

ĀNANDA VĀRTĀ

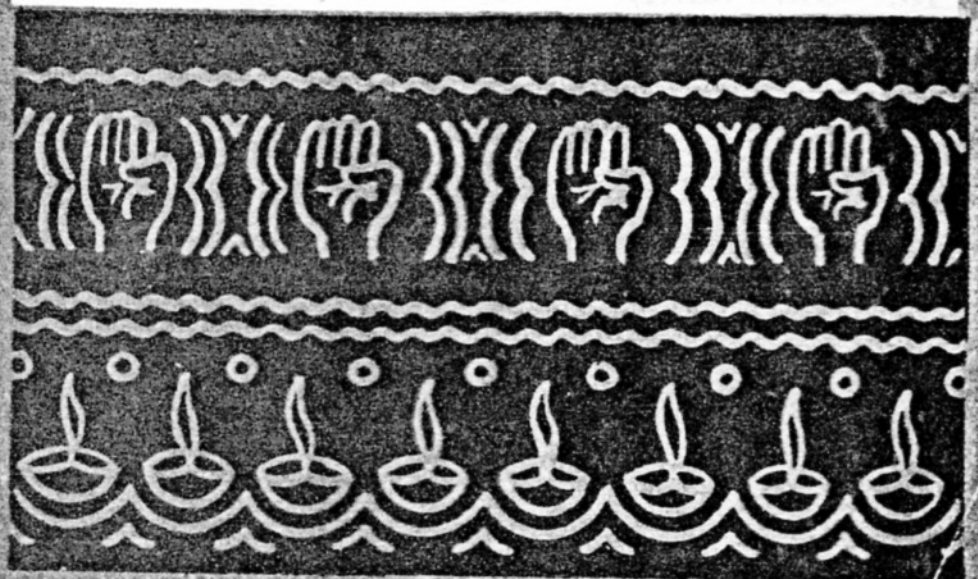
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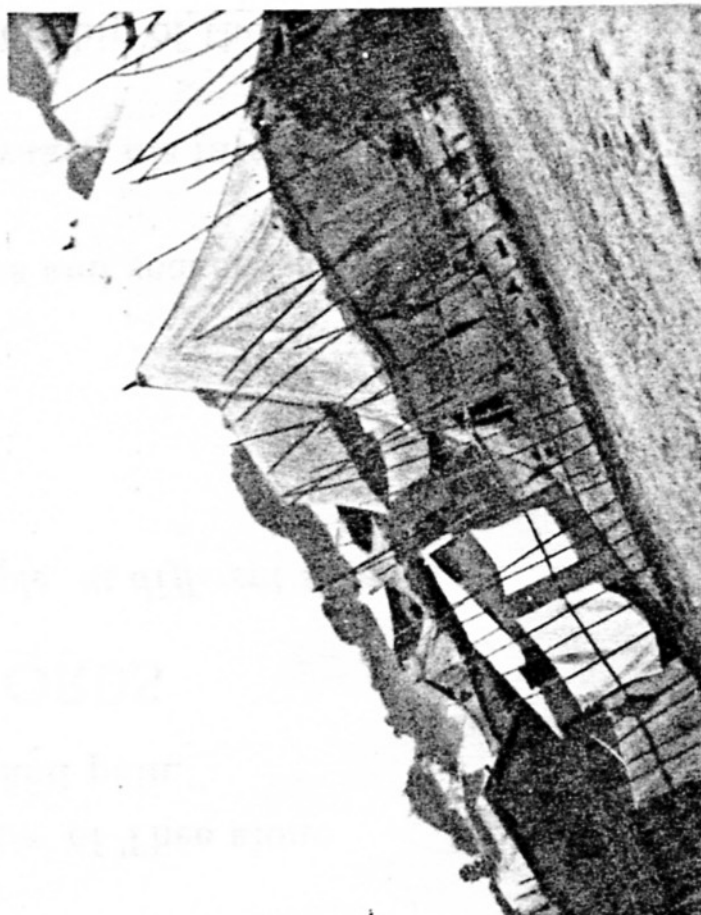
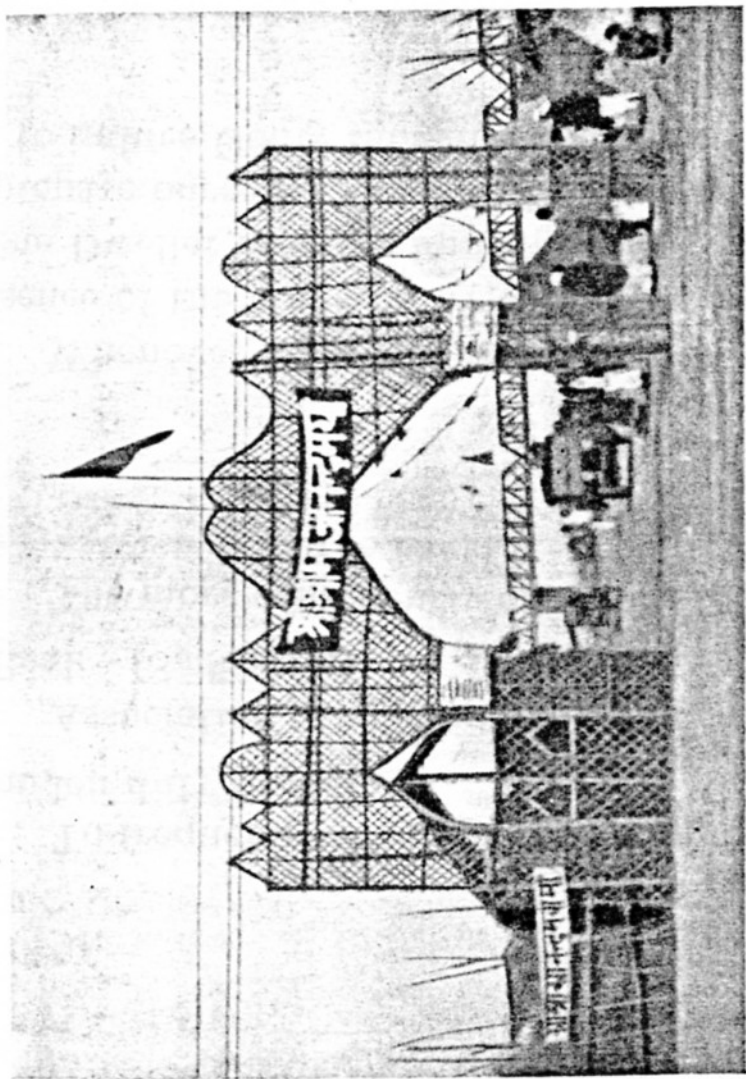
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"Spoken word, verily, must be of Thee alone
All else is but futility and pain."

MOTHER'S WORDS

(Replies to letters from different people at different times.)

Satsang.

1.

To frequent the company of saints, sages and seekers after Truth is the bounden duty of man.

Association of this kind will help to awaken his interest in that which is Real. (*Sadbuddhi*).

The more consistently one seeks the fellowship of the spiritually minded the greater will be the Good.

2.

Whenever no opportunity can be found for coming into the physical presence of the holy and wise, it behoves one to contemplate *Vasudeva*, the divine Dweller in every human heart. By cultivating His Presence one has to prepare oneself. One should choose activities and surroundings that are apt to induce Godly thoughts and aspirations. (*Sadbhava*).

The Importance of the Guru.

1.

Just as without the help of teachers and experts one cannot become proficient in the worldly knowledge taught at universities, even so the sublime Knowledge of the Absolute does not come without the guidance of a competent Guru. To find him is the problem, be it for spiritual progress, liberation or anything down to the smallest detail.

2.

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

How to Meet Adversity and Danger.

1.

Write to him, for the present this is His way of manifesting Himself. Tell everyone to abide in fortitude, and in total surrender to lay all matters at His Feet.

2.

Verily, He is in all shapes and in all states of being. Whatever comes to pass at any time, it is He who either causes it to happen or does it Himself or knows about it.

In all things rely wholly on Him.

3.

Adversity will of a surety befall man. Bear it like a hero, armoured in patience and fortitude. Accepting what comes as His dispensation endeavour to seek refuge in Him alone.

4.

It is desire that causes sorrow, but the will to God-realization is itself felicity. Be certain that He will cleanse and comfort you and take you into His arms.

This trouble has come to lead you to happiness. At all times hold Him in remembrance.

5.

Nothing should be done in a hurry. One has to be anchored in patience. Whatever He may assign to you, try to take it upon yourself as His gift, joyfully.

6.

More often than not God destroys disaster by adversity. Complete trust in Him through foul and fair is what is wanted.

7.

No evil can ever betide him who cleaves to God's name. What one suffers is in exact keeping with the nature of one's actions. If the flow of God's name is sustained all work will beget the good.

8.

Wherever God may place you at any time and under whatever circumstances, recollect that it is all for the best. Endeavour to go through life leaving your burdens in His hands. He is the preserver, He is the guide, He is all in all.

9.

In times of affliction one must persevere in patience. Although distress and danger certainly are part of man's lot, yet will they be conquered by one who can meet them with courage and calm.

Conditions vary. During spells of misfortune it is necessary to rely on Him with even greater fervour. There is no knowing through what mishap he may wipe out peril. Sometimes He actually removes danger by adversity. This is why He is called Dispeller of Danger — Saviour.

MOTHER'S AMARA VANI

(3)*

Mataji : Father**, what do you call action that is free from desire (*Nishkāma Karma*) ?

A devotee : Well, it does not seem possible to me to perform action without desire, that is to say devoid of attachment for either the work or its fruits, but solely from a sense of duty. According to the scriptures (*Shastras*) only the man who has achieved perfect fulfilment is capable of such action. As long as one is linked to the objects of the senses it is impossible. Yet, what is taken up in a spirit of dedication to God may well develop into work done without any desire.

Mataji : Whether with or without desire — it is still action. One cannot possibly remain without action until the state of Pure Being comes about. Therefore let this aspect of the matter also be understood.

When you surrender yourself to the Guru you have to carry out his orders unconditionally. In this your motive is exclusively to execute the Guru's will. Consequently, when, going about the task you grow eager to do your utmost, can you call this also

a desire in the ordinary sense ? To set one's heart on being efficient with the sole object of fulfilling the Guru's will is certainly a good desire.

If for any reason there should be even the least resentment the action can no longer be described as without attachment. Suppose after having accomplished by far the greater portion of some work, you have to abandon it, and towards the end someone else takes it up and completes it and he gets the credit for achieving the whole of the task. If you mind this even in the slightest degree, how can the work have been really disinterested ? Obviously it was not quite free from a desire for recognition.

When you have given yourself up to the Guru, no matter what he may do, to what trials he may have to subject you, you regard yourself as a tool in his hands : you have now reached a stage where in spite of all

* The Bengali original appeared in "Ananda Varta", Vol. 1, No. 5.

** Mataji addresses every man as 'father'.

difficulty you persist with the work, knowing it to be the Guru's order. Remember that by this attitude you grow steadfast in endurance, patience and perseverance and your energy and capacity are enhanced.

In action there is bound to be conflict. When can there be freedom from conflict? When there is no question of feeling hurt or not. In the midst of work one must be prepared to obey any kind of order at any time and under all circumstances. Imagine you are hungry and just as you are raising your hand to put food into your mouth, you are asked to go elsewhere. At that very instant you should gladly let fall the food you were about to eat and obey the call. Such a spirit is an indication of one's becoming established in a happiness which is not of this world. When one is nearing effortless being,* whether one is blamed or not for some shortcoming 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 it as a kind of spectator. There one observes what a great variety of work gets done by such a body and in what a very smooth and efficient manner. Egoless work is full of beauty, for it is not prompted

by a desire for self-gratification. So long as the knots (*granthi*) that constitute the ego are not dissolved, even though you intend to act impersonally, you will get hurt and this will produce a change in the expression of your eyes and face and be apparent in your whole behaviour. To long: "Let my heart be free from craving for results," is still a desire for a result. Nevertheless by thus aspiring after selfless action there is hope of its coming to pass. In the process of this a great inner transformation takes place. A "knot" means resistance and hence, so long as the ego persists, there will at times be clashes, even when impersonal work is attempted, because one is bound and therefore pulled in a certain direction.

A devotee : So until one has attained to perfect fulfilment acting without a motive is an impossibility?

Mataji : When impersonal work is being carried on and watched as by a witness a deep joy surges up from within. If at that time the body gets hurt, even this becomes a source of happiness. However, this welling-up of joy is not identical with Self-realization. The thrill of delight brought about by impersonal work is His delight become one's own, His glad-

* In "Amara Vani" (2) Mother says: "Sustained effort ends in effortless being — in other words, what has been attained by constant practice is finally transcended and then spontaneity comes."

ness felt as one's own: a stage has been reached where happiness is bound up with Him. In this condition, since one has lost interest in worldly pleasures, a great deal of work can be done in a perfect way. But even if despite one's utmost efforts some task has not succeeded fully, one does not feel disturbed. For everything has its place, here also His will prevails. Do you see what an exquisite path this is! But only at a time when action is not tainted by a sense of possessiveness. Yet even this state is by no means Self-realization. Why not? Whether with or without desire, it is work that is referred to here. Although done impersonally the action still remains separate from the doer. Whereas where the Self is and nothing but the Self, there the Guru, his instructions, the work cannot each exist separately. Where the duality of precept and action persists one cannot possibly speak of Self-realization. The play of one who has attained to final consummation is entirely different from the work that has become selfless by effort. This has here been enlarged on in reply to your question.

Even when the state of spiritual ecstasy (*Samādhi*) has been reached, in which one seems to be wholly absorbed within, this also is still a

stage. Yet, it is when by this spontaneous inner process (*antarkriya*) the veil is lifted, that the Vision of Reality may come about; whereas it can never come through outer activity such as the attempt to efface desire.

By way of illustration, father:* There was a time when this body tried to carry out to the very letter anything Bholanath** asked for. But when he saw that this body became rigid, that it was incapable of performing certain types of worldly actions, unable to bear them, he himself most gladly took back his request. This is how, in spite of the fact that some tasks could not be attended to, strict obedience in one way was being observed.

However, one day the husband of Bholanath's sister, Mr. Kūshari came on a visit. When he saw that this body obeyed Bholanath in all matters, he felt annoyed and exclaimed: "Have you no opinion of your own? Have you to consult your husband about every little detail? What a state of affairs! Suppose he asked you to do something wrong, would you obey then also?"

He got the reply, "Let such an occasion arise and, when setting out to put the order into practice, see what comes to pass". This answer left him dumbfounded. Thereafter he

* Mataji addresses every man as father.

** Mataji's husband was known as Bholanath.

changed his mode of life and remained devoted to the Supreme Quest for the rest of his days.

There is a state in the spiritual life when unconditioned, self-sprung action is possible, because there are no ties; and where no ties exist there is no danger and no wrong path — one cannot take a false step.

Question : Was it not after Self-realization that you were in that condition ?

Mataji : Leave this body out of it! If you say that this condition only comes after Self-realization, you will have to understand that after Self-realization it is possible to play anywhere, in any way one pleases — oneself playing with oneself of course — quite a different matter from what was being spoken about. It is a state of oneness : even while remaining in division one is undivided and remains in oneness though appearing divided : this is THAT ness ITSELF (*Tat Sva*). Here to obey and to disobey — both are THAT.

There are signs by which actions done as an instrument before Self-realization can be recognized. At this stage the stream of action is directed towards the fulfilment of actual needs. Whereas in the state of Pure Being it is totally different : to do or not to do, call it what you will, all is THAT. Within this sphere everything is

possible : not to eat while one is eating and to eat though not eating ; to walk without feet, to see without eyes, and much more of the kind, as you would put it. When established in the Self, who obeys whose bidding ? There are no others, none are separate. No longer does one talk to another — how can there still be the relationship that is based on the sense of separateness ? The level of selfless action is quite different from the state of Self-realization. So long as the Guru, the love of him, the work, the "I" are perceived separately, the question of Self-realization does not arise. Yet it must be said that action dedicated to God is not of the same order as work prompted by desire. The one is for the sake of union, which leads to enlightenment, the other for the sake of enjoyment, which leads to further worldly experience. What alone is worthy to be called action is that by which man's eternal union with God becomes revealed ; all the rest is useless, non-action. It is not a new kind of union which has to be established, but rather the union that exists throughout eternity has to be realized.

Very well, now listen to something else. There is a stage where working is very delightful and gives intense happiness. Here one is quite unconcerned with what may or may not

result from one's action : the work is done entirely for its own sake, for the love of it. Neither is there an external Guru in this, nor the love of of him. A state of being of this kind does exist. There is great diversity in the realm of action.

The sense of contentment experienced at the fulfilment of some worldly desire is relative happiness. This desire may be for one's wife, son, a relation or anyone else and accordingly the fruit inherent in each particular action will be reaped. This is working for the sake of self-satisfaction (*bhoga*), not for the sake of union (*yoga*); it brings joy along with sorrow as well.

Now to come back to what has just been said about work done for the love of it, not for anybody. Imagine how much sometimes gets accomplished even while walking in the street, not for anyone's sake, work for the sake of work, work itself being one's only God. This also is one of the stages. But if one goes on performing action of this kind, there comes a day when one is liberated from action. There is such a thing as labouring for the welfare of the world, but here even this purpose is absent. It is a type of work not prompted by desire or craving, one just cannot help doing it. Well then, why is it done? One simply is in love with

the work. When God manifests Himself in the form of intense desire for some action, one is finally liberated from all action.

Question : Work only begets more work, how can it come to an end?

Mataji : Why, do you not know this? If you can become so completely absorbed in any one thing that you are, as it were, no longer in control of it, wrong action becomes impossible and therefore work is about to cease for you. How many states and stages there are! This is one of them. Here one has certainly not become a sage as yet, but one cannot do anything wrong. Neither is there an opportunity to consider whether one is acting in accordance with the Shastras or not. Nevertheless in such a state of one-pointedness wrong action violating the laws set forth in the Shastras cannot occur. The human body — the vehicle through which the work is being done — has entered a current of purity and as a result *Satkarma*, action in harmony with the Divine Will, is performed.

It is on the level of the individual only that pleasure and pain exist. In spite of one's attachment to one's wife, husband, son or daughter, — during spells of severe pain, when one tosses about in intense burning agony,

there room left for the thought of one's nearest and dearest? Does one not groan in a frenzy of self-pity? At that moment the infatuation of family ties loses its hold, while the delusion of identifying oneself with one's body reigns supreme. One-self exists, that is why everything exists. From here, out of this arises the semblance of the going and coming of the individual, with its round of births and deaths.

Now you should understand that one who loves God is but out to destroy identification with the body, which implies destruction (*nasha*)* of delusion, of bondage, in other words of desire (*vasana*), † of 'no Self' (*na sva*) †. Your dwelling place (*vasa*) at present is where the self manifests as 'no Self' (*sva na*); when that is destroyed it is only destruction which is destroyed. Furthermore what is known as worldly craving also means the activity which takes place because the action of Self-revelation is absent. He is not there, this is the essential crux of the matter, is it not?

This body speaks of yet another aspect; can you guess what that is? Just as the Beloved (*Ishta*) is the Self, so destruction is also He Himself,

as likewise is the destroyed He Himself. This is so where the SELF is and nothing but the SELF. Hence with whom can one associate? That is why it is said: He is without another, existing alone. When speaking of Him as appearing in disguise, what is the disguise? He Himself of course.

What is known as the world (*jagat*) means movement, whereas what is bound is the individual (*jiva*). As the saying goes: wherever a living being (*jiva*) is there is *Shiva* and wherever a woman, there is *Shakti* (Divine Energy). Where no question of birth and death exists, no question of bondage, this, surely, is named the Eternal. Now grasp this thoroughly: how can there be bondage in that which is perpetual movement? Does that remain stationary anywhere? Just as it does not remain confined to any one place, so it cannot be found when the mind is dissolved. For this reason, because it never stays bound in any particular spot, can one not call it free? Well then, what goes and what comes? Behold, it is movement as that of the sea (*samudra*),* *He expressing Himself* (*sva mudra*). The waves are but the rising and the

* Here Mataji plays upon words. *Sva* and *sha* are pronounced alike in Bengali, therefore *nasha* — destruction sounds like *na sva* — no Self; † *Vasana* — desire is where the Self dwells as *no* — Self, *vasa* — to dwell, *na* — no, not.

falling, the undulation of the water, and it is the water that forms into waves (*tārāṅga*)* — limbs of His own body (*tār āṅga*) — water in essence. What is it that makes the same substance appear in different forms as water, ice, waves? This again is the problem of a particular plane of consciousness. Reflect and see how much of it you can understand! No simile is ever complete; yet has it not helped you to view this from the standpoint of the world? What actually have you realized? Find out!

Very well, you call transient that which never stays fixed anywhere, do you not? But what does not stay? Who does not stay? Who comes? Who goes? Change, transformation — what are they? WHO? Grasp the root of this! Everything will crumble, everything disintegrate, that is to say death crumbles — death dies. Who goes and whither? Who comes and whence? This ceaseless coming and going, what in essence is it? WHO? Again there is no question of action of any kind, no question of coming and going, where does birth come in, where death? Ponder over this!

Look, this universe, you will say, is nothing but the One Self. As such

every form is HE in His very own FORM (*sva ākāra*), that is the Self (*sva*), the Eternal, revealed as Form (*ākāra*). What does this imply? Non-action (*akriya*). In what sense non-action? Your idea from the point of view of the world is : action dedicated to God is alone true action, all the rest is useless and therefore no action at all. But here the question of such action does not arise. What then does exist here? SELF-ACTION (*Sva-Kriya*) — *He Himself as Action*; He Himself as Form, that is why He is called "With-Form" (*Sākāra*); He Himself as Qualities (*gunas*), that is why He is called "With-Qualities" (*Saguna*). Where the Lord (*Īshwara*) or anything pertaining to His Divine Splendour is manifested, He Himself (*Swayam*) appears in action, yet ever remaining the non-actor. He as such is the Essence of Absolute Truth.

There is non-action (*akriya*) yet form (*ākāra*). Form means embodiment (*murti*), in which there is neither action nor one who acts. Of what can He become the doer and who is to be the doer and where? He is not revealed in what you see as bondage by action. He Himself is action (*kriya*) He, the Eternal that can

* Mataji plays upon words : *samudra* = sea, *sva mudra* = His own expression. *Tarāṅga* = wave, *tār* = His, *āṅga* = limb, intrinsic part.

never be destroyed. Destroyed (*nashta*) means not - the - Beloved (*an-ishta*)* not-He who can never be undesired ; for He is the one and only thing desired by all creation, the All-Beloved. Therefore you should grasp that the One who is 'Without Form' (*nirākāra*) 'Without-qualities' (*nirguna*) is also 'With form', and 'With qualities'; water and ice — what in essence is the difference between the two ? Can you tell ? Hence He alone is and nothing but He. The One who is Pure Consciousness and Pure Intelligence has many shapes and forms and at the same time He is formless. For this reason, whether you call it worldly action or the action of the seeker, both are THAT, every action, is free, in other words there is no question at all of action (*Karma*).† That is why, you know, it is like this : there is only One Eternal Reality (*nitya vastu*), but since you are limited by your diverse angles of vision, you speak of transience and hold to the idea : "no action can endure, change is its very nature." Where does the ceaseless change of the everchanging world lead to ? Action in which there is no possibility of bondage is indeed "being". World

is the name for that movement which rushes towards death, in other words perpetual change is its innate character. On the plane of the individual and therefore of bondage all change is exclusively along this line. Facing towards THAT (*Tat-mukhi*), many are striving, each in his own particular way ; effort of this kind is certainly *everyone's* duty. In order to divert the course of his life into this direction the average person has to occupy himself with actions aiming at THAT (*Tat Karma*).

But now, think carefully and realize : you are eternally free, because action (*Karma*) is ever free and cannot remain bound. Do you not know that the rope with which you tie anything in this world must rot or wear out ? And though you use iron chains or even golden, whatever binds will one day break or be shattered. Do any worldly fetters exist that can never break, never be destroyed ? It is only the cry of lament over temporary ties that alone fashions the bondage of the mind — the mind that cannot be confined to any place. Like a restless child, unconcerned with good or bad, it seeks Supreme Bliss; never satisfied with momentary happiness and

* Another play upon words : *nashta*— destroyed, *na-ishta*— not the Beloved, in sound more or less alike.

† The word '*Karma*' means action as well as the law by which actions inevitably bear their fruit ; whereas '*Kriya*' means action as such, action in general.

therefore ever fickle. But how can it possibly be at rest until it has discovered a way to the Supreme Reality? Until it has become wholly absorbed in its source, reposing in its own Self? In your innermost heart you know that you are free, that is why it is your nature to yearn for freedom. Likewise when by some good fortune He becomes revealed as action, action will cease by itself. Stagnation is death; solely to avoid this blocking of the movement man resorts to countless devices. Only what falls away of its own accord is to be given up.

You go on insisting that the mind must be dissolved (*manonasha*). * But do not forget, it is this very mind which is the Mahayogi †, yes indeed, the sublime Yogi. Your scriptures describe such a Yogi as

behaving like a mischievous child, or as being oblivious of cleanliness, decency and propriety; also as a lunatic or again as one seeming inert and unfeeling. That which resembles complete indifference and inactivity you regard as very exalted and moreover you say: what is contained in this microcosm is in the macrocosm.

A Divine Incarnation (*Avatāra*) playing as a child, how lovely it is, how enchanting! When ordinary people read or hear about the childhood of Sri Krishna or see it enacted, they interpret it in the light of their experience of their own children, for this is what they are familiar with. From where would they get the capacity to grasp its inner significance? When you witness a dramatic representation of the love play

* According to Vedānta liberation is due to right Knowledge of the Self or Intuition of Truth. When such Knowledge or Intuition arises, liberation is bound to follow as a matter of course. But it is further asserted that though liberation becomes a moral certainty for a man of Knowledge, its realization or actual experience as a state of Bliss in this very life depends on the further condition of the physical and vital organism being purified; for the simple reason that the experience or sense of freedom can express itself in an embodied state only through the medium of the purged vehicles of mind and life. If this purification is lacking, the liberation effected through Knowledge can only be realized when the present body with its imperfect mental and vital sheaths falls off. The dissolution of the (conditioned) mind (*manonasha*) and desires (*vasanā-kshaya*) is an invariable antecedent to the experience of spiritual freedom during life.

† From a different point of view mind is spoken of as the "great yogi" in the sense that it behaves like such a yogi in his usual state of restlessness and indifference to purity or impurity, his freedom from rationality and lack of harmonious self-adjustment. The yogi is free in his movements, so is the mind. The analogy is further strengthened by the fact that the mind, like the yogi, is always in quest of absolute Bliss.

of Radha and Krishna in the *Rāsālīla* or a performance of the *Rāmalīla* you do not see the real *Līla* which is entirely spiritual, supernatural (*aprākṛita*), transcendental. Where there is actual experience of it, it is due to the functioning of spiritual vision.

Question : When there is spiritual experience, how is it interpreted in terms of worldly occurrence ?

Mataji : As one is released from bondage, the destructible destroyed and the Beloved alone shines forth — hence, say, what can one behold ? When ties are being broken it is the breakable only that breaks. But the bond of the love of God is not that kind of bond — it is an *unbinding*. And where the knowledge of the Absolute (*Brahmagyān*) is, there the ordinary function of understanding ('standing under') no longer exists. For to understand means to throw off one load only to stand under a new one; whereas the knowledge of the Supreme Reality is beyond thought and speech.

When the average person sees a performance of the *Rāsālīla* or *Rāmalīla*, what can he possibly grasp of it that will not be coloured by his worldliness ? Where is the capacity to experience anything beyond that ? Nevertheless since it is God's Divine Comedy which he is taking in through

his ears and eyes, there is hope that the capacity may come.

It is the nature of the mind to accept the many. All that is wanted is to focus this acceptance on one particular thing, with or without form, which, when accepted leaves no further choice between acceptance and non-acceptance. This One Thing means where the possibility of duality is altogether excluded. This is why one becomes one-pointed. The mind points to the many. Amidst the cross-currents of the divergent mind one has to become firmly concentrated on one goal. Think of a tree. The boughs and branches that spread out on all its sides yield the same kind of seed as that from which the tree originated. This is how one single seed potentially contains innumerable trees, innumerable boughs, branches, leaves and so on. There is infinite movement and infinite stability, infinite manifestation and infinite mystery — the seed grows into a tree, the tree brings forth seed. Therefore when one becomes wholly concentrated on any one thing, why should not the ONE be revealed ? The One contains the endless, and at the end of the endless is the One-Without-End, in whom the duality of finiteness and infinity is not. This is what is wanted — the **THING ITSELF**. Where you

perceive a limit there is actually no limit, for verily, He is limitless. In all forms and in the formless is He and He alone.

This much about attachment to work (*Karma*). Now about attachment to *Bhāva*.* *Bhāva* also belongs to the realm of action. But there is predominance, sometimes of action, at other times of *Bhava*. This is all very difficult to understand. Someone has asked the question: "What is attachment to *Bhāva*?" One example is when one practises yogic postures and breathing exercises (*Pranayama*), ritual worship, the repetition of God's name, meditation, contemplation, any of these, for the sake of getting into a particular *Bhāva*, and then one wishes to remain in this state all the time. So long as it lasts, or rather so long as this condition predominates, one is steeped in bliss. But in this one

has not yet attained to enlightenment, one is only on the way to it. This is a pure kind of attachment and therefore one may progress beyond it. Since one delights in lingering on the level of this *Bhāva* one could possibly indulge in it day after day or even for the rest of one's life. Although remaining in this state for a great length of time does induce transformation to a certain degree, yet there can be no special progress. But if by some ineffable touch this *Bhāva* could find its consummation, one would be able to proceed further.

There are states where one soars up and glides down again. But to become established in perfect poise, where ascent and descent are out of the question, surely, this is what is wanted. Not until both *Karma* and *Bhāva* are brought to completion can one go beyond them.

**Bhava* is the inner disposition that reveals itself as *Karma*. *Bhava* is latent *Kā* whereas *Karma* is *Bhava* actualized.

GREETINGS FROM A EUROPEAN

By

Richard Lannoy

Some years ago I purchased a small map of India and drew a big green line over a route I planned one day to take. On the map I underlined Banaras heavily, because I had always wanted to visit the Sacred City. But although a small inner voice told me that I might find there something remarkable, little did I dream of ever receiving such a deep experience as was eventually given me when I stayed there for some months. That green line drawn at a moment when I never seriously considered the actual possibility of visiting India was perhaps a mark of fate, the first intimation of an inevitable event, of which, at the time, I could have little understanding. But if it was in my fate to come to Banaras (in these days of easy travelling not so very difficult), it was with astonished wonder that I looked upon Mataji when I first saw Her. That some one so great, so full of love, some one with such a power immediately to inspire all those around Her, should really exist filled me with amazement. Reading of

Ramakrishna or Ramana Maharshi may convince one intellectually of their greatness, but my own fumbling conception of Mata Anandamayee is but a reminder of how extraordinarily ignorant I am of real spiritual greatness. We in the west have a very inadequate conception of the richness of the Hindu religion, and due to the trend of our civilization during the last few centuries we have lost the grace to live as Hindus can, near to God, with the inspiration of a living faith. Therefore it is very difficult for us to have any sensible idea of religion in India. When, therefore, one has the supreme good fortune to meet Mataji, who must surely stand at the very pinnacle of spiritual greatness, one receives that unique blessing which only direct contact can give, which is at once a revelation and so different from any previous experience. Mataji gives without limit, but never beyond the individual's capacity; it is all kindness which makes personal problems vanish; however it is when one comes to write about Mataji that one balks

at the difficulties. As a westerner I feel this very strongly, because for most of us any spiritual journey is a journey without maps, there are no green lines to help us, none of the guidance, or at least very little, to which the Indian may have recourse in the Shastras. To the Indian many elementary and a number of difficult problems are within his immediate command, his traditions come to his aid where we have either discarded or forgotten ours. Therefore perhaps I may be forgiven if I flounder with my words, because I have no book-learning in the scriptures with which to express myself with accuracy.

It is precisely in this matter that Mata Anandamayee has such understanding; anyone from any part of the world may come to Her and receive guidance which no scholarship can ever hope to give. For my own part it has been such a deep experience to be near Mataji; because She is so clear and direct. I have been able to receive Her blessing and guidance in spite of my ignorance. The customs of another culture may prevent one from reaching any degree of understanding without having lived there for a prolonged period of time, and it is often held by Europeans that India is mysterious, inscrutable, incomprehensible and one may as well give up any hope of receiving serious spiritual

experience there. The correct word for Mataji's conclusive ability to prove this notion entirely unfounded is hard to find, so I will call it Genius. Not only for Indians, but for people from all countries, all walks of life, from every kind of society, people of great intellectual brilliance, people of worldly eminence or the most humble, it is Mataji's Genius to be able to inspire them with the Love of God, to put them again in their own true centre. I had the good fortune to stay near Mataji in Her Banaras and Vindhyachal Ashrams for nearly a month and I was astonished to see so many different kinds of people visiting Her and to see their faces become radiant and transformed by Her Presence. If the path of sadhana be hard to live up to, something has been illuminated in the hearts of those who visit Her and which cannot be obliterated by time; this is such a great love which She gives to all that at once the difficulties of sincere aspiration become simplified.

In the west the current trend of thought is to search for some new formulation of ideas which can stand up to the monstrous conditions of the present age. Nuclear physical catastrophic wars and terrible human suffering have given the world problems of vast proportions which the institutionalized religion of Christ-

ianity has so far failed to encompass. Something new, or newness, therefore, has become almost a cult in the west, and nine persons out of ten would probably also say that Indian philosophy or Indian mysticism, great though it may be, is old, that what is wanted is something new. Mataji makes only too clear the fallacy of this search for the new. With Her the new is entirely irrelevant. If anything is new it is surely Her own unique way of helping you to realise instantly, at once and for all time, how to kindle the inner flame Her Genius, suddenly lights you up with happiness, inner and abiding happiness, the vitality of Joy, and shows you that this can never come from cinemas or a fat bank balance, but from within. In this state of happiness She gently guides you to the point where you can know without fear that this Joy comes from God. Many people balk at the word 'God' and profess atheism or agnosticism, but that which one can receive from Her is nothing to do with any 'ism'.

As a photographer certain things have struck me as remarkable and my work changed considerably when I was taking photographs in the Ashrams. Always seeking to catch Mataji's natural expression without any posing I found Her mobility too

fast to render adequately, Her beautiful movements so quick that it was nearly impossible to photograph them. Too many were taken in moments of impetuous excitement; but by being completely quiet there was always a moment she gave my camera and all I need do was to close the shutter with it safely inside on the film. Mataji is constantly in movement, which is Her special way of filling everyone with vitality, with laughter and joy, a sparkling quality which has nothing to do with the hectic rush in which we usually live, but a movement which can only be appreciated in quietness. This playfulness which we find so entrancing and which animates and makes so expressive every activity in Her Ashrams is a very unusual quality, so different from the stillness with which we usually associate sages. But because this mobility constantly transforms the ordinary into the unique, we can glimpse the way in which all illusory charms of the world nevertheless contain an inner significance which our blunted sensibilities fail to appreciate. With what deft and astonishing charm She brings everything alive and unafraid.

To a westerner accustomed to the diversity and excitements of our fast-moving life the serenity of

the spiritual life is not easy to appreciate, still less to accept, because we are habitually restless. Therefore this seemingly endless play of movement, like the play of light on water, which I associate with Mataji, helped me first by bewitching me with Her grace and the beauty of Her every movement. This eventually helped me to become quiet and see that such beauty can only proceed from absolute serenity. It can only be understood by oneself as the abiding peace when some small iota of quietness within oneself can be responsive to it. At the Banaras and Vindhya-chal Ashrams there is always beauty in the person of Mata Anandamayee and beauty in everything associated with Her. Everything is animated by Her golden touch; this is not a sentimental beauty but something powerful which only comes from greatness. It can be as gentle as the light at sunrise or it can be of a magnitude expressed by the German poet Rilke in his Elegy;

.....Beauty's nothing
but the beginning of Terror we're
still just able to bear.
and why we adore it so is
because it serenely
disdains to destroy us.

Worldly life with its splendours and miseries makes us rely upon pleasurable distractions. Two problems

seem to occur to the novice in the contemplative life: firstly the beauty that may be so abundant in a place of retirement may cause distraction, secondly fear of isolation, of being cut off or pent up in a secluded spot. I found, when in the Ashram, that there was no alarming feeling of monasticism or unfamiliar seclusion from the robust world, but on the contrary here was total experience, the full vigour of life, enhanced by Mataji's inspiration, difficult to sustain and yet full of Her love. I have done many jobs, travelled in many different countries, but I found that here, to derive full benefit from this experience, I must summon up every aspect of my experience in order to respond fully. Living in the Ashram one does not feel guilty of the trivialities of one's life, for it is too positive an atmosphere, but one's human relationships, one's work, one's inner problems receive a new impetus, and furthermore, a focus. The diversity and richness of the blessing given by contact with Mataji does not permit one to become dulled to a sluggish pseudo-serenity, does not make one recoil from life nor to be led away into a labyrinth of enjoyment of the beauty around one, but Her love, Her transmission of joy thrills one until one catches a glimpse of the way of love, the way to God in all things. This harmony

life is total, not unreal; coming away from the Ashram one may feel the pang of leaving, but one does not receive the shock of a sudden painful actuality, for actuality abides in the Ashram more powerfully than in many a street. Mataji's love is pervasive too, captures our hearts and goes with us from the Ashram, stretches beyond personal existence to inspire more than can be counted in terms of numbers and distance. So many people to-day are afraid to see what is meant by the Love of God; the two words have lost much of their original force, but what they mean and what *that* can do for us, Mataji at once shows by Her unique genius, by the inspiration of Her presence.

West Bengal, March 1954.

Words cannot very effectively express our feelings on this occasion of Her birthday, when many will be marking the event from the depths of their hearts. In other parts of the world too, although they could not show any conscious reason for rejoicing, there are many people without the opportunity to see Mataji, who would wish to join with those in India. In some of those distant countries until now concerned with the preoccupations of materialism, there are many who have grown weary of the negation which that implies, and could I but carry invisibly some of this feeling of theirs within these words of mine, then this small tribute would not have been in vain.

GURU-SANGA

S. S. Cohen

Sadhana is the persistent conscious efforts which an aspirant makes with the ultimate object of attaining God Realisation. The degree of these efforts and the tenacity with which they are pursued depend on the individual strength, which in turn depends on *adhikara* (maturity), that is, mental purity and ardour. Ardour is thus the greatest impelling force and the most valuable asset in the sadhana, being the expression of a highly-developed intuition in a mind which has already tested the values of things earthly and rejected them as false, and thus dedicated itself to the life of the Spirit. It is natural to such a mind to seek solitude wherein it can uninterruptedly yield to the pure joys of expectation of the descent of the celestial manna in a heart aflame with the love of the Divine. Hence there arises a tendency among some of these ardent seekers to depend more on practice than on *sat-sanga* (company of saints), which they regard as incidental or auxiliary to it. Whilst practice is undeniably indispensable to obtain a state of mind which mirrors the Divine, *Chit* or Self,

experience and tradition have proved that in the vast majority of cases practice cannot single-handedly demolish the vast mass of obstacles external as well as internal, which hamper progress. It is *sat-sanga*, and pre-eminently *Guru-Sanga*, which possesses the tremendous power of not only levelling down these obstructions slowly and steadily, but also standing guard against the pitfalls which abound on the long and weary road ahead.

Yogis and *tapasvis* are familiar with these pitfalls and the long periods of darkness, known as 'spiritual dryness', which often intervene between vividly-bright spells of illumined practice—a darkness which sometimes threatens to cause the fall of the unwearied seeker who has placed too much faith in his own independence, and has not prepared for these periods of suffering. These veterans in the spiritual line have learnt by experience to appreciate the formidable protection which the presence of the mighty Guru offers against these misadventures. Sri Krishna at the end of his mission on earth, having these difficulties in mind, called to Him

Uddhava, his foremost disciple, and instructed him in the rules of Dharma, Samnyasa, mind-control and Bhakti, which He recommended him to observe so that he might return to His Divine Feet for which the aching heart of Uddhava, who was despondent at the prospect of losing the Master's physical presence, was yearning. In twenty-three long chapters in the Bhagavata (Adhyayas 7 to 29) the Lord discoursed at great length, and particularly stressed the importance of Sat-sanga, which He declared to be the most effective of all practices, saying :

“Neither yoga, sankhya, righteousness, study of the Vedas, tapas nor sacrifices, building of tanks, charity, vows, Yajnas, Yatras, Yamas and Niyamas so win Me as does the company of saints, which puts an end to all attachments. It is only by this association with the righteous that Daityas, Nagas, Sudras, women and even outcastes born with the natural disposition to Rajas and Tamas, sinless one, have in the several Yugas attained to My place..... All these had not studied the Vedas, nor sat at the feet of the learned, nor performed hard penance, but only through the company of saints have they attained to Me.....” (Skandha XI, Adhyaya 12).

These words which fell from the divine lips of the Lord have again and again been found necessary to

repeat by all the great teachers who followed Him and find echo in the experience of many disciples of modern Saints. Sri Ramana Maharshi, apart from warning against standing without a guru, in His inimitable crisp style emphasised the magnitude of the Guru's influence to which He assigned a dual positive role. “The Guru”, said He, “exerts a push from outside and a pull from inside on the disciple's external mind to drive it back to the Centre, which is the Antaryamin, God or the Guru Himself” ; and this has been discovered to be the very action of Sri Maharshi Himself on His devotees. The greater the spiritual attainments, that is, the firmer the fixity of the Guru in Brahman, the Self, the more impressive is His influence on, and protection of, the devotees.

Mighty Gurus like Sri Krishna, Lord Buddha and others, who influence vast sections of humanity at one and the same time in a vast sweep of Their mysterious powers and ripen Their immediate disciples to full perfection, are far and few between. In this age we are singularly fortunate to have a few of Them simultaneously or in quick succession in our midst. Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa and Sri Ramana Maharshi, to mention only two, were such Ones. Even now there lives in our midst the equally

mighty Shri Anandamayi Mata in the flesh, which makes it incumbent on every determined devotee of Hers to take advantage of the unique opportunity and benefit by Her company. It is true that like some other great Teachers She constantly moves about, which seems to deny stability to the practising devotee who needs some sort of a well-defined spot for his undisturbed practice, yet this constant movement is not without its advantages. It calls for greater exertion and incessant vigilance, which in themselves are potent factors in promoting the requisite self-discipline. Besides, it embodies the Guru's Divine will to benefit by His physical presence those devotees and potential devotees whom *prarabdha* has kept nailed to their sense of domestic duties and fancied domestic happiness at different distances from Him. Undertanding Their difficulties, He, in His infinite compassion, bodily goes to them to fan the spark of devotion in them to as big a flame as possible, in which act the accompanying sadhakas will have their share too.

The purity and holiness which perpetually emanate from the Divine Guru unceasingly act on every creature and everything which comes within its radius, and reduces to ashes all impurities and binding attachments, thereby making the mind of

the sensitive devotee ultimately to shine in all the splendour of the Supreme Consciousness. A spiritual Sun, Shri Anandamayi Mataji, incessantly sheds Her benign rays on all around Her, whether one is conscious of it or not. Her Jayanti will soon be celebrated in many parts of India. The blessings which She pours out on that auspicious occasion are of great magnitude, and are of special benefit to those who have opened their hearts to Her influence, and who may feel the urge to praise and address Her in the words which Uddhava addressed to his beloved Master, the Lord of the Universe, Sri Krishna, thousands of years ago, after he received the Divine Upadesha :

Uddhava said : 'The great darkness of delusion which had covered me is completely dispelled by Thy presence (note the word "presence"), O Creator of Brahma. How can cold or darkness affect him who stands near the sun ?

'Thou, Lord of compassion, hast once again bestowed on me, Thy servant, the torch of Supreme Wisdom. Which man, not ingrate, would abandon the dust of Thy Feet and seek shelter elsewhere ?...

'Salutation to Thee, O great Yogi, pray so direct me, worshipper of Thy Lotus Feet, that I may find delight nowhere but in Thee.'

(Bhagavata xi, 29)

MOTHER'S GRACE DIVINE

Ganga Charan. Das Gupta

We performed a vow of SELF-DISCIPLINE (*Samyam Vrata*) at Calcutta with Mother Anandamayi as the sole pivot of the entire function from the 14th to the 20th Nov. 1953. This was followed by another week during which the truths of a cosmic empire of endless bliss, as embodied in the *Srimad Bhagavata*, were read out and explained to a vast gathering, assembled at the two functions.

It was a glorious fortnight in our lives ; we had to slam the door on our daily routine of soulless drudgery and direct our attention to a course of self-discipline with Mother as the central symbol, moulding our aspiration, for a higher life. We had to give up the lure of petty pleasures during the period and concentrate our minds upon the divine forces in and about ourselves.

During those days with Mother we had a unique opportunity to turn our eyes inwards and to find out that there were many dusty corners in the chamber of our soul which required vigorous cleaning. We felt the great

need of constant repair-jobs to be done in the daily scheme of our lives. We realised that by selling our integrity to paltry gains or by yielding to the easy temptation of lowering our standards of life even for a while we not only fall down ourselves but drag others down with us, until the whole structure of our social and spiritual life crumbles down causing havoc in many directions.

During this period Mother spoke words, both in the open assembly and in private interviews, with such soothing motherly affection, with such surprising lucidity and penetrating vision, that the hearts of all persons present were swayed by one desire to enjoy Her Presence, and were also deeply moved by an ardent aspiration to live a higher and nobler life far above the level of our usual drudgery of physical existence. Every one amongst us must have felt a strong Godward Pull by a mysterious power radiating from Her Person.

The whole audience consisting of all kinds of people, young and old, rich and poor, paid Her the rare homage

of rapturous attention and devotion in a new climate of spiritual life.

When Mother took Her seat on the dais, She quietly cast Her benign glance around and the hum of the vast assembly of people lapsed at once into a spell of absolute silence, which continued for full one hour, both in the morning and in the evening. This happened for two full weeks. Such experience rarely falls to the lot of man. Its influence was so deep, so all-pervading. There was a mighty up-surge of piety during the week. It was far beyond the limitations of human expression.

While the entire world is torn by strife and dissension with atomic clouds hanging over the heads of humanity, while masses of men are desperately engrossed in helpless struggle for food, clothing and shelter as well as for the bare comforts of life, it was immensely and intensely gratifying to find Mother "lifting the threat of a catastrophic war" with an insistent appeal to man to look to God for peace and security. "These two blessings" said She, "much coveted by men and nations alike, always flow from Him and from Him alone". This stupendous fact Mother asserts with Her every breath. This is the most positive approach to provide real security against any man-made calamity, befalling man.

Security is the most momentous and frightening word in the world of today. Security measures have driven nations of the present age to develop the guided missile, tactical atom-bombs, atomic cannons. Hydrogen or Hell-bombs, atomic submarines and the like, ostensibly to resist external aggression but essentially to administer dire threat of massive retaliation. Power-mad atom-mind appears to have forgotten that there is one God to rule over His Creation, and that His laws can never be violated with impunity and that the little drop of power that man has discovered to blast away the fair face of His beautiful creation at one stroke, will eventually recoil on the inventing nations themselves.

Mother always reminds Her devotees that the most powerful armour of security for "maintaining the lifelines of the world" lies in the spirit of absolute reliance on Him, the source of all good and greatness, as well as in the realisation of the fact that all men whether dark, yellow, brown or white, are in essence blood brothers, whose co-operation is ever possible only through selfless love for all beings alike.

During Mother's stay in our midst we found how She merged Herself into our lives completely, suggesting solutions even for all our tiny problems.

and domestic worries which She ever considers to be Her own, but at the same time pulling us up to refer everything to Him as the Dispenser of all things, and with His blessings to put forth our best efforts to fight on for truth, love and peace.

After the strenuous Calcutta functions were over, Mother went to Puri in the 1st week of December. She went there apparently for rest, but even from there She was in vital touch with all Her devotees living in places far, far away. She very often says, "Wherever you happen to be, this person (evidently referring to Herself) is ever present with you. My watchful eyes are ever directed towards what you do or miss doing in your daily lives. I see, as in clear daylight, all the causes of your joys and worries, successes and failures. Always develop the habit of opening up your heart with faith and devotion to God and try to feel His Enveloping Presence. By such an attitude alone all the burdens of your life will be lifted from your head."*

Certain incidents that happened about this time at Banaras and at Puri, where Mother had gone for rest, will go to prove in what a mysterious and subtle manner Mother's life and that of Her beloved children have

been tuned together. To realise the significance of such live-touch one would do well to compare two series of events occurring at Banaras and Puri at about the same time. They are sketched below :—

SCENES AT BANARAS

Dr. Gopal Das Gupta and his wife, Mrs. Amala, were both very ardent devotees of Mother. So were their children. Their love for Mother was most sincere and selfless. It was for above the physical plane of existence.

A few weeks before Mother left for Calcutta Mrs. Amala went to offer *pranams* to Mother. When she came out of Mother's presence, she said with beaming looks to her husband, "I prayed to Mother, fulfil my desire to depart from this world in the presence of you all. With all affection, She touched my head and allowed me to touch Her feet with my vermilion box. My prayers have been fulfilled." It was with this vermilion mark on her fore head that she triumphantly undertook her last journey from this world.

At Her departure to Calcutta towards the early part of last November, Mrs. Amala accompanied Mother to the Banaras station in the same car. On

*Matri Darsan, p. 63

alighting on the platform she again said to her husband, "I am quite lucky as I could offer my *pranams* at Her feet to my heart's content. Mother was all affection to me. She was wonderfully calm and often cast Her soothing glance at me."

On the 1st December '53, just seven days prior to her death, Amala said to her husband again during an evening walk, "I am afraid to die now." "Why talk about such arrant non-sense? To one so much devoted to Mother like your sweet self, such fear of death hardly comes with good grace", was her husband's reply. "I am awfully afraid not for me but for you, when I come to think how you will fare in my absence. You are so good, so easy going; you do not know even how to take care of your own body."

On the 8th noon preceding her death she hung seven portraits of Mother on the walls of her bedroom. When asked why she was fixing so many photos in the same room, her prompt reply was, "When I close my eyes, I find the Image of Mother, embossed on my heart, but when I open them my sole desire is to enjoy Mother's smiling looks all about me. Hence I have been setting up so many portraits of Mother all about me."

On this same day at about this time, Amala wrote in her beautiful

handwriting, a most appealing letter describing her deep distress owing to Mother's absence from Banaras. It came from a great agony of mind.

In the afternoon of that fateful 8th December, Mrs. Amala gave consent to her husband to build a house at Banaras for residential purposes only on condition that the premises must be dedicated to *Balgopal Thakur* after their death.

At dusk when Amala was passing by the Durgabari Temple, she said, "I have a great desire to pass my life in the service of *Sisu Kalyan*. If I pass away earlier, will you keep the Institution alive by your loving service?" She exclaimed, "Mother, give me strength! I seek refuge in Thee!"

On the 9th at about 1-30 A.M. she complained of head-ache and slight fever. At about 7-15 A.M. she said to her husband, "I feel a terrible pain in the head. Pray, do not leave my bed." Gopal Babu to soothe her nerves, replied, "You have been calling Mother all along, She will give you relief. Mother is testing your endurance and watching if Her children in their greatest agonies of life, remember Her."

Amala's prompt reply was— "I shall surely pass my Mother's Test. Ma, Ma, Mago!!"—the last words

that escaped her lips, and then came the end and all was quiet.

Both Garupriya Didi and Kamal Da on their way to Lucknow via Banaras, saw Amala on the 8th. She appeared to be well at that time. When they returned from Lucknow on the 9th night at 1-30 a. m. they were surprised to learn that Amala had passed away in the morning. The dead body was allowed to remain till the 10th morning to enable her two sons to arrive from Calcutta to take part in the funeral rites. The body showed no signs of decomposition during the 24 hours that intervened.

When the dead body was about to be taken out for cremation Gopal Babu was entreated by his boys to decorate the forehead of their mother with the vermilion from the same box which had been touched by Mother's feet—painting as is done on a girl's first bridal day. Gopal Babu also asked his boy to enkindle the funeral pyre with these words :—

“Ma Anandamayi, Ma Mangalamayi, see what has befallen us. Your daughter had no thoughts other than those of you at all times, O Mother”.

This happened when Didi and Kamal Da were present at Banaras.

THE SCENE AT PURI

On the 8th instant at about 1 or

1-30 a.m. Mother appeared to be very reserved and Her looks were sombre and serious. Nobody could say why She had no disposition to sleep that night. She asked all the inmates of the Ashram to sleep. All retired for rest, but Mother moved about in the room as if absent-minded. On the 9th morning She enquired if there was any letter from Banaras. From the bundle of letters that arrived, a letter was picked up written by Amala dated 8th Dec., the last day of her life. It was evidently meant for Mother though addressed to Miss Buni (Juthika Guha). Mother instantly asked Buni to read it. The letter written in a neat, legible hand ran thus :—

“Dear Sister,

Those of you who live near Mother hardly realise the pangs of separation from Mother, that rack my body and mind constantly. I am afraid, even Mother does not realise how painful it is for me to live so far away from Her. This time I have not even had any letter from Mother. You also have forgotten to write a few lines about Her to me. Didi always used to drop a few lines to me about Mother, but Didi too is here today. You are all busy people; you complain about want of time. So I was rather reluctant to enquire from you about

Mother. Didi on arrival here came to see me today on her way to Lucknow with Kamal Dada. Didi was not well, she had fever. Your dada (my husband) has prescribed some medicine. Ask Mother — “Does She think of us at least once during the day?”

We, buried as we are in worldly affairs, do not even for a moment miss the thought of Mother. Her lovely looks dance before our eyes. When the pangs of separation from Mother become too severe to bear, I go to our prayer-room and weep silently, so that nobody may know the depth of my distress. There is no other way of relief. From what Didi said I realised that Mother might be here by the 1st week of January, 1954. Tell me, my sister, how long can I endure the pain of separation from Mother?”

Mother listened to every single word of this letter and said, “What a lovely letter! How fine are Amala’s sentiments! How deep her love and devotion!”

Just at that time Swami Paramanandaji came up with a telegram announcing the death of Radhu’s mother (Amala).

The inmates of the Ashram were stunned by the news. Mother was silent for some time. She said, “I hear talks about vermilion. I also hear Baba Gopal giving instructions to

his son how to apply fire to his mother’s body at the funeral pyre.”

During the whole day of the 9th Dec. Mother was talking about Amala and her husband and their daughter Radhu and their love for Her. No body in the Puri Ashram could ever guess what was happening at Banaras. The whole day and night Mother looked self-absorbed.

On the 10th morning Mother was heard to exclaim to Herself, “সব শেষ, সব শেষ, এতদিনের সম্পর্ক”, evidently meaning thereby that the funeral pyre had started burning as well as the life of one sincere devotee with all her devotion to Mother had reached the end of her worldly career.

When Didi and Kamal Da arrived at Puri two days afterwards and narrated the details of Amala’s exit from this world we could realise how Mother saw everything at Puri, as on a mental screen.

How keenly Mother feels about the distress of Her children will be evident from a letter which Mother asked Miss Buni to write to Radhu according to Her dictation. The letter was a soothing balm to the whole distressed family. Translated in English, it stands thus :

“Radhu,

How deeply your mother loved all! All her thoughts were how

would give your father peace and happiness after she leaves this world. All the details of her everyday life, all about her suffering and troubles, she would confide in me without the least reserve, and thereby found great relief. Her behaviour to me was like that of a near and dear friend. When she talked to me, her mind was wide awake even to my whispers and signs. It was as clear as a sunny morning without any dark spot anywhere.

"She was a very fortunate housewife leaving her beloved husband and children to carry on her work. She has passed on to higher planes of existence. It is not at all proper for us to weep for her or be sorrowful at her loss. Though it is quite natural for children to mourn the loss of their parents, still you should develop the power of enduring all inevitable ills of life.

"Just as parents" sole aim is to secure peace and happiness of their offspring, your attempts, as children, should be devoted towards keeping your mother in peace and tranquillity in the next world. You, with your brothers and sisters, should pray to God in your tribulation, saying, 'Our beloved Mother has gone to her peaceful abode in a higher sphere of life. Hearing us weeping she would feel such pain which she cannot express

to us. May God bless with peace our mother who was so dear to us all.

"Remember, death comes to all by God's Will. He places every man exactly in the position, in the lines of development, for which He considers him fit. My little friend Radhu, you with your brothers and sisters should join in silent prayers to God, saying, My mother, my dearest soul your peace in the next world means our peace. Remember this prayer always. Never put on sorrowful looks before Gopal Baba, your father. You should not cast gloom upon other peoples' mind by your own mournful looks. With these ideas in mind serve all persons in the family cheerfully."

These lines show Mother's ever affectionate ways for Her devotees. No earthly mother could be so intensely concerned for her children. There is a very intimate tie between Mother and Her *bhaktas*.

The last words of Bhaiji were, 'We and Mother are all one.' Though we missed the real import of those words at the time of his death, their significance has become more and more impressive and clear, in course of these 16 years that have intervened. Mother and Her devotees are bound together with indissoluble bonds, which cannot be snapped by any earthly

power. Our sole aim is to feel it and obtain strength from growing faith and conviction through Her grace.

In the life of Bhaiji such records of most subtle association with Mother were plentiful. Mother is often heard to say that our joys and sorrows, our appeals for relief from the woes of life, are always known to Her. There is a response whenever necessary. It works in such a subtle manner that baffles our comprehension. We who profess to love Mother ardently, hardly realise how Her healing touch operates. Being too much engrossed in our crude ego-sense, we are unable to trace the soft silken threads of perennial life by which all existences are woven into one web of beauty and bliss with the Mother of the World in the centre. We always miss the divine radiations of Her presence that surround us and lend their soothing balm to all our ills. There are only a few amongst us who have lost themselves in Her

benign Grace and who can have a glimpse of that subtle process. The slime of physical comforts with which we happen to be encrusted from childhood, has developed a hard fossil round our soul shutting out all light of heaven with which our souls are ever clothed. But we must not lose heart. We must press on to the high destiny of man to realise the subtle influence of Mother Divine in our lives. We should pass our days in prayer for firmer faith and deeper devotion and depend on Her grace. The following lines of Tennyson should serve as a motto of our life:—

“We are not now that strength
which in old days

“Moved earth and heaven; that
which we are, we are ;

One equal temper of heroic hearts

“Made weak by time and fate,
but strong in will

“To strive, to seek, to find and
not to yield.”

The Supreme Teacher I found in Sri Sri Ma Anandamayi

Atmananda

Having been asked to give my impression of Mother, I feel all but paralysed by a most painful sense of my utter incompetence for this task. One might just as well ask an ant that spends its days crawling about on the slopes of Mount Everest to give its experience of this highest and most mysterious of Himalayan peaks. Yet, one might argue, even to the tiny ant which feeds on it, this mighty mountain may communicate some of its wonders that escape those who gaze and admire it from a distance or who know about it only from hearsay. This is my excuse -- if there can be an excuse for the audacity of attempting a task so far beyond my limits. Perhaps, if it is Mother's wish, even through my feeble words there may be conveyed an infinitesimal fraction of that indescribable something which attracts thousands to Mother's Holy Feet and moves them to such deep love and adoration.

Whatever one can say about Mother is never quite true. Mother is

all paradox. Though She is always in perfect repose, there is nothing static about Her. She is more volatile than air and more fluid than water, always in motion, yet tranquillity itself.

How to grasp that which is ever flexible, ever unaccountable? She seems to have no substance, yet all possibilities are contained in Her. She must ever elude the mind and all speculation. She has no special method and no particular teaching, yet all methods and all teachings are Hers. To meet Her is to be plunged in light -- how to find words for the intangible?

Large crowds come for Mother's *darshan*. Many are fascinated by something in Her which they can never forget and which upsets their complacency. But I believe there still are earnest seekers all over the world who have at most only heard vague rumours about Mother.

Some cautiously remain at a distance saying: "Of course She is one of the greatest. But all Her followers are Bhaktas. She works only through emotion and has no message

for those who are on the path of knowledge or enquiry."

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

Nine years spent in close contact with Mother have given me the conviction that She has the power to reveal to every human being the "Secret of the Golden Flower" hidden in his heart. Be he a Hindu or a Buddhist, a Christian or a Jew, a Mohammedan, a Parsi or an Atheist, an introvert or an extrovert, an intellectual or an emotionalist; be he a Yogi, a Bhakta, a Jnani or a Tantrika; a fastidious artist; an eminent scholar or an illiterate; whatever his upbringing, his traditions, his prejudices, from whatever school of thought he may hail; be he a beginner or highly advanced in his search, however tormenting his difficulty, however deep his error — for every seeker after Truth Mother has the right word at the right time in the right manner. Her advice is always like the egg of Columbus. What has puzzled one for

years, what has seemed an insoluble problem, an insurmountable cliff, a most exasperating issue, it suddenly becomes so simple. Her solution is so obvious, so convincing; it gives instantaneous relief to a mind in agony, to a heart in distress. One hears Her utter a few clear and simple words — but miracle of miracles, they are not pronounced by another: one feels them emerge out of the depths of one's own being. Something in one whispers: "This is what I have always known, what I have always wanted. How strange that I could not discover it for myself!"

What She says is intensely practical, it can be carried out at once, it is not more and not less than what one can understand at that very moment — and yet as time goes on it becomes ever more valuable, ever more helpful. As one ponders over it, as one translates it into action, its significance deepens and widens, its implications go on increasing. It ever gains in moment and new vistas open out. It is like a seed of light that has been planted into one's mind into one's life. It germinates, it takes root and by that time Her attraction has become irresistible, one is bound to seek Her presence at all costs and one may be sure of getting all the support, all the help one requires, in exactly the way it is needed.

One can often hear Mother say that She is neither a Guru nor has She any disciples. This is certainly a fact in the technical sense. She does not give what is called "Diksha", initiation by Mantra. But does She not also say : "I never go anywhere" and yet we see Her travelling all the time. Does She not also say : "I am whatever you think me to be." There are more than a few among those that are close to Her, to whom She reveals Herself as the Supreme Guru, the Dispeller of Darkness, the One who by Her very nature leads them "From non-being to true Being, from darkness to Light, from death to Immortality. "To them She is the Guru who teaches by the fact that She is, as naturally and as effortlessly as the sun shines and gives light and warmth and energy to all alike, as the flower blossoms and sheds its fragrance ; who teaches by words and by silence, by action and by non-action, in waking, in sleep and in dreams, by day and by night, and once the contact is made, whether physically near or far.

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Let me now try to express in a few words what seems to me the essence of Mother's teaching.

There is only ONE and there is nothing outside of Him. HE IS. He is and He is not ; and neither is He, nor is He not. He is with form — all forms are His form, all names are His name — He is without form and He is beyond form and no-form.

He appears to man as a personal God in order to attract him to Reality which is man's own SELF. Ice and water seem different, but actually they are both the same. The personal God is like the ice and the Impersonal, Immutable, Unmanifest like water. You get in touch with one of His divine forms and one day you discover that it is but the formless and then you know that He is with form, without form and beyond both.

To realize the ONE is the supreme duty of every human being. All other duties are either within this one duty or else imaginary. Man is a human being only inasmuch as he aspires to Self-realization. This is for what human birth is meant. If he pursues anything but that, he wastes his time and energy, he lives his life in vain.

Duality is pain by its very nature. "Duniya" (the world) is "Dukha" (sorrow), that is, the sense of separation is itself suffering. All sorrow is due to the fact that the many are seen where there is only ONE. As long as there is identification with the body

and the mind, there must be pain, distress and agony. It is useless to seek happiness in anything that is of the world. Find out where your real home is. This world is like a traveller's inn — one comes and one goes.

There are innumerable paths — and yet there is no path to the Supreme.

If there were, it would mean that the discovery of the Real depends on the efforts of the individual. The Supreme would not be the Supreme if He were subject to anything at all. He and He alone is at all times. To wear off the veil that prevents the vision of Reality is all that man can do and that he has got to do.

NOTES AND COMMENTS

With this 'Birthday Number' the Ananda Varta enters its third year of existence. We are only too well aware that it is still far from fulfilling its lofty purpose. Yet our endeavours have not been entirely without success. The fact that Mataji's teaching is now made available to all in the Bengali original and through careful translations in Hindi and English is much appreciated by its steadily widening circle of readers. We have been extremely fortunate to secure the co-operation of Mahamahopadhyaya Sri Gopinath Kaviraj, greatly revered throughout India and abroad for his deep insight and eminent learning. We are gradually able to include more articles of real value. As a result Ananda Varta has now begun to travel to England, France, Sweden, Holland, U. S. A., Australia, Brazil and Hongkong. In spite of its shortcomings some readers find it elevating and inspiring. We shall not relax our efforts to make it an ever purer vehicle for Mother's Blessing and Her Message.

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In the last issue the usual report of Mother's movements had to be

omitted. We have therefore to go right back to *Durga Puja* celebrated last October at the Kishenpur Ashram near Dehradun. Preparations for the Puja as well as for the *Bhagavata Saptah* were in full swing when Mother arrived with Her party on October 7th, 1953. *Naomi* and *Dashami* this time fell on the same day, which shortened the function; but thanks to Mother's guidance every detail was carried out to perfection and hence the blessing and the spiritual impetus the Puja is meant to give were experienced to the full. Every night after the Satsang Mother gave minute instructions for the proceedings of the next day. Every detail becomes alive in Mother's presence.

A large number of devotees had come from far and near. To read and explain the *Srimad Bhagavata* in seven days is not customary in Bengal. Those who had come from Calcutta found the function so inspiring that they at once decided to repeat it on the occasion of the *Samyam Mahavrata* that was to be held at Calcutta in November.

On Oct. 22nd Mother journeyed to Vindhyachal, accompanied by a number of devotees from Calcutta.

In the solitude of this charming place, in the presence of Mother were thought out and discussed the details of the forthcoming *Mahavrata*. Three days of rehearsal of its programme and its rigours were thoroughly enjoyed by the small group present.

Mother arrived at Banaras on Nov. 5th in time for the *Kali Puja* at the Annapurna temple of the Ashram on Divali night, succeeded by "Annakut" on Nov. 7th, when 140 different preparations of rice, vegetables and sweets as well as fruits were offered at the shrine and then distributed to the large crowd assembled for the occasion.

On Nov. 10th Mother travelled to Calcutta. In three languages enthusiastic and detailed reports of the *Samyam Mahavrata* and the *Bhagavata Saptah* held from Nov. 14th to 28th have already appeared in the last issue of this magazine, which was called "Samyam Saptah Mahavrata Special".

On Dec. 2nd Mother left for Puri, where She remained till Dec. 22nd. The Ashram there is right on the seashore next to the burning ghat. Many came for Mother's darshan at the evening Satsang. Quite unforgettable the beautiful kirtan mingling in a strange harmony with the wild music of the sea, the sight of the

flames of the blazing funeral pyres against the background of the dark, tossing waves -- and the ever radiant figure of Mother, clad in spotless white, seated in perfect repose, yet so keenly alive, containing all, transcending all.....

During Mother's sojourn at Jamshedpur from Dec. 23rd-29th, one day of *Samyam Vrata* was observed with its full programme and austerities at the request of those who deemed themselves unfortunate for having missed the recent Calcutta function. So deep and widespread was the interest aroused by that memorable gathering!

On Dec. 29th Mother gave one day only to Ranchi. Notwithstanding all entreaties to prolong Her visit, She sped away to Calcutta on Dec. 30th, where She spent two days at Dum Dum.

On January 4th, 1954 Mother reached Banaras. Interrupting Her stay by a week-end at Vindhyachal, She was back again on the 12th. On Jan. 14th was celebrated the anniversary of the great Yajna that had been performed at the Banaras ashram from 1947-1950, about which a book by Gurupriya Devi with many illustrations has appeared in Bengali and Hindi.

On Jan. 22nd Mother motored to Vindhyachal, and back to Banaras for a day on the 26th. On Jan. 28th Mother arrived at the Kumbh Mela at Allahabad. Even a few days previous no arrangements had seemed possible at Mother's Camp. But at the eleventh hour all the necessary materials were procured and Mother found a small township of huts and tents accommodating 300 people, with main roads, lanes and by-lanes, a spacious pandal for Satsang, separate units for Herself and the Kanyapith, for Sri Hari Baba Maharaj, for Jogi bhai and Dr Pannalall, with different sections for men and women, with kitchens and dining-sheds, bathrooms, electricity and street lights.

In the course of Mother's stay the *Mahants* and *Acharyas* of the various *Sampradayas* (religious sects), including Sri Shankaracharya of Jyotirmath, were given a reception, the like of which — as many remarked — had only been accorded them very rarely.

This issue of 'Ananda Varta' contains an article in Bengali with interesting details and reflections on the catastrophe on Febr. 3rd. We hope to include a similar article in English in the next number. We learn with deep gratitude that none of Mother's *Bhaktas* were amongst the victims of the disaster.

On Mother's return to Banaras

on Febr. 12th discussions naturally centred round the Kumbh and the terrible tragedy. According to Hindu tradition unnatural, sudden death causes a painful state of ghostly existence for the deceased. The question arose whether such a fate would have befallen the victims of the Kumbh disaster. Mother said : "What the Shastras declare holds good in the ordinary course of events. Just consider : the very special constellation of the Kumbh, the sacredness of the Triveni, the atmosphere created by a vast gathering of Sadhus and Sanyasis with their spirit of complete dedication. Death occurred at that auspicious moment. Would this not definitely mean a special step forward ?"

On Feb. 16th Mother took a trip to Vindhyachal, reaching Banaras again on the 18th, while Acharya Sri Gopal Thakur of Allahabad arrived on the 20th to conduct the annual "Gita Jayanti" that continued till Febr. 25th. Sri Gopal Thakur has not been keeping good health for the last two years. To his own amazement he found himself capable of carrying out with vigour and efficiency all the details of the celebrations. This he ascribed solely to the inspiration of Mother's presence. He left on Feb. 26th for Allahabad, the same day on which Mother started for Vindhyachal.

On March 1st, in good time for

Shiva Ratri on March 3rd. She was again at Kashi. The festival was observed on a magnificent scale and in a very impressive manner. A complete fast is kept on that day and a vigil during the following night, when *Shiva Puja* is performed four times, with *Kirtan* in the intervals. Only the next morning after a bath in the Ganges may the first drop of water be taken.

On the verandas in front of the Annapurna Temple and of the Chandi Mandap as well as inside the Mandap the worshippers were seated in circles round Shiva Linga. From sunset to sunrise mother sat or moved about among the various groups, inspiring, encouraging and at times Herself leading the *Kirtan*. Some devotees had come specially for that night, drawn irresistibly by the memory of last year's function. The atmosphere of intense spiritual aspiration, the outpouring of Divine Grace was so powerful, so overwhelming, the hardest agnostic might have been moved to adoration.

The very next day, on March 4th Mother left for Brindaban, where the ceremonial opening of the new ashram was performed in the presence of Sri Haribaba Maharaj, Sri Krishnanandaji Avadhuta and other distinguished sanyasis and devotees. Mother also joined the Holi play on March 19th.

On the 27th She went to Delhi for a day, giving Her blessing in person to the *Nama Yajna* held annually by Her Delhi Bhaktas. On the 29th She proceeded to Hoshiarpur, remaining there till April 9th and then spent 5 days at the Savitri Devi Ashram at Jullundur, where everyone was entertained with great generosity and attentiveness by Sikh devotees, a father and his three sons, whom Mother had named Ram, Lakshman, Shatrughna (the fourth, Bharat, having passed away some years ago.) Both at Hoshiarpur and Jullundur Mother received tremendous ovations as always in the Punjab.

On April 13th Mother travelled to Almora, where the consecration of a Shiva Linga took place at Her ashram at 'Patal Devi'. Mother is expected to remain there until after Her birthday celebrations, ending on May 22nd.

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Mother's birthday is to us an occasion for boundless rejoicing as well as for deep searching of our hearts. To pay homage to Mother in words, however eloquent, however humble is of but little value. That Her birthday is observed in Her ashrams

several weeks of concentrated Sadhana, by a concerted effort through Satsang, meditation, Japa, Kirtan, etc. to sustain the remembrance of God throughout the twenty-four hours, is a beautiful custom full of deep significance.

In the world to-day, side by side

with materialism, cruelty and chaos one can notice a great spiritual awakening, an ever growing yearning for abiding Peace, for all-embracing Love, for Enlightenment. Mother, we feel, is an embodiment of these. Her contact kindles this yearning into a bright flame, Her presence among us holds the promise of fulfilment.
