has a large share in making us what we are, and I know that She is right ; when we let ourselves go, for example during the painful periods of our life, and talk too

much, nothing goes right. Silence, contemplation, the chanting of the Name of God are far more valuable than conversation.— And the Apostle James specifies :

“If a man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man, and able also to bridle his whole body”. (Epistle of James Ch. 3, v. 2).

And then : *an equal consideration for everyone* is the rightful respect for each one of God’s creatures, whoever it be ; this is the true path of godliness which leads to the vision of the Divine. Love for the entire creation and for its laws which proceed from the eternal Spirit ; the simple and joyous sweetness of sanctity.

Thirteenth rule : “Cherish only what pertains to the *Supreme Quest*”.

Patanjali begins his Raja-Yoga with these words : “Have great love for the Goal to be attained.”

No impatience, no whining :

“When will I reach the Goal ?

“When shall I know this ?

“When shall I know that ?”

“No. Cherish only what pertains to the Supreme Quest : *Love God!*”

We should try and serve Truth, which we do not know, concentrate on the highest within ourselves, and always rise still higher towards the Infinite. This is of great help. For our meanness stifles us. Only the soul’s generosity keeps us serene, calm as well as firm and equanimous.

The rungs of the Supreme Quest are the qualities of the Spirit whose ascension towards Imminence is fed by our adoration.

Fourteenth rule : “Your conduct must be gentle and exemplary.”

Once again behaviour and politeness, because courtesy is also love and self-control. “Exemplary”, is not he who wants *to set an example*, but who can be a model, unconsciously. In other words, there should be within us a constant quest for perfection, in every field, the natural and spontaneous simplicity of constant obedience to the Divine. “Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.” (Gospel of Matthew, Chap. 5, v. 48)

Rule fifteen : “In everything you say, be honest and frank”, that is to say good. For kindness is honest, it deceives no one and frankness born of piety is beneficent, it is without criticism and without pride, full of understanding and joy. Frankness *gives* us sincerity, courage to go ahead, it liberates us in God !”

Rule sixteen : “The search after truth must be kept up at every moment. When by the accumulated force of the continual practice of discrimination between the Real and the unreal, of *japa*, meditation, ceremonial worship, the study of sacred texts, singing the praises of the Lord,—whichever of these be the main line of approach,

for any particular person—one becomes engrossed in the Supreme Quest, then one cannot remain without the remembrance of God”.

“To remember God !” This is one of the most beautiful sayings of Hindu Wisdom.

“*To remember God,*” is to chant His Name, meditate, pray, study sacred texts, attend religious ceremonies, find within ourselves the right and basic note of our love of God, the true accent of our worship which advances and grows with us, becoming part and parcel of our being. Then do we become truly One with the Lord.

“Consequently” (listen attentively !) “foolishness, wrong knowledge and *suffering* disappear.”

When man really and constantly remembers God, ignorance leaves him and he is born to the higher intelligence of the Spirit.

“To be a human being means to aspire to God realisation. Man’s calling as a human being is to find God ! One can hardly go further : Man’s vocation is to find God ! We are on earth solely for this purpose ! Our destiny is to learn, we have been betrothed to Knowledge and it is our duty to open ourselves to God. This is the only way we can get to know ourselves, as well in the truth of our original, total and final nature which is Spirit and which is God, the Light of Life.

For Ma Anandamayi, these are the ashram Rules. They are admirable for their oneness in flavour and their perfect simplicity.

Let us keep on questioning Her.

Ma Anandamayi does not set Herself up as a *Guru* and neither did Sri Ramakrishna ; in fact it was painful for Him to be called "Master", because They both know that the true Master, the true *Guru* is within us, in each one of us : the Divine Mother in us, Christ in us. And Ma on earth, visible to our eyes, audible to our ears, is here simply in order to awaken in us this inner *Guru* which is the voice of the Spirit within our consciousness. She usually refuses to give initiation, but She Herself states that She has been known to give it without intending to do so ! That is to say, to awaken in some person's consciousness his new Name, his initiatory Name, without having willed it, without having done so verbally.

On occasions but very rarely, She has given a mantra to someone or other, to Her husband for instance. She generally, however, refuses to give initiation and in cases where it has been received by a disciple, it has been spontaneous on Her part. She says with delicacy : "It is God Who did it !"

She declares the same thing when miraculous healings are attributed to Her, saying simply : "I did not do it deliberately, it just came about through this body."

What a lesson in impersonality !

We are so terribly riveted, fixed, attached to the notion of personality, that even of Christ Himself we have made a limited person, and we have the greatest difficulty to extract ourselves from it in order to rise higher towards His True nature

and His real message. For Christ is God ! He declares and explains it in many different ways in the Gospels. To quote but one, in St. John's Gospel, Chap. 8, verse 58, this radical saying : "*Before Abraham was, I am*".

Christ is God the Eternal, the Infinite, the Impersonal Spirit, the Breath, the Substance of all life. And Ma, too, possesses this same quality of being nobody in particular because She is all, because everything has happened through Her, because everything can be done by Her and She has no need of our thoughts, our wishes : She *IS*, totally, immutably.

In my relationship with Her, for example, which is of long standing, when, very rarely, I happen to write to Her for some very important reason, I am as brief and simple as possible ; I also know that my letter will no doubt travel widely in India, reach Her translator first, then be sent on elsewhere, to someone else in order to get to Her at last. Then it will again sometimes have to wait before She Herself has the time to listen to it and to reply, which again will take many more days. However, all this is hardly necessary ! My letter is only the gesture, reaching out towards Her and even before it reaches India, I receive the answer, an answer which is always *impersonal*, exactly the right "Step" to be taken in order to proceed further and, consequently, to solve the problem.

Ma does not pose as a Guru ; *She is the Guru*, because She is God within us.

“At Ma’s feet a veil falls, many persons acquire the capacity of concentration and prayer. Her very presence, Her smile, Her expressions are in themselves a teaching. Ma’s protection is felt as soon as we think and act *in a pure fashion*, free of personal motives. *Pure desires are fulfilled*”.¹ Free of egoism and pride, based on God and Love.

Ma is the transparency of the Holy Ghost ; Ma is the All-pervading Light of Truth, She knows all, She sees all, She understands all, but not in the way we do. And it is true that if our desires are selfish, they will not be granted by Her, because She acts according to God’s Justice, bestowing on us only that which is good for our growth in the Truth, for our progress towards the Light which is the Knowledge of God. A divine hope, a devout thirst which aspires to perfect itself inwardly in order to go further, higher, receives an answer, if the time of bestowal has come...Ma’s blessing is always that of *Bhagavān*, the blessed Spirit !

To end this first part, here is an answer which is not lacking in humour :

“To someone who was complaining he had not received from Her the immediate and complete illumination such as Krishna had given to Arjuna, She very simply replied :

“Bring me an Arjuna and you will see what you will see !”²

(1) Preface of “The Teaching of Ma Ananda Moyi, p. 50.
Editors : Albin Michel, Paris.

(2) Idem

The disciple very often does not know himself enough and asks for what he is yet incapable of realizing.

Further Ma says in Her Teaching :

“If you ask something of God, He may fulfill your desire but you will not be satisfied”. *Just offer yourself* to God, and He will grant the revelation you are capable of receiving, which you are able to live and to understand fully. Sri Aurobindo says this too. And when it is God Who gives, without our expressing a precise wish, His response fulfills us, is good, sustaining, and makes it possible for us to grow in Him.

Now here is one of Ma’s sayings which deserves great attention. Moreover it completes the subject we were studying last night.

Ma says :

“Only when meditation comes *spontaneously* is there real meditation.” It must come of itself, effortlessly”, which is the same as saying that God alone *gives* the meditation when the moment has come for us. It is not man who realizes it, but the Spirit within man. What then is man’s role ? —Only to offer himself to God, to the Infinite, every day and in all that he thinks, loves, does.

“Here am I Lord, to do Thy bidding !”

I am happy to be Thy servant.

Help me to be a good servant.”

Our role, our task is to persevere in prayer and in the service of God and men. The Lord knows when all is ready within us to receive His grace without distorting it, and He then descends to

reveal to us something of the Spirit : that is spontaneous meditation. Spiritual "techniques", so much the fashion nowadays, are not entirely useless, but their value remains limited. The main thing is to love God and hope to know Him really. What Ma says here, She repeats later concerning food.

She says :

"The need for pure food in order to attain a spiritual development is much discussed. For me, sattvic food means to nourish oneself with divine thoughts and emotions and to abide in the awareness of Truth or God. If once a day, you eat perfectly pure food but remain engrossed in worldly thoughts all day and night, of what use can *sattvic* food possibly be to you ?"

It is similar with breathing and other techniques. Ramakrishna also said, of what use are these unless over and above such techniques, there be not, primarily, the love of God, and of God only.

Real meditation is spontaneous, my friends, like a clear spring which gushes out of the rock, free of imaginations, of mental reminiscences and physical and vital reactions. All of a sudden God is there ! "Like a thief" as say both Jesus and Sri Aurobindo. Our consciousness, suddenly spotlessly virgin, catches a Ray of the Light wherein the Infinite is revealed. We must be extraordinarily cautious with regard to anything we may experience. Swami Vivekananda continually kept on repeating to his disciples :

"Learn to discriminate, discriminate constantly ! Examine what took place within you while meditat-

ing, sift it thoroughly and tell yourself : 'perhaps that was not quite pure'."

True meditation is granted by God, and how wonderful that this is so, because it is Truth's Gift, to which man can attain in no other way.

True meditation comes when we are tiny children who know nothing and who simply repeat : "Here I am Lord to do Thy bidding ! Father, Thy will be done !" Full stop, that's all. Then, while motionless with intense fervour, our heart opens up to the Ineffable to Bhagavan, the Blessed.

Let us remember the *three basic* fundamentals of man, to be found in the XIth vedic hymn addressed to God Agni : the body and its health, strength and firmness ; life and its power ; intelligence and its lucidity, its impartiality. When these three bases are firmly established in us, it may happen that ecstasy comes about and that we are fulfilled. I nevertheless want to add that this is rare and we should neither expect it, nor will it. The Hour of its bestowal belongs to the Lord. But a single meeting of this spontaneous nature, coming from God, makes us unfathomably productive, for the abundance of the Spirit is inexhaustible. Without any human intervention, it enlightens us of God alone. Ma Anandamayi untiringly repeats :

"*God and God alone !*"

God alone IS.

God alone KNOWS.

God alone ACTS.

“There is a state in which you may have neither knowledge nor understanding of what is taking place—as for example, when a yogic posture of which you are ignorant forms unawares.

“What brought it about? —*The inner Guru.*”

“In a similar way, when a *mantra* bursts forth, the solution to your problem and the inner significance of the *mantra* in its supramental form appear directly before you.”

To *see* and *hear* : yantra-mantra, this moment of inner concentration, when our consciousness is seized upon, as it were despite itself, by the power of the Spirit which allows it to see and understand simultaneously, “without knowing what has happened.” All problems are solved : what the soul sees, it hears as well. It understands the vision and its certainty will henceforward remain ineradicable. Everything is in its place according to the order and sequence, the light of the Divine. All the elements of life receive consideration without their clashing with one another. What seemed irreconcilable to us is in harmony. A Breath is wafted, which is life-giving, a Brightness rises, dazzling, joyous, like a flame that revives the fire on our secret altar :

“God, You are God ! and I have ceased to be separate from You.”

For we find it very difficult, my friends, : *to love God for God's sake and not for our own !* Then it is that “the *mantra* issues forth” to lead us towards our higher reality, towards the intelligence of the Spirit which gives birth to Its Felicity in us.

“In action there is bound to be conflict. When can there be freedom from this conflict? When there is no question of feeling hurt. Even in the midst of work, at any time and under all circumstances, one must be ready to obey any kind of order.

This rule is in use in all monastic orders : in Christian convents and elsewhere.

“Imagine you are hungry and just as you are raising your hand to put food into your mouth you are asked to go elsewhere,” (The bell rings for prayers, for instance !)

“At that very instant you should gladly drop the food you were about to eat and obey the call. Such an attitude is an indication of one’s becoming established in a happiness which is not of this world. When one is nearing the state of effortless being, whether one is blamed or not for some short-coming in one’s work, leaves one quite indifferent. Then only does one become an instrument in His hands. The body moves like a tool and one watches in the nature of a spectator. Then one observes what a great variety of work gets done by such a body, and in how very smooth and efficient a manner. Egoless work is full of beauty, for it is not motivated by a desire for self-gratification.”

Here, I should like to add something : *Egoless action is full of beauty.* In order to attain to it, there is a way,—that of love’s perfect disinterestedness. Nowadays, for various reasons which are acceptable and understandable, the desire for

comfort has been greatly developed. Many are the different ways of increasing our well-being and self-satisfaction ; their pursuit is no doubt legitimate, for during the past centuries a great disregard for the body and the soul's needs yet prevailed, which are now better understood. But let us be vigilant ! for this leads us to the belief that the aim of our efforts, the object of our course here—on earth, is well-being and comfort. In consequence therefore, and almost unconsciously, each one's selfishness has greatly developed, an earthly selfishness which does not allow us to go beyond our ego and does not lead us to self-mastery. We take for granted that pleasure, happiness, are our due ! So that we find ourselves more destitute and less strong in the face of obstacles and difficulties.—To use terms easily understandable, I would say :

“Our aim should be, not so much to seek our own satisfaction, or well-being, but rather to have *strength enough to face the situation !*”

More than ever, nowadays, we have to face the challenge of life, confront it, master it. And the only *true* way of mastering life, is to do away with selfishness ; to reach that beauty of egoless action, in which God radiates and becomes tangible.

Lord, here I am, to do Thy bidding, yet I do not know Thy will ! It is perhaps the exact opposite of what I should like, but that is not important, so long as it is Thine.

Not so much to seek our ease as to try and *face the situation !* All is God. And if our hearts accept this, even suffering becomes a grace.

It is wise indeed to try not to be hurt by critical remarks, and also to remain indifferent to praise ; the two go together and both are necessary ; in this way we rise above the pairs of opposites and are born to our impersonal universality. Our individual self is blotted out and our hearts, our minds, our souls, freely open out to God.

“You must remember yet another thing. Only in your mind does everything exist.” Therefore try and see God in your mind as much as possible. “Man alone has been endowed with the privilege and the capacity to attain to God-realization. Know your Self. Try to understand who you are in reality.”

To know God is to know oneself !

I should like us to bear in mind this phrase in particular : “Remember that everything exists Only in your mind !”

We grasp things with our minds, and it is the mind which makes us see things in a certain fashion. If our mind is filled with God, the chances are it will not deceive us, because there is always a good lesson to be learnt in everything, the righting of an involuntary error, the joy of gratitude or of forgiveness. Our mind “makes” of events only what it is able to retain of them. Each person sees the same occurrence in his own particular way ; we can perceive in people and in objects only what we ourselves are, more or less high, more or less low, according to our own level of observation. Where the soul sees God, man very often sees the Devil ! It is our mind which

distorts our view and disfigures God in us. For God is Spirit, the eternal immensity of Life, the unfathomable depth of its Light, the Grace of its Beatitude. God is not "Someone", He is the Infinite and we are the unbounded growth of His Joy incarnate.

Aum Sri Ram

Jay Ram, jay, jay Ram !

Let us walk, day and night, chanting His Name, like a hymn, like a blessing, till it becomes such a force in us that no "ill" can befall us any longer. Swami Ramdas used to say : "God and His Name are one and the same thing." And the only "ill" is to forget God, our origin, our nature and our plenitude. Our other thoughts drop off by themselves, they evaporate in the light of an understanding, which is holy and blessed, of a serenity which is effective. A divine will develops in our consciousness and when we wish to be silent in order to let Ram sing in us, it comes to pass ! To reach that point, all we need do is to set out and persevere. "Under any guise, *weakness is a sin*. That is why it is very necessary for you to acquire and preserve physical and mental vigour... The Supreme Being is joy... Always try to live in joy."

About the different religious and sects, Ma says : "The one is present in each sect and religion, even though in some cases there seems to be conflict among them due to the limitations of the ego."... "Yet it is of course true that if one remains satisfied with whatever can be achieved by follow-

ing one line, the Goal of human life has not been achieved. What is required is a Realization that will uproot conflict and divergence of opinion, that is complete and free from inherent antagonism.”

Religion is a word which comes from the Latin *religare* and whose meaning is : ‘to join, bind, unite with’. Thus religion is the path which unites man with God, the finite with the Infinite, the transient with the Eternal, the dualistic understanding with the Spirit which is One.

“To advance on the path which cannot be relinquished,” says Ma, “and which leads to the realization of one’s Self—this is *dharma* (=the true law of our nature). The path to illumination is *different* for each one. Wherever you may be, from there itself start advancing. For there is only He, and no other. He Himself is holding you. He never, never forsakes you.”

Thus it is that God says to Abram (who will later become Abraham): “Get thee out of thy land, from thy country, and thy father’s house, to the land that I will shew thee”. (Genesis 12 : 1). Proceed, within yourself, towards the unknown that is known only to God, towards your true nature and your transfiguration by the Spirit, beyond all doctrines.

“The Supreme Being is Joy incarnate, and that is the reason why all creatures aspire after Joy. Seek always to live in joy, to express joy in your thoughts and acts, feel His joyous presence in everything you see and hear. This will bring you true happiness. Sadness is fatal for man ; banish

it from your thinking. Try to pay attention to everything that gives you real joy, it will bring you nearer to God." We must learn to close our eyes ! Not to dwell much on what is disagreeable, painful, heavy. To get over it, face the situation, yes, but also to pluck the least tiny flower which can bring us joy ! To be sensitive to the least insignificant event which gives contentment and keeps us cheerful. This is very important. To shun melancholy and to cultivate gratitude is the best way to rejoice in God everywhere and with everyone.

"How can you impose limitations on the Infinite by declaring : "this is the only right path" or "this is the only truth" ! Hindus, Moslems and all other religious communities of the world form one body. They all worship the Supreme Being and invoke His grace. All religions are intrinsically one, but the *path to illumination is different for each individual.*"

And I should like to end with a short story which seems to me suggestive.

"A couple who had lost their son asked Ma why the child had died prematurely."

Here is one of life's problems. Ma's answer is rather surprising but admirable :

"It all depends on each one's karma. Your *Karma* was to serve your son for a few years and his *karma* was to accept your care. When it was over, God took him away. Such is the great divine *līlā*. Loss and bereavement are part of earthly existence !" Death is an aspect of life. In this case, as elsewhere, the parents and the son had

accomplished what they had to do together and then Fate, which envelops everything and everyone in its universal and perfect completeness, separated them. Appearances changed. But Ma adds the following :

“Remember that the Atman of your child and your own Atman are one. The Atman who is never born nor dies, eternally IS. Our body leaves us like a worn-out garment. Try not to be attached to the body nor to weep for it. —*Weep for God alone.* —Remember Him, repeat His holy Name, contemplate Him and regularly read holy Scriptures such as the Bhagavad-Gītā, the Rāmāyaṇa and others, and you will be comforted. Your grief will be alleviated. Let your life be dedicated to God. *The state of the householder too is one in which spiritual development is possible.* —Suffering occurs to remind you to turn your thoughts towards That which is real. A man whose six sons had died was greatly comforted by reading the Bhāgavata Purāna.”

Similar are always Ma's answers to questions which She untiringly brings round to the Lord, Bhagavān. —All is God and all is One. Each one of us is the one immaculate Soul, the radiant consciousness of the Infinite. There is no separation, no departure, for all beings dwell in us and none belongs to us more or less than others. Truth in Peace is the unconditional Love of the whole cosmos in the perfect Joy of Its Creator. And the only effective remedy for all our afflictions is God-centredness, which perseveres in adoration.

HOW MA CAME TO ME

Stephen M. Quong

This is a true story of how MA came to me at the most critical hour of my life. I have been asked to share this experience with other devotees, so that all may be further inspired by the glory of Sri Ma.

On November 12, 1981 I was driving my car into the city of Santa Cruz, California. I was taking two new friends to a Yoga Sutra class being taught by Baba Hari Dass, who is originally from the Nainital district in North India. My car had a special, personalized license plate with the words "SRI MA" instead of the usual random numbers and letters. That morning the roads were wet and slippery from the first heavy rain of the season. As I was driving uphill around a sharp curve, a large tractor-truck pulling two trailers was coming downhill. The truck driver lost control of his vehicle and his trailers jack-knifed across to my side of the road. My car collided with the rear axle of the second trailer at a combined speed of about 60 miles per hour. It all happened without any warning, and there was no human way to avoid the collision.

The impact of the collision was so severe that my wrist-watch came off my wrist, went through the broken wind-shield, bounced off the side of the truck, and landed eight feet behind the final resting

place of my car. The entire front end of my car was completely destroyed, except for the license plate saying "SRI MA". That remained unharmed and undamaged !

According to all the witnesses at the scene of the accident, we all should have been killed. Miraculously, my two passengers escaped with only minor cuts and bruises, despite the fact that they were not wearing seat-belts. I was knocked unconscious for about 15-20 minutes, and the rescue workers had a very difficult time extricating my body from the wreckage. I suffered a broken left hip and fractured right pelvis, as well as multiple bruises, sprains and torn ligaments and muscles.

As I was regaining consciousness, my first thought was "MA ! MA ! MA ! Anandamayi Ma !" At first I did not remember what had happened. Slowly I came to realize that I had been involved in a serious accident. The extent of my injuries was not known at the time, but I knew that my life hung in the balance. Strangely enough, I remained calm and tranquil. I had no fear of death, nor had I the desire to live. My only thought was "MA ! MA ! MA !". At this crucial point, when I was on the verge of death from shock, exposure, and trauma, I had no concern about my physical well-being. I just could not ask MA to save me, nor to protect me, nor to heal me. My only thought was : "MA, here is life ; here is death. Take them both and give me pure love for Thee !" Only grant that I have pure love for Thee !" And then, at that very moment,

I was engulfed in the beatific divine presence of MA, lost in the ocean of Her bliss and holiness. I could only weep in joy and gratitude that I was in MA, and MA was with me, and in me, as my very own Self. The life and death of my physical form did not seem real. Only MA seemed "real". The love and bliss of Anandamayi Ma was all that I was aware of. I was ready to die, because my last and only thought was of MA. But by Her grace, I did not drop the body at that time.

I did not have to make a conscious effort to remember MA and to renounce the world during my last moments. MA's *darśana* came automatically ; and in MA's presence, there is no world to renounce, as such. There is only the bliss of eternal Being, of the identity of MA with my own Self. I was consumed by MA's *darśana* and overcome with joy at this divine blessing. I could think of nothing that I had ever done in this life to deserve MA's *darśana* at this time. Her grace is given freely to all, regardless of merit.

During the ambulance ride to the hospital, I was completely unafraid of the consequences of my injuries, or of any danger. I had several more visions of MA as I lay in the emergency room waiting for X-rays of my body to be taken. Along with MA's *darśana*, I also heard the voices of Brahmins chanting the Bhagavad Gita in Sanskrit. And I recalled the words of Lord Krishna as he gave his final *upadeśha* to Arjuna : "Abandoning all dharmas, seek refuge in Me alone ; I will save thee !" Abandoning the desire to live, or any

thought of family, friends, *sādhana*, or whatever, I took refuge in MA alone. And I was saved—this time saved from the death of the body ; hopefully I shall be completely saved one day.

The orthopædic physician who examined me at the hospital told me that I would be on crutches for 8-12 weeks. But by MA's grace I stopped using crutches after three weeks. Also, during my three-day convalescence in the hospital, I took no drugs or medicines of any kind for the relief of pain. MA was my only relief. The nurses were very surprised at my incredibly quick recovery. I had no treatment other than bed-rest and a little physical therapy before being discharged from the hospital. By MA's grace I was also able to get good vegetarian meals at the hospital ; this is very unusual in America.

A few weeks after the accident, the insurance company of the truck driver accepted complete liability for the collision and awarded me a generous settlement as compensation for property damage and bodily injury. With this money I was able to travel to India to have my first *darśana* of Anandamayi Ma, as she lives in Her earthly body today. I had not met Her previously.

So this is how MA came to me, at the most critical point in my life, and this is how MA arranged for me to be able to come to India to meet Her in person. All is Her grace. Meeting MA has been the fulfilment of my life. But even beyond life, beyond death—there is only the eternal Beingness of this love, this pure, undying love

between MA and Her children. May we all live pure lives, in quest of the Divine, that we may be truly worthy of this love. Jai MA !

NOT I BUT THOU

“What is the watchword of all ethical codes ? ‘Not I but thou’, and this ‘I’ is the outcome of the Infinite behind, trying to manifest Itself on the outside world. This little ‘I’ is the result, and it will have to go back and join the Infinite, its own nature. Every time you say ‘Not I, my brother, but thou’, you are trying to go back and every time you say ‘I and not thou’, you take the false step of trying to manifest the Infinite through the sense-world. That brings struggles and evils into the world, but after a time renunciation must come, eternal renunciation. The little ‘I’ is dead and gone. Why care so much for this little life ? All these vain desires of living and enjoying this life here or in some other place bring death.”

—Swami Vivekananda

REMINISCENCES

Cecile de Bonardi

(Translated from French)

One day, Sri Muktananda Giri, Mataji's mother, said to someone in reply to various questions about her daughter, "what shall I tell you, I don't know myself !" Then she added : "But who can know my Nirmala ?" In fact Ma's facets are innumerable, and manifold are the appearances She assumes for each one of us. Ever living in the Absolute and free from the reactions caused by the presence of the ego, She is one with all who come to Her ; and as for ourselves, we see in Her the reflection of our true nature. Does anyone exist who is able to know Ma as She is in Reality ? It is most unlikely unless one could attain to the state in which She is Herself. In actual truth, everyone contemplates his own Mataji.

If, in everyday life, Mataji can be the Guru who teaches in silence, at times seeming far removed and radiant with a spirituality that inspires deep veneration and at times awe or even fear, She can also laugh merrily about a joke, or discuss with Bengali ladies how a particular dish has to be prepared, or give detailed directions concerning Her ashrams. I remember having myself watched Her making meticulous arrange-

ments for blankets and pillows before the arrival of a few mahātmās.

If the rigour of the strictly orthodox brahmins in Mataji's entourage may surprise us and if meticulous adherence to caste rules and Her attitude towards foreigners is at times disconcerting, one has, without the slightest hesitation, to ignore all these troublesome details and dwell on that which is essential, namely the authenticity and the grandeur of Her spiritual Realization.

And Ma, does She not Herself put a full stop to all the questions about Herself by declaring : "You have brought down this body to the physical plane for accomplishing your work, for your spiritual uplift."

In our days when so many pseudo-gurus and pseudo-yogis disseminate in the West a distorted Hinduism and teachings of a more or less doubtful nature, Anandamayi Ma ever remains a blazing light of spirituality that radiates all over the world. At the same time She is the faithful guardian of the ancient tradition of Her country. For all who sincerely want to progress inwardly and thereby to assist the collective evolution on our planet, Sri Ma is bound to inspire unshakable confidence and profound gratitude.

The following is an attempt to tell of moments of great intensity experienced in Mataji's presence during my first *darśana*. In a few minutes, She is able—if it is Her *kheyāla*—to throw light on our spiritual quest, at times far more light than years of reading and practice of yogic exercises can give.

I should like in this description of "Mataji as I have seen Her" to give an idea of the value and the importance of every moment lived in Her presence.

One winter afternoon, many years ago, I was sitting in my room in an Ashram in France where I was then staying. The life of the community was greatly disturbed at the moment and I had just suffered a severe disappointment. My heart was sad and frozen like the garden outside where snow flakes were whirling about. I was absentmindedly turning the pages of a magazine in which, I had been told, there was an article on India. Suddenly the face of a woman gripped my attention. Specially Her eyes were extraordinarily striking. They were gazing into the far distance, an "inner distance" I felt, towards horizons that were unknown to us. Intense radiance and spiritual power emanated from that face and I was unable to take my eyes off. "How I should love to meet Her", I said to myself, while I felt a kind of remote call, although very weak as yet, almost like a murmur. I read her name : "Sri Anandamayi Ma."

The thought that such a being existed somewhere and that, perhaps, I might be able to meet Her one day, restored my confidence and I felt the courage awaken in me that was needed to accept the trial I had just been through. A flame, almost dead, had been stirred up. But I was still very far from guessing what an important role Sri Sri Ma was going to play in my life.

Several years later I was walking on a beautiful road in the country. On one side there were fields and on the other side gardens with pretty country houses in the shade of mango trees and plantains. In the background one could see the foothills of the Himalayas and the houses of Mussoorie rising tier by tier on the top of the hill. It was the beginning of April. The excessive heat as well as the torrential rain of the monsoon were still far away and there was little traffic, for the people who would be driven to cooler places by the grilling heat in their towns, had not yet started on their exodus. A few cows were strolling along the lower path, or peacefully chewing the cud, some children were chasing each other and shouting, an old man sitting on a mile stone was looking into empty space.

The day was about to end and on the horizon long clouds, flame coloured like the robe of a sadhu, floated over the sky that was of shades of opaline transparency. The entire landscape was envelopped by that golden light and the flaxen dust that lend to the twilight in India a peculiar beauty and sweetness.

I pushed open a garden-gate and found myself in front of a large building surrounded by trees. I had entered the Ashram of Sri Anandamayi Ma.

This happened on my first journey to India, about 20 years ago. I had just perambulated over the whole of the peninsula, eager to see everything for I did not know whether I would ever be able to come again. My peregrinations in South and

Central India were completed and now I had come North in search of Mataji. I had first been given to understand that She was in Benares but on arriving there I learnt that She had left for Bihar the evening before and that in about 10 days She would be in Vrindaban. I went there, but only to be disappointed once again. An Indian lady of Mataji's ashram told me with a smile that Ma's programme had been changed and that it was not known where She was at the moment. However, a monk informed me that Ma would soon be in Dehradun and assured me that this time I would certainly find Her and that he was himself preparing to join Ma at Dehradun.

Mataji seemed to be as unseizable as a leaping fire, and I was wondering whether I would ever succeed in meeting Her.

Yet, that evening at Dehradun, I was told that She had not only arrived, but that She was already in the courtyard where the *darśana* would take place. This information was given to me by a very old monk with long white hair and an impressive beard, who was standing at the entrance of a dark room. When I approached, he at first recoiled in haste. "Don't come in, don't come in", he exclaimed with a voice that sounded frightened as well as commanding, while he stood in front of the door blocking the way. I of course had no intention of intruding into his room. Anyhow, with a gesture full of condescension he very kindly showed me the place where I could find Mataji.

It was a courtyard, all white, the walls plastered with lime, such as can be seen in many Indian homes. A few green plants and in the centre a couch with a brightly coloured canopy. Only a handful of people were present. A few elderly ladies, probably widows to judge from their saris without borders, were sitting in a corner. A monk dressed in his ochre robe was counting his beads. On the couch I saw a woman lying who seemed asleep. Her head rested on Her folded arm. Her face was ageless, of a serene beauty, framed by long black hair that fell down to Her waist. She was dressed in a white cotton sari and a shawl of the same colour covered her shoulders. An ivory bracelet on each wrist were the only ornaments She wore. I noticed Her, for an Indian, very fair complexion, and the delicacy of Her hands and feet. A very beautiful young girl stood near Her, fanning Her gently.

I sat down at a little distance and rested after my walk in the sun on the main road. My tired limbs relaxed and I inhaled with pleasure the evening breeze that made the green plants oscillate. Inwardly I thanked Ma that this first meeting was taking place far from towns and crowds, in this little, very simple courtyard in the midst of fields, trees and hills. I leant against the wall and closed my eyes. Gradually, the wandering thoughts calmed down and I let myself be envelopped and pervaded by the silence of the place, a silence of a quality and intensity I had never known before. A great peace descended upon me, coupled with a

feeling of repose and the impression of a freshness such as a tired pilgrim may experience, who after a long and difficult march, lies down in the shade of a large tree on the bank of a limpid watercourse. The time passed. I looked at Ma, She had not moved and seemed still asleep.

Before my eyes there was a scene, the beauty of which, with its harmony of colours, the sweetness of the air, the calm that envelopped everything, seemed to me utterly perfect. A dream of very pure beauty that I carried within myself since the beginning without its ever materializing, had now become reality. However, I felt sure that a similar scene transferred to the West into the courtyard of a Spanish or Italian villa would not have produced the same effect. It did not take me long to understand that the enchantment that I experienced was due to the infinitely subtle inner radiance that emanated from Ma and seemed to be transmitted to everything that surrounded Her: the praying widows, the meditating swami, the plants and even the walls and pavement of the courtyard, their own real essence, True Being, actually present in everyone and everything, but so rarely expressed. "The spiritual practices and meditations of innumerable sages and yogis have in the course of centuries impregnated with spirituality the holy places and innumerable country-sides and dwellings in India", I thought, "divinity in some way seems to glow in the stones of its temples, in the spreading trees of its countryside and in the glaciers of its mountains. This is undoubtedly one of the reasons of

the irresistible attraction this country seems to exercise over such a large number of people”.

The peace I felt was so much more profound than the peace I had ever experienced in other places of prayer, and the silent beauty that surrounded me was so eloquent, that the most perfect of poems or the most marvellous music could not be compared to it. This scene of the Ashram : the guru resting in a calm place before giving *daršana* became in my eyes through the magic presence of Mataji, the quintessence of harmony, an image out of time, a glimpse into Eternity.

“I could remain like this for ever, without ever growing tired, squatting in this sweetness and this plenitude,” I thought, and a call, almost a supplication arose in me, “ah, may time stand still and may life remain fixed in this marvellous present, so far removed from the clamours of the world and the ugliness of everyday life.”

At that very moment Ma slightly opened Her eyes and I recognized that look that had struck me so powerfully in the first picture I had seen of Her years earlier on that icy winter day. A look that seemed to come from so far and to contemplate the void.

There was some kind of vibration in the air, a sort of expectation of things. A woman came, holding a bowl from which rose thick clouds of fragrant incense, and for a second Ma's form seemed to vanish behind a veil. Then Her face reappeared and I thought there was an imperceptible smile on Her lips. A flight of parrots passed

through the sky turning to the left and one of them uttered a piercing cry.

On the road some cars stopped, their doors were banged. The quite happiness I had felt till then made me forget that the hour of *darśana* was approaching. A group of people arrived, followed by another one, and then a third one. All did obeisance to Ma with offerings of flowers and fruits. I realized with shame and regret that I had come with empty hands, not knowing whether I would find Ma and as yet only slightly acquainted with the customs of Ashrams. The small courtyard kept on filling with crowds of people and I saw, not without bewilderment, whole families invading the limited space in which we found ourselves. Some children were running about, ladies without bothering about politeness pushed themselves forward in order to sit as close as possible to Mataji's couch; a bleating goat was being chased which had, God alone knows why, entered with the crowd. Soon I found myself wedged in between an imposing matron who at regular intervals breathed deeply and repeated "Rām, Rām", and a young woman, whose adorable baby with round cheeks and large black eyes, persistently tugged at the sleeve of my dress. Penetrating into the Ashram, everyday life assumed again its rights.

Now Ma was sitting up, and She was not alone. A very aged lady, smaller than Herself, dressed in the ochre robe of the *saṁnyāsī*, her head shaven, sat next to Her. It was Sri Muktananda Giri, Her mother, addressed by the devotees as

“Didima,” who accompanied Her on almost all Her travels.

Ma responded with animation to someone talking to Her. She was laughing, Her eyes sparkling, Her face extremely expressive. I noticed Her hands, a little while ago motionless in Her sleep, which now reminded me of butterflies dancing in the evening light.

A personage, doubtless of great importance to judge from his bearing and from the way he was received by one of Ma's monks, had arrived. He wore a *dhoti* of a very fine texture and an embroidered shawl and, perched on his bald and shining head, the little cap of the Congress members. He walked, leaning on his stick that had a silver knob. He was very stout and with some difficulty prostrated before Ma ; I even thought he might fall down and be unable to rise up again. A shy servant, who looked like a frightened deer, accompanied him, carrying a heavy basket trimmed with silverpaper and filled with fruits of all sorts. He put the basket on the floor and eclipsed himself hastily. Ma paid no attention to the stout gentleman who after his prostration and having received a flower garland went to find himself a seat. Ma bent down with amazing suppleness and rapidity, chose four very beautiful fruits from the basket, held them in Her hands for a few moments and then passed them on to Her attendant who ran after the servant and gave him the fruits, repeating : “Mataji's *prasada*, Mataji's *prasada* !”

In the packed courtyard, the men had sat down on one side and the women on the other. Calm returned. Near me the tired child had fallen asleep in his mother's arms. Didima's eyes were shut, she seemed to meditate. Ma, sitting very straight, had again that gaze lost in the far distance, turned towards a region to which we have no access. But from time to time Her gaze was fixed on one of Her attendants who, often absorbed in herself, was not conscious of this, while Ma turned Her head away and another person stared at Her with a kind of avidity. I observed this little game for some time, having here, like a few moments before with the very important person and his servant, a first glimpse of Ma's *līlā*.

I noticed that the silence, which had been restored by and by, had not quite the same quality as when Ma had been lying alone on Her couch in the centre of the courtyard. Nevertheless, even during the worst hustle and bustle, when the crowd had gathered, a certain stillness, almost tangible, had prevailed, similar to the quiet and soundless waters in great depths which even the most violent storms are unable to trouble. That underlying peace which is present everywhere, even in the big cities with their agitated and noisy masses, is an astounding phenomenon in India of which many strangers are aware. It powerfully struck Sri Aurobindo when he landed in Bombay after having spent the years of his childhood and youth in Europe.

All of a sudden Mataji looked at me. There are no words to express the intensity of this first

exchange. Everything was contained, everything was said in that first glance full of love and yet totally impersonal, and I saw myself in the eyes of Ma,—for the sage can be compared to a mirror—with my difficult past and my completely unknown future, which Ma knew, I felt quite certain. There was the luminous side of my nature with its spiritual aspirations and possibilities, beautiful and pure like the wings of angels in the sun, subtle like the sounds of Krishna's flute ; but there was also the dark side, the monsters that rumble deep down in the unconscious, cowering in hidden corners, ever ready to come to the surface to capture one booty after another, never satisfied ; and the innumerable obstacles on the way, and the path itself, so long, merely endless, but of which Ma seemed to show me the goal and to give me the certainty that one day it would be attained. *There*, there will be neither glittering visions, nor dreadful apparitions, but only the Ultimate Reality, where the marvellous and the terrible will have dissolved and where the Being which we already are but which only ignorance prevents us from seeing, will shine for ever. Yes, all this was in Mataji's eyes and still very much more : the soul of India, the universe displayed in its boundlessness, life and death.

Now Ma's eyes were fixed on someone else. Although I was fascinated by all that I had discovered by Her contact, I nevertheless experienced a certain anguish. "Before attaining to that state of fulfilment and peace where all joys and sorrows

are annihilated, how many obstacles have to be conquered”, I said to myself, “what dangerous guardians of the threshold have to be faced, what a long path to traverse with how many lives spent in renunciation and inner loneliness? For to deserve resurrection, must one not pass through death? Was this not what all the traditions taught?” Something at the bottom of my heart, like the voice of a condemned whose sentence has just been pronounced, tried to protest, almost to implore, “but then, what will happen to me, shall I die, I, I, I,…” A story told by Ramakrishna Paramahansa rose in my memory :

He passed the Panchavati when he heard a frog croak in great fright. He went near it and found it in the mouth of a snake. When he returned after several hours, he heard the same cries. Looking in the bushes, he saw that the snake had the frog still in its mouth. It could neither swallow nor eject it. The agony of the frog was endless and likewise the suffering of the snake almost as intense. “Had it been caught by a cobra it would have been dead before being able to utter three cries”, thought Ramakrishna. “Someone who succumbs to the influence of a guru who is not competent, never attains to liberation, but with a really accomplished Guru the ego of the *jīva* will be destroyed in no time”. And the anxious voice of my own ego continued to murmur, “take care, be on your guard”. Ma’s face was again turned to my side, it seemed to me that Her look was empty and contemplated the

void, when suddenly She started to laugh without any apparent reason, with a kind of primordial innocence and with a joy that seemed to spring from a source known to Her alone.

Far away, down in the valley a dog barked. By my side, the bulky lady had fallen asleep, with her head rocking on her voluminous breast. The child was slumbering all the time, sometimes smiling in his sleep, as if waiting for his mother to wake up. The last rays of the sun had disappeared behind the mountains, the lamps were being lit.

That sudden laughter of Ma left me bewildered. As if by coincidence it had gushed forth at the very moment when I had felt alarmed and agitated about my future. It was most unlikely that it had been meant for me and yet it found a resonance in my consciousness. I found it disquieting, almost cruel.

Recently I have read in "Matri Vani" a small collection of Ma's words : "this body does not do anything of its own volition—everything happens spontaneously." That sudden outburst of hilarity was in fact as spontaneous as it was unexpected—but what was its real import? After a long moment of inner suspense my fears started to dissolve. Gradually some replies arose in me which I would have been quite incapable of finding all by myself and I understood that in the silence of the *darśana* Ma was teaching us. The years during which I had practised meditation had given me sufficient receptivity to grasp without the aid

of the spoken word, but intuitively, and at least partially, what a Guru like Ma had to communicate. I tried to remain attentive. It seemed to me that Ma's laughter was under the circumstances devoid of intention, except those which everyone of us offered Her, from wherever we found ourselves and according to our spiritual development and the contents of our subconscious. Probably, I mused, others in the audience, drew from this unexpected behaviour their own personal conclusions, quite different from mine. But my ego which was worried about its survival at the moment when Ma broke out into laughter, interpreted it as a menace or at least as a mockery which I considered out of place.

In reality, could not this laughter of Mataji, so totally impersonal and yet concerning us all, could it not also be interpreted as Ma's invitation to join Her where She dwelled : so far beyond happiness and sorrow, beyond good and bad ? Did it not in fact express that impersonal joy of Divinity, that *Ananda* which remains unchanged through thousands of human tragedies ? For the Lord knows that our anguish and our tears, which are also part of His *līlā*, help us to attain to liberation by purifying our nature. And I saw the image of Kali and Her apparently so cruel and dreadful dance, in Her hand brandishing a severed head, while She lovingly made the mudra of protection with Her other hand ; and behind Her appeared the face of Ma, laughing like She had a few minutes earlier.

Ma in Her very subtle manner told me that suffering must not be rejected, not even dreaded and that without renouncing oneself and without the trials that go with it, the discovery of our true Being can never be anything more than a delusion. But one day, we also shall realize that the whole universe is, *Bhagavān's* play, and then the pleasures and pains that now are still of such great importance for us, will make us smile.

Gradually some kind of surrender took place in me and I started to understand the uselessness of revolt and despair. Of course I knew that for the moment total renunciation was as yet impossible and that egotism, desires and fears were still very powerful ; but I could glimpse clearly enough to be able to make the choice, which is required of all those who are seriously and definitely pledged to the path of yoga, and it was accepted. I meditated for another while, but the *darśana* was coming to an end. A very gentle force, like someone who graciously holds out a hand to you, invited me to leave. I understood that this first meeting was over and that it was time to start on the return journey. I got up quietly, traced out a way for myself between the crowd of women and arrived at the entrance.

There I turned round for the last time : Mataji and her mother were sitting with their eyes shut. Behind them stood the beautiful Indian girl still fanning them.

Outside it was night, a mild and luminous night, filled with the perfume of jasmine and other

sweet smelling blossoms. The parrots had gone to sleep in the trees of the garden. Instead the bats were circling round the ashram. One of them, attracted by a lamp on the verandah slightly brushed against my face on its silent flight. In the sky the stars had risen, the milky way was displaying itself mysteriously, the constant guardian of unknown moons ; at the distance shone the Southern Cross and on the peak of the mountain the lights of Mussoorie contributed a tiny point scintillating on the dark and deserted Himalayan range.

At the bottom of my heart Ma's glance was watching and Her Name rose in me like a peaceful chant.

“God is ever busy in freeing you from the tangle of worldly friendships and attachments which are in their very nature unstable and unreliable, and, therefore, bring you nothing but sorrows and anxieties. Let this experience teach you that if there is one whom you can entirely trust and for whom you should offer the love of an undivided heart, it should be the supreme Lord Himself who has His eternal seat in your heart.”

—Swami Ram Das

HOW TO TAKE GOD'S NAME*

Swami Ramdas

God's NAME is sweet. There is a way of repeating it that can give you joy and make you the very embodiment of Joy.

In the first place surrender yourself to Him, accepting Him as the **SOLE POWER** pervading all life and causing all movements in the world. He is the Lord of the Universe.

Feel that you are nothing before Him. As an individual you are insignificant in comparison with Him. Know that you are nothing and He is everything.

In this spirit take His NAME. Call Him and pray to Him with such an attitude and be sure that God whom you do not see within, will reveal Himself.

His NAME is simply wonderful in its potency. It can purify, elevate and enlighten you thoroughly. Repeat the NAME constantly with all faith. Do not use its power for worldly ends. It is the key that opens the portals of Heaven wherein God, absolute splendour, joy and peace dwell. That Heaven is in your own heart.

His NAME also serves as the lamp that illumines the path leading to Him. Call upon Him as you call your mother. Let all the purest and

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deepest feelings of your heart be concentrated in the call. Few know the greatness of the NAME. Sages and saints have sung of its glory in ecstatic words.

If the world could only take to it, how free and blissful all beings in it would become ! How all the difficult problems of life would be solved ; and peace and harmony established on this earth !

May His NAME ring in the hearts of all ! Let its sweet music charm the ears of all ! Let it always remain on the tongues of all people and fill them with ecstasy !

We are all manifestations of the one Truth, the one Reality which is eternal, all-pervading, changeless, ever-illumined, whose nature is pure bliss and peace.

“How to know that we are this Truth ? The simple method is to constantly think and remember that we are this Truth and by so doing dispel the illusion which makes us believe that we are only the perishable manifested beings or bodies. Remembrance connotes removal of forgetfulness. Forgetfulness—which makes us wrongly think we are what we are not—should be removed by remembering what we actually are”.

—Swami Ramdas

MĀTRI LĪLĀ

(April—June, 1982)

In the last issue of Ānanda Vārtā we already reported in short about Sri Ma's visit to Agartala in Tripura State where a small Ashram had been ready for nearly three years, waiting to be opened by Ma.

It must be mentioned in this connection that several years ago the erstwhile ruler of Tripura State, Maharaja Manikya Bahadur and his wife had kindly donated a piece of land within their palace compound for an Ashram to be built in Sri Ma's holy name, because Tripura is the State where Sri Ma was born. Subsequently, at the express wish of the Maharaja, the beautiful temple of Uma Maheswara, situated within the palace compound on the bank of a spacious lake with its extensive appurtenant area was also handed over to the Anandamayee Sangha on a permanent lease by the Tripura Govt.

For several years innumerable devotees and admirers of Agartala and the surrounding areas had been eagerly waiting for Sri Ma's visit. At long last Mataji with a party of about twenty-four arrived at Agartala by road on March 30th at midday. For one night She stayed in a newly constructed bungalow on the outskirts of the town and early morning on March 31st moved to Her

ashram. Immediately on arrival She visited Sri Uma Maheswara Mandir and then formally inaugurated the new house specially built for Her use.

She had brought all the way from Vrindaban a small marble statue of Goddess Sarasvati and a Narmadeswara Śiva-linga to be installed in Her bungalow. Mataji remarked : “This body is not going to live here, so I have brought Ma Sarasvati, the giver of *Brahmavidyā*, to occupy my room. This will be Her room and Tripura Śiva Mahadeva will give *darśana* from the veranda”. The consecration of the image of Goddess Sarasvati and of the Śiva Linga was performed by the priest of the ruling family, in Sri Ma’s presence on the 31st morning, a very auspicious day.

Long before sunrise on April 1st, Mataji left the Ashram and spent a few hours quietly in a spacious tent pitched for Her use on the lawn of the I.G.P’s residence, leaving at 11 a.m. by car for Dharmanagar. On Her way She paid a short visit to the palace temple at the special request of the Maharaja, who arranged for a most dignified reception.

The night was spent at the P.W.D. Inspection House at Manu. On reaching Dharmanagar the next day, She boarded Her special coach to Bongaigaon, the last station on the meter gauge line. Perfect arrangements were made by the Railway Dept. also for Her return journey to Calcutta. Thanks are due also particularly to Sri Ramendra Bhattacharya, Inspector General of Police, Tripura, who is the Vice-President of Agartala Ashram

Managing Committee, for the excellent and elaborate transport arrangements made by him for Sri Ma and Her entire party's visit to Agartala and their stay at the P.W.D Bungalow at Manu both ways. Sri Bhattacharya and his wife personally saw Sri Ma off at Dharmanagar Rly. Station.

Sri Ma left New Bongaigaon on 3rd April afternoon, reaching Calcutta on the 4th midday, and went to stay at the residence of Sri Vibhuti Chakravarti in Bhaśa near Diamond Harbour which is very difficult to reach from Calcutta. All the same quite a number of devotees managed to go there for Mataji's *darśana*. On the 6th, 7th and 8th Mataji visited our Ashram to grace with Her presence the various rites and ceremonies in connection with the conservation of a beautiful new temple for Didima, Sri Muktananda Giriji Maharaj. Mataji spent 18 hours in cars during Her four days in Calcutta, since it took nearly two hours each way from Diamond Harbour to the Agarpara Ashram. On April 8th, after all the ceremonies had been completed, Sri Ma left the Ashram at about 3 p.m. to escape the surging crowd and motored to the residence of Sri Jalan at Howrah, where She spent a few quiet hours on a lawn before boarding the Doon Express for Hardwar that very night.

On April 10th early morning Mataji alighted at Kankhal. The trip to Agartala and Calcutta, where Sri Ma had appeared in great form and excellent mood, notwithstanding the tedious and enervating journey of several days each way, had

nevertheless been an undue strain. Mataji needed rest. She remained in Her cottage and the daily evening *darśana* was sometimes through the windows or Mataji would stand on Her veranda for a few short moments while everyone gazed at Her from the garden.

On April 14th, Didima's *Samnyāsa Utsava* was celebrated as usual by *mangal āratī*, an elaborate pūjā in Didima's Samādhi Mandir, talks by mahātmās in the hall, sādhu feeding, etc. But Mataji never left Her cottage except for ten minutes at midday when She stood in the hall while *āratī* was performed to the mahātmās before their meal.

On April 26th, *Akshaya Tritīya*, a new cottage for Mataji, built by Sri and Srimati Sailen Ghosh of Calcutta, situated directly on the bank of Gānga opposite the sadhu's building, was ceremoniously opened. On the 24th some pandits performed preparatory rites in the enclosure in the hall and Mataji attended for a few minutes, sitting in Her wheel-chair. On the 26th morning Mataji sat in the small hall of the cottage for an hour while the elaborate inauguration rites were performed, the crowd watching through the large windows on three sides. The same evening Sri Ma again gave a lengthy *darśana* there itself.

On April 28th the birth anniversary of Sri Adi-Sankaracharya was celebrated by a solemn Pūjā in his mandir, followed by talks of mahātmās in the Ashram hall which Mataji attended for half an hour.

That very night Mataji left for Kanpur at the urgent invitation of the family of late Sri Padampat Singhania, who were performing an *Ati Rudra Yajña* at the Ashram there. Mataji reached Kanpur on the 26th and stayed only for two days and one night, returning to Kankhal on May 1st early morning. She was in an excellent mood. On April 30th Sri Bholanath's *Mahāsamādhi* was commemorated by pūjā and sādhu feeding.

From May 3rd to 11th Sri Ma's birthday celebrations took place. The first pūjā was performed in front of Her photo in the hall while āratī was done early morning on the veranda of Her cottage where She sat in person.

For seven days there was *Rāsālīlā* every morning till 10 a.m. in a large pandal in the courtyard, followed by recitations from the *Gītā*, *Chandi*, *Upanishad*, *Bhagavata*, *Hanuman Chalisa*, etc in the hall until midday ; *Rāmāyana*, talks by mahāt-mās and kīrtana in the evening as every year, but Mataji never left Her cottage. Every evening Sri Ma's āratī was performed there itself, Mataji lying on Her couch on the open terrace and everyone was allowed to enter the compound and sit on carpets spread all over the grounds. Visiting mahāt-mās sat on the terrace near Sri Ma. This was the only daily *darśana* that Mataji gave throughout Her birthday celebrations, but it was extraordinarily elevating, powerful and impressive. Beautiful music was sung throughout while the large audience sat hushed and spell bound. Occasionally Sri Ma would sit up for a little while

to greet a mahātma but most of the time She remained lying.

Since devotees had flocked from far and near bringing gifts and were eager to perform pūjā, tickets were issued to a certain number each day, who lined up in a long queue to offer their presents to Mataji for half an hour before *ārati* started.

The *tithi pūjā* was performed in the hall of Ma's cottage. Mahātmās and a few selected devotees could be accommodated in the hall, the rest watched through the open door from the covered veranda and the open grounds. Unfortunately it started raining which caused some confusion among those sitting in the open but the pūjā proceeded undisturbed and the sky soon cleared up.

Recitation of hundred Chandis, Kumāri Pūjā of 108 little girls and all other functions were carried out as every year. Those who officiated were allowed to go to Mataji before and after to receive Her blessing.

On May 12th evening *Nāma yajña* started as usual after Sri Ma's birthday, continuing for 24 hours in the Ashram hall.

On May 17th, the Prime Minister, Sm. Indira Gandhi paid a visit to Ma and talked to Her in private. The same evening Mataji left by car for a solitary place near Raiwalla, at the invitation of Sri and Sm. Ram Panjwani, for complete rest and quiet, returning on May 27th morning. Five sons of different devotees from Calcutta had their sacred thread ceremony that very morning. Mataji was present for a little while and then retired to Her

new cottage where She gave *darśana* every evening for a short time, always lying down.

Again Sri Ma never left Her cottage until June 16th evening, when Jagadguru Sri Sri Sankaracharya of Sardapitha, Sringeri Math arrived with his disciple and successor Swami Bharati Tirtha Maharaj and a party of over a hundred men. In spite of Her ill-health Mataji came to the hall to welcome him. The next two days She again sat in the hall for 45 minutes each morning while Sri Sankaracharyaji and his disciple delivered talks in Hindi and Sanskrit. On the 17th afternoon, Mataji received our august guests in the hall of Her cottage, offered gifts to them and talked animatedly to them with a loud voice for quite some time. When they left on the 18th at 3 p.m. Mataji was again present to bid farewell to them. The whole party was proceeding to Gangotri and Jamnatri and Sri Sankaracharyaji readily agreed to pay another visit to Sri Ma on their way back. Since Mataji was to be present at a Bhagavata Saptah in the Kishenpur Ashram, Dehradun, from June 26th till July 4th, they were invited to meet Her there.

Mataji arrived in Kishenpur at 6-30 a.m. on June 26th and sat in the hall for a short time while *ārati* was performed and everybody could do *praṇāma*. Then Mataji was taken to Her room downstairs. When Sri Swami Vishnuashramji Maharaj started his first talk on the Bhagavata at 10 a.m., Mataji remained in the hall for a whole hour and was then carried to Her room upstairs.

The Bhagavata Saptah had been arranged primarily by Srimati Shanti Sabarwal of Dehradun. Two other parties also participated and so three *pandits* recited the Sanskrit original in two different places. Swami Vishnuashramji talked daily in Hindi for about 3 hours each in the morning and afternoon in the beautifully decorated hall. The audience spread all over the verandas and the courtyard. Sri Ma remained upstairs and for the first few days stood up on Her veranda for a very brief spell while everybody had Her *daršana* from the platform below.

On June 30th evening Jagadguru Sri Sankaracharyaji arrived after His pilgrimage. Mataji received him upstairs on Her veranda. A portion of the Ashram on the level of Sri Ma's room as well as an upper storey had been allotted to him, his successor and a few others. The rest of his party had to be accommodated at the Ramatirtha Ashram above Rajpur for lack of space.

On July 2nd morning, Thakur Sri Sitaram Das Omkarnath suddenly arrived from his retreat at Kanyakumari in spite of his age of 92 and his precarious health, for the sole purpose of persuading Mataji to get well and bless the world for many more years with Her physical presence. He left for Rishikesh after a short time and from there to Delhi to fly back to Kanyakumari. Sri Sankaracharyaji, before leaving on July 2nd, also urgently requested Mataji to recoupe Her health and invited Her to visit Sarda Math at Sringeri. Mataji said : "Take me with you !" When

Sankaracharyaji asked : “When will you come ?”
 Mataji replied : “Not this year.”

It is well to remember that Mataji’s body does not thrive on ordinary food as human beings do. She has declared time and again that it is our purity of aspiration and our God-centredness that are the food which sustain Her body.

“There is no difference between *jñāna* and absolute surrender to the Lord, that is in thought, word and deed. To be complete, surrender must be unquestioning. The devotee cannot bargain with the Lord or demand favours at His hands. Such total surrender comprises all ; it is *jñāna* and *vatrāgya*, devotion and love.”

—Bhagavan Raman Maharshi



Last word on Surrender

There was no rest for Sri Ramakrishna. Once a man asked him, "Sir, you are a great yogi, why do you not put your mind a little on your body and cure your disease?" At first he did not answer, but when the question had been repeated, he gently said :

'My friend, I thought you were a sage, but you talk like other men of the world. This mind has been given to the Lord. Do you mean to say that I should take it back and put it upon the body, which is but a mere cage of the soul.'

—Sri Ramakrishna

