

"Of Thee alone must be the spoken word,
All else is but futility and pain."

MATRI VANI*

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

How to Meet Adversity and Danger

10.

No two days pass alike. Do not allow yourself to be overpowered by despair. Have complete trust in Him in spite of everything — to Him you should call out, whether surroundings make it easy or not. If you have fallen to the ground, use it as a spring-board to raise yourself up again, for it is man's duty to exert himself, no matter what he undertakes.

11.

Misfortune must not be looked upon as a disaster: it would be a sin to do so, for Who sends the misfortune? What *He* does is all-beneficial. Under no circumstances, however adverse, should man accept defeat.

"Gurudeva, you do only what is for my real well-being," keep this thought ever with you. In this world there are bound to be all sorts of troubles. If you have lost wealth and position, let them be gone. Pray to God only for the lives of your family.

*Mother's Words.

12.

At all times let patience be your stronghold. Say to yourself: "Lord, everything Thou doest is for the highest good!" Pray for the power of endurance. Nothing happens that is not an expression of God's Grace: verily, all is His Grace.

Anchored in patience, bearing everything, abide by His Name and live joyously.

13.

What else can be expected from this world, whose very nature is constant flux; times are never the same. To live in time is to be bound by it — by death.* If you do not rise above time, how can you escape the clutches of death? Had time not swallowed up the moment that brought you such acute distress and agony, would any life be left in your body? This is the way of the world. What you have experienced continually happens to every family in one form or another. Console yourself with the thought that this is how the world is fashioned.

When one resides in a country not one's own, how can one possibly evade the hardships that are a foreigner's lot? Your motherland is where there is no question of distress and sorrow, of violence and hatred, of alienism, neither of the opposites of light and darkness.

The endeavour to find Himself in his real home, in his true nature, is the sole duty of man. Courage and steadiness is what is required.

Consolation in Bereavement.

1.

It is the will of the Almighty that prevails at all times, verily is the law of creation. 'World' means a ceaseless round of sor-

*Here Mother plays upon words. *Kala* means both 'time' and 'death.'

temporary happiness and affliction : to experience this, man is born. Do you not see that the world is nothing but this in infinite variety ?

For him who has set out on this life's last journey with the name *Durga* on his lips, there should be no grief, no tears ; at any rate do your utmost. If weep you must, weep for God. Fortunate is he who breathes his last pronouncing God's Name. One must strive to keep one's mind ever concentrated on His Feet. Pray for the Guru's Grace and constantly remember His Lotus Feet.

2.

Such is the nature of the world. Girded with fortitude like a hero you must try to calm yourself. There simply is no hope of peace save in the contemplation of God. Let this be your firm conviction. It is man's duty under all circumstances to seek refuge in Him, by virtue of whose Law all things are wrought. Not to wail or pine for the physical presence of the departed should be your sole effort. This is a journey which everyone without exception has to take and it is necessary for each one to provide himself for the way. Those who have been received into His Arms should be abandoned entirely to His care.

Regard as the Supreme Being whomsoever you serve. Rely on Him absolutely.

The Fear of Ghosts and Evil Spirits.

1.

Where God's Name is, no ghost or evil spirit can exist, for His Name is the destroyer of all sorrow and sin. Cherish this Name ! Be sure to attend to your *japa* regularly morning and evening and ever let your thinking be pervaded by his Name. Make a special effort to understand and have faith that where His Name is there can be no danger or adversity of any kind.

2.

Do not give into your inclination to think about ghosts and apparitions; rather keep your mind solely on God's Name and meditate on Him. In the presence of His Name no other power can function. This is the truth, be firmly convinced of it. The moment you have recourse to God's Name you should feel that no other lesser power can touch you. If at that time you are aware of any physical anxiety, be quite certain that it is merely a bodily reaction.

3.

When he retires for the night he should repeat the Lord's Name and fall asleep with it. If he be afraid even then, let him place a sacred book like the *Bhagavad Gita*, the *Chandi* or the *Rāmāyana* near his head. Besides he should unceasingly sustain the flow of God's Name and remember that where scriptures are, there is He Himself and no fear of any kind can exist in His Presence.

The Duties of a Brahmachari.

Those who attempt to be *Brahmacharis* or *Sadhus* must live a life of renunciation. Sloth, greed, fame, praise and impatience constitute serious obstacles. Taking great care to avoid them, all work should be done in a spirit of service. Furthermore the rules enjoined on *Brahmacharis* and *Sadhus* have to be given special attention. What might seem an offence in the eyes of others should not be pursued, nor what is likely to cause even the slightest harm to oneself.

MATAJI'S AMARA VANI

(4 *)

Question : So long as physical existence, which is the result of one's actions in former lives (*Prarabda*) † continues, must not at least a trace of ignorance be left over ?

Mataji : If everything can be consumed, cannot this trace be burnt up too ? At a certain stage of course a last vestige of ignorance does persist ; however there is a state where there is no question of it.

Question : It is said, a Realized Being remains in his body in response to the wishes of others on the basis of their *Prarabda*.

Mataji : One's own desire, another's desire and indifference — these terms certainly indicate the various kinds of bondage that desires represent. If, although one seems established in one's True Being (*Swarupa*), one can be touched by desire or its opposite, it is a sign that dependence in one direction or another still continues. Remember that where there is no sense of having a body, he who is under the spell of the physical, sees the body as a concrete fact. If you say after enlightenment the body will not survive, is embodiment then an obstacle to Supreme Wisdom (*Gyan*) ? Where the revelation of the Self is, there the problem of the body simply does not arise, for in that state there is no question of anyone or anything in particular.

Question : Since illumination can consume everything, it is only logical that the physical body should be consumed too ; some hold this theory.

Mataji : Most certainly the body will be consumed ; 'body' means what is subject to change, and this will be burnt up. It is as you say. When you hold to a theory you thereby commit yourself to a certain position

* The Bengali original appeared in "Ananda Varta" Vol. 2, No. 1.

† *Prarabda Karma* is that portion of one's past actions which is bound to fructify the present life and cannot be averted.

and you will be limited to it. But where the revelation of the Self is, the query whether the body survives or not, cannot possibly occur.

Question : What is 'Nitya Lila' (God's Eternal Play) ?

Mataji : What do you understand by 'Nitya' (eternal) ?

From the audience : That which cannot be affected by the states of waking, dreaming or deep sleep is called 'Nitya' (eternal); this is how I have heard it explained.

Someone else : Duality (*Dwaita*) and non-duality (*Advaita*) are both eternal, it is merely a matter of divergent angles of vision. When one allows for different points of view, then amidst this diversity the non-eternal will find a place.

Mataji : In the Supreme, in the Ultimate, when limited vision has disappeared, how can there be distinctions such as duality and non-duality ? He who inquires, perceives the two and there is likewise duality for him who practises *Sādhana* although he aims at Oneness. You must grasp the truth that He who is duality, is the One who is non-duality — just like water and ice.

A voice : Ice is not mere water, it is necessary to mix something else with the water to obtain ice.*

Mataji : No simile can be complete in every respect. Therefore in this case one's attention is focussed on the water which is melted ice.

A state exists where the distinction between duality and non-duality has no place. He who is bound by a particular angle of vision will speak from the stand-point which happens to be his at the time. But where *Brahman* is, the One-Without-A-Second, nothing else can possibly exist. You separate duality from non-duality because you are identified with the body, which means you are in a condition of constant wanting.

*This question was asked by a dweller of the Indian plains, where the temperature never sinks to freezing-point and he therefore was ignorant of the fact that ice is nothing but water; below a certain temperature.

†Here Mataji plays upon words: *deho*—body, and *'deo'*—the imperative of give.

Besides it has to be pointed out that, if through sense-perception of any kind or description, anything arises which is not THAT and THAT alone, then it is *avidya* (illusion). To say 'there is only one Vishnu', when you do not behold Him everywhere, what is the sense of it? Again whether you call it *Shabda Brahman** and therefore *Brahmā*, or whether you call it *Vishnu* or *Shiva*—these are only the various manifestations that are necessary at different states and stages. Thus all names are His Names, all forms His Forms, all qualities His Qualities, and the nameless and the formless are also He alone.

A state of being exists where it is immaterial whether He assumes a form or not — what is, is HE. In this case what is there to express in words? Furthermore at a certain level the Self may reveal Itself to Itself. At the same time He does not reveal Himself at all : to whom is He to reveal Himself? When there is neither form nor quality, what is to be put into language? Where nothing is excluded, how can Oneness be obstructed? In this state of complete poise nothing at all is any longer apart from Him, what is, is the THING ITSELF. So what can be said or left unsaid, since it is entirely beyond words! Obviously each one speaks from the level at which he finds himself, and whatever is uttered are His words, His song, addressed to Him. In the Supreme State nothing whatsoever can possibly be an obstacle : if it is, then ignorance has survived. In reality there is only He — He alone and nothing but He.

Suppose you have modelled a doll in butter ; whichever aspect of it you may survey, its shape, peculiarity or appearance, butter it remains and nothing but butter : it is one indivisible substance. If you try to split it up, its integrity will be lost, that is to say, division is out of the question.

What is called "*Nitya Lila*" means God playing with Himself. Where God is — His play can never be transient. He, the Almighty, engages His infinite *Lila*, His endless Play. Within the Infinite lies the finite and in the finite Infinity. He alone, He who is the SELF, He engages a play with Himself : this is called '*Nitya Lila*'. Viewed from this

* *Shabda Brahman* is the eternal sound which is the first manifestation of the Supreme Reality and which lies at the root of all subsequent creation.

stand-point, whatever is required at any level becomes manifested, for is it not the sphere of Pure Consciousness! Here even division partakes of the nature of Pure Consciousness, since it is transcendental. When you speak of non-duality (*Advaita*), is not the idea of duality implied? But in the realm of Pure Consciousness, if you say '*Maya* exists', so it does; and if you say 'there is no such thing as *Maya*', it is equally correct, for nothing can be excluded. Non-duality which cannot be conceived of, is as true as that which one is capable of conceiving, for all is HE, and so discord, doubt, dissension are not there. The false as such must vanish. How can one speak of *Advaita* and include individuals, the world? Since there is non-duality, can there still be individuals, can there still be the world? Where do these find a place? Where exclusively Oneness is, how can there be room left for the two? Furthermore is it not said: 'Wherever a living being is, there is *Shiva* and wherever a woman, there is *Shakti*.' From such a point of view you should now try to ponder over all this.

Albeit, whatever anyone may say from any standpoint, everything is always right, nothing can be outside of THAT. Whether you say there is or there is not the appearance of *Maya* — actually there is no place for speech. Using words or not, seeing or failing to see is merely a matter of angles of vision. On the other hand where THAT is, there can be no angles of vision. Problems are born through want of knowledge, due to the veil of ignorance. Until one is established in one's own Essential Being (*Swarupa*), it is natural that queries should arise.

In the realm of phenomena there are all kinds of differentiation such as 'above' and 'below'. But THERE — what is and what is not. Where ascent and descent can still be spoken of, what will you call such a state? Must you not admit that various directions have remained? If you speak of descent and ascent it is implied that there must be a place to descend to: but whither can He descend? To Himself alone of course. Ascending and descending are one and the same thing and He who ascends is He who descends, and the acts of ascending and descending are also He. Although *you* may well speak of Divine Descent, *He* surely does not become divided. You see fire flare up here and there, but this does

not affect its unity : fire as fire is eternal. This is how you should understand it. No simile is ever complete. He who descends, whence he descends, and whither — all are one. There is nothing whatsoever outside of THAT.

Question : If the Thing Itself remains what it is, what then do ascent and descent mean ?

Mataji : What you say represents a particular viewpoint of the world. Where the Ultimate, the Supreme is, the question you ask is impossible. On a certain plane descent and ascent exist. It is *you* who say : 'God descends.' On the other hand there is no such thing as descent : where He is, there He remains and all possibilities are contained in Him. To understand* intellectually, which means to be burdened by mental conceptions, prevents one from grasping the Truth.

Again, to what can you attain ? It is already present here itself ! Anything gained will be lost again. To prepare oneself for the revelation of THAT which eternally IS, there are injunctions, numerous paths. But do you not see, every path must come to an end ; in other words you should concentrate upon that imagination which will sweep away all other imaginations, which means when you have gone beyond all imagination there is the revelation of THAT which you really are.

The beauty of it is that man's very nature is to desire the Real, Supreme Wisdom, Divine Joy ; his nature to return home when the play is over. The field of the play is His, the play His as well, and so are those who take part in it, friends and fellow-beings — all is He alone. Ignorance surely, is not what one seeks. To aspire to Immortality is man's true nature — or is death desirable ? The world is concerned with the knowledge which is ignorance. Although it is true, even here one can observe how man builds a solid house in order that it may last for a long time, because he wants stability. At times one may tell a lie under some uncontrollable impulse, yet one feels uneasy about it.

*A play upon words : 'bhoja' means 'to understand' as well as 'burden.'

To long for the cessation of want is your very nature and to explore and penetrate to the root of whatever you perceive. When you buy clothes you choose durable material, which will not wear out quickly; even this is an indication of your innate tendency to seek the Everlasting. It is your nature to crave for the revelation of THAT which IS, for the Eternal, for Truth, for limitless Knowledge. This is why you do not feel satisfied with the evanescent, the untrue, with ignorance and limitation.

To yearn for the revelation of WHAT YOU ARE is your true nature.

BIRTHDAY CELEBRATIONS AT ALMORA

By

Kali Prasad

The turning-point of every year in the lives of Mataji's Bhaktas is the period, varying between two and four weeks, when Her birthday is celebrated in the month of Vaisakh. This year Mataji stayed in Almora for the whole period and a very large number of Bhaktas from all over India had gathered, besides those of the Almora District, to join in the one-pointed devotion of worship; also coming for Mataji's Darshan were people from Germany, Austria, Switzerland, England, Scotland, America, Canada, Australia and Mauritius. Facilities for residence were made in or near the Ashram for the gradually increasing number of visitors. From May 2nd to 23rd the Ashram was the scene of constant activity, Satsang, discourses by Sanyasis and Pandits, Kirtan, Bhajans and a variety of ceremonies, all for the purpose of maintaining intense dedication to the worship of God throughout the twenty-four hours of every day. A harmony and single-mindedness was forged from the feeling of love and devotion for Mataji in the hearts of

all assembled. Here was a friendliness devoid of obstructive attachment, which only those united in a single purpose such as this can create. There was a buoyancy and joy in all, inspired by the constant loving attention bestowed on everyone by Mataji, a detailed attention, utterly selfless, which She alone can give. Many, who for the first time were living close to Her for a prolonged period, were amazed by the endless pains She took, to ensure the comfort and welfare of each person. Thus She created the atmosphere of Love and Service which pervaded the weeks of celebration and transformed all the routine activities and natural *Tapas* of Himalayan Ashram life into a source of profound happiness for everyone. From early morning almost until late at night Mataji was in our midst; hardly was there a time when She was not somewhere in the Ashram supervising every little detail, seven hours of every day remaining with us in Satsang. So many things happened, so many moments of significance and

beauty that in this small space it is not possible to record them.

Mataji had been in Almora since April 14th and by May 2nd a number of Bhaktas were already there to prepare for the arrival from Brindaban of Sri Haribabaji Maharaj with his party. The night preceding May 2nd there was all-night *Nam-Kirtan* with Puja at 3 a. m. Next morning with decorations going up and beautiful Pahari floor patterns (*alpanas*) being completed, Mataji was seemingly everywhere at once. In the evening the huge crowd assembled in the Bhajan Hall were fortunate enough to hear Mataji lead the Kirtan with Her own exquisite voice. Throughout the evening and after the arrival of Sri Haribabaji Maharaj there was much rejoicing, and a feeling of elation spread through the vast gathering.

Every day in Satsang Sri Hari Babaji read and discussed Bhaji's book about Mataji '*Matri Darshan*'. Swami Svatantranandaji of Sri Shankaracharya Math discoursed on Vedanta and Sri Krishnanandaji Avadhuta on the *Bhagavad Gita*. On these occasions anything up to 500 people were present. In the morning and evening Sri Hari Babaji sang Kirtan with his disciples, and whether one was present in the hall or perhaps somewhere out on the slopes of Patal Devi, this was a profoundly stirring

sound which imbued all with a sense of exaltation as they came to sit at the feet of Mataji.

On most evenings after the fifteen minutes of silence at nine o'clock Mataji would answer questions and give profound discourse on many subjects. The mood in the evenings was always one of happiness and laughter. Manohar (now Paramananda Das) and others of Sri Hari Babaji's party performed religious parables with brilliant characterisation and rich humour. These parables always illustrated some serious spiritual subject, sometimes one of Mataji's own stories which She often invents or recounts, and their humour and real devotion kept everyone enthralled. As Mataji has said: "Whenever you have the chance, laugh as much as you can. By this all the rigid knots in your body will be loosened. But to laugh superficially is not enough: your whole being must be united in laughter, both inwardly and outwardly. Do you know how this is expressed? You simply shake with merriment from head to foot, so that it is impossible to tell which part of your body is most affected."

"What you usually do is to laugh with your mouth, while your emotions are held in check. But I want you to laugh with your whole com-

tenance, with your whole heart and with all the breath of your life." *

After the first few days, Didi, who had been ill for some time, had a set-back and therefore unwillingly consented to leave Mataji on the great occasion in order to go to Calcutta for treatment. Her dynamic presence in our midst was sadly missed and we wish her an early recovery to full health. Swami Paramananda was in charge of all the arrangements in the Ashram, no mean task as by the end of the celebrations a few hundred Bhaktas were living in or near the Ashram, and with the many ceremonies, he was constantly busy, yet ever smiling and ready to give assistance and to work at any task.

People began to flock to the Ashram and news travelled from village to village that Anandamayi Ma was in Almora for Her birthday. Some of the hill people travelled long distances on foot to have Her Darshan. One evening a man arrived from a remote village after walking for nine days, remembering Mataji from 1937 when She had visited Nilash. Just as he was saying: 'I do not know whether I shall have the chance of Mataji's Darshan today', Her door opened. She looked

towards him, as if solely to give him what he wished, after he had travelled that tremendous, hard distance. Outstanding faith and devotion always call forth a correspondingly wonderful response from Mataji, and She performs the real miracle of granting exactly one's deepest wish.

As all present became gradually transformed by long periods of japa, meditation, Satsang, by joining in the daily Arati and Puja and by the inspiration of Her Presence, the significance of Her birthday dawned in our hearts. Yet the true inner meaning of Her birthday will perhaps always remain a mystery. This is not just the celebration and rejoicing, the presentation of gifts which are the spontaneous expression of the event. Nor again is it only a celebration of the blessed day on which She came into the world. Living amongst us and directing us solely towards God, the day of Her birth when She assumed this Her body could perhaps be considered of no importance. Yet She has said. "This body is what you think it to be." Here lies the crux of the matter that we, almost unconsciously, for we do not know the full reason, desire to enter some kind of communion with Her on this anniversary of Her birth. If

*.Quoted from "Sad Vani."

we are really in harmony, then Her birthday is *our* birthday, it is the day on which our hearts were set alight with the Divine fire, whatever the date upon which we first met Her and whether or not we were yet born when She was born into Time. For the Divine fire is eternal, and its kindling also an eternal process as Birth, Life and Death partake of the same eternal stream. So too, whatever may be its significance to Her, for this is beyond our conception, in that lies the mystery, in that which is completely beyond our comprehension we seek to participate, such as we are able, to have communion with Her, each in his own way.

Therefore, since Mataji's Birthday meant something different to each individual present, it is impossible to attempt an objective description of it. It is necessary to employ the personal account, since each seeing it differently would have cause to disagree as to the *quality* of the bald facts. Only through the actuality of the subjective experience as something that really happened, can the so-called objective reality be glimpsed. What we recount can only be in the duality of subject and object, not the real, total experience. What is written of Mataji should be a kind of transparent structure of word-mirrors through which diversity of

viewpoint may be permitted a glimpse of that which is the ultimate actuality of Mata Anandamayi.

The Night of May 21st.

What magnetic force beyond our ken attracted over two thousand people to the Ashram to keep an all-night vigil? An all-night vigil holds no prospect of feasting, of *Prasad*, as perhaps might attract many to what is conventionally considered an ordeal. Yet this huge crowd of people from widely scattered parts of India came and sat silently for hours, awake, patient, completely absorbed, suffused with happiness, people from all walks of life, Sanyasis, Pandits, children, Rajas, business men, families, artists, beggars, — pilgrims all on the route to the inner Kailash. Kirtan and Bhajans were sung throughout the night and a grotto was created out of pines and banana leaves on a stepped terrace. At three in the morning Mataji came out from Her room; She was radiant in white, a kind of minuscule fineness and perfection, wreathed in garlands. She mounted the steps and after briefly sitting surrounded by devotees She lay down on a couch and was covered with a beautiful golden floral coverlet. Only Her forehead gleamed out of this robe of Sprites.

flowers and freshness, and Her black hair fell like a plume on the pillow.

Puja commenced and salvers of sweets laid out in rows on the steps were uncovered. Three Sanyasis, led by Sri Hari Babaji Maharaj, sat near Her like the Three Wise Men in the Adoration. For two hours the ceremony continued in a mood of intense exaltation. Yet there could hardly be anything more simple and supremely undramatic. Almost no outward sign was manifested beyond Her recumbent figure. But here within the black arena of invisible Himalayas Mataji lay in Her birth dream, the mystery of mysteries, Her brow alone marking Her presence like a face, like a mountain peak, inscrutable. This *Murti* seemed like *Vishnu* asleep upon the Ocean of Bliss, dreaming of the universe, or *Queen Maya* dreaming of the birth of *Lord Buddha*, or *Devi* immersed in the imponderable mystery of *Shunya*, beyond creation and dissolution, birth and re-birth. Yet it was none of these things, for it was the very essence of *Anandamayi*. And the assembled crowd filled with *Bhakti*, kept vigil for That. Whether the pandits may have called this *Samadhi*, or *Sushupti*, complete absorption in the causal *Prakriti*, whatever the guess, nothing can either approach the full truth, nor

dissolve the reality of that surge of devotion which filled those assembled and made them as *one*. For if, as is supposed, only the perfected Yogi can perceive One *Jiva* where before there was the whole world of many *Jivas*, here was an unvoiced awareness of that reality, lived for those few wondrous moments.

As the Puja ended, everyone, still entirely absorbed by the moment, by the mystery of the Birth Day, processed quietly, unhurriedly to the foot of the couch, there to *Pranam* and re-dedicate themselves. As the last filed past a new mystery was born, reborn, and Mataji awoke; laying aside the coverlet of flowers She walked forth into the morning in Her simple white robes. But now it seemed that one had never really seen Her before, so different She appeared to us, almost delicate, pale and beautiful as a full-moon in a blue day sky, with eyes utterly remote and serene, remote in that they seemed to embrace all, rather than any single person, to look beyond and to embrace That which abides deep within; but never in so close a communion with Her Bhaktas as at that unforgettable moment.

That day there was feasting and singing of hymns and discourse of the learned. In the night as I returned home I saw a single glow-worm ahead of me on the path, as if I had found myself being called to the attention of something within. My eyes then wandered and saw by contrast the distant flashes of a great Himalayan storm and suddenly from the direction of the hidden Nanda Devi came a piercing bright light, and as straight as an arrow,

serenely, with awesome, incalculable silent power a comet traversed the sky. It sped in a huge arc across the star-broken blackness, piercing the brain, proceeding to some nameless distance, leaving behind it a long sparkling plume of fire — and vanished. And then a wind came rushing through the night, stirring and weaving through the pine groves, voice of the night, poised between the void of the unknown and the Light of a promise.



you first see the ...

At Mataji's Camp on the Day of the Kumbh Disaster

By

A Devotee.

The news of the terrible tragedy spread like wild-fire: first through the vast city of tents and huts that had been erected near the confluence of the three sacred rivers, and a little later through the whole world by broadcasts, newspapers, pictures, films and by the horror-stricken tales of eye-witnesses who had themselves escaped as if by miracle. Everywhere there was great distress, grief and mourning for those who had been trampled to death, and deep sympathy for those who had lost their loved-ones in so tragic a manner. A special commission was appointed to unravel the causes of the catastrophe; there were discussions and rumours without end.

Amidst all the conflicting views and statements it is but natural that many of Mataji's Bhaktas wanted to know, how the memorable day that is considered so auspicious and occurs only once in almost a century, was spent in Mataji's Camp and what Mataji had to say about the dread-

ful event. Indeed on learning the details of this, the whole matter presents itself in a surprisingly new and unexpected light. One has a sensation which can best be compared to the experience one gets at a sudden flash of lightning on a pitch dark night in an unfamiliar place: for a second the landscape is lit up and clearly seen.

Over 300 men, women and children from all over India had gathered in Mataji's Camp, eager to bask in the sunshine of Her Presence as well as to purify their bodies and souls by plunging into the sacred waters at the Triveni on February 3rd, the most auspicious day of the Kumbh Mela. The problem was how to get this large number of people safely to the Sangam and back again. Following Mataji's suggestion it was decided after midnight only that the bathers should form themselves into small groups, each under the leadership of one or two men. But a little later Swami Paramananda came

and said he had hired two spacious boats in which all the inmates of Mataji's Camp could be taken to the Saagam in two or three large batches. Mataji said: "Since you have already made the arrangement, proceed as best you can." The Swamiji who is well known as an excellent organizer could not foresee the terrible difficulties he would have to encounter, trying to keep such a large number of people together amongst the teeming crowd.

At 2 a. m. about a hundred devotees were accommodated in the boats, ready to take off. Before embarking all had *pranamed* to Mataji and She had impressed on them to choose a sacred Name like '*Jai Guru*', '*Jai Rām*', '*Jai Shiv*', which they should repeat aloud uninterruptedly—so that if anyone got separated from the others he would be able to recognize his party on hearing the Name. Vibhu at once called out: "We have decided on '*Jai Ma*'," to which Mataji laughingly replied: "See, how you don't accept a single one of my suggestions." Everybody was in high spirits and started away with great hopes.

Mataji walked to the gate of Her Camp. Watching the broad stream of bathers pressing on relentlessly, She said: "Does it not look like an

endless procession of ants! This mighty ocean of human beings, all pilgrims on the path to liberation." With that She returned to Her hut and lay down, only to emerge again after a short while. She obviously was in one of Her strange moods, seeming so distant and yet so near, in one of those states which are so extremely hard to describe, but which have often been noticed in Mataji during Kirtans.

Just then the Swamiji had sent someone back to the Camp to escort the second batch to the Triveni. When they took leave of Mataji She enjoined on them also to repeat God's name incessantly right through their pilgrimage. Then Mataji at short intervals alternately rested in Her hut and strolled hither and thither. At about 9 a. m. She was lying down, appearing to be in a state of Samadhi, when suddenly She sat up and exclaimed: "*There, there, they are being crushed, choked, they are being suffocated!*" Mataji's chief attendant and great Bhakta Sri Gurupriya Devi, known as 'Didi' (elder sister), who was by Her side, started up in alarm. Were her younger sisters and brothers in danger, those who had gone to bathe amongst the uncontrollable crowds at the Sangam? Abruptly her anxiety gave place to exaltation. With almost supernatural

determination she declared: "Nothing will happen to anyone of our party." "Are you quite sure?" questioned Mataji. In a very definite tone Didi reaffirmed: "Yes, Ma, nothing will happen to anyone of our party." Twice Mataji repeated Her question, and twice Didi promptly gave exactly the same reply. At last Mataji said: "Good!" and reclining once more, remained silent. Didi straightened herself as if in a defiant mood. Again Mataji's voice rang out: "Didi, I see apparitions, they are horror-stricken!" "What is this again?" Didi began to feel troubled. "They are clearly visible," insisted Mataji. Didi became thoughtful: she knew from experience that whenever Mataji speaks of apparitions (*Murtis*), it is an unfailing indication of disaster. As if to keep up her spirits, Didi said after a moment's reflection: "Well, Ma, all that takes place in the world is within your consciousness. You must be seeing what is happening elsewhere. Most certainly nothing has befallen our party." As if in confirmation Mataji said in the end, "Very well, be it so!" and once more seemed to become absorbed.

From where came Didi's unshakable conviction? Was it Mataji Herself who inspired it? At that time

Didi could have no idea that her words were prophetic: not a single person belonging to Mataji's party incurred even the slightest injury.

Confusion and difficulties there were no doubt, but everyone returned safely. Some got separated from the rest and had to force their way back to their camp on foot. Others could not advance as far as the Triveni and had to be content with a bath in the Ganges. The boat got stuck in the sand and was pulled out only with difficulty. The second batch never met the Swamiji at all.

Between 10 and 10-30 a. m. Mataji, Didi, Yogibhai and Dr. Pannal were ready to go to the Sangam by car. Just then Swami Paramananda turned up. Mataji wanted to know how everyone was faring. The Swamiji brought the news that many of the first batch had returned, but he knew nothing about the fate of the second batch. Amongst the gigantic masses it had proved impossible to keep to his original plan. Moreover, Gangadi, the lady superintendent of the Kanyapith*, had remained back at the Sangam with all the girls in her charge to wait for a procession of Sadhus. "You should have brought them back with you", said Mataji,

*The girls' school housed in the Banaras Ashram.

“you should never have allowed them to stay without male protection.”

Now Mataji's car started for the camp of Jogibhai's people. Though he himself had chosen to reside in Mataji's Camp, the Camp of his people was situated near the Triveni. There Mataji sat down on a chair on the river bank. Dr. Pannalal and Swami Paramananda tried to persuade Mataji to go to the Sangam by boat, but She said very firmly: “I am not going anywhere just now.” Then She requested the Swamiji to go in search of the people who had not yet returned. Mataji seemed in a peculiar mood. We were aware of something special, quite unusual in Her behaviour.

How could the Swamiji possibly find anyone amidst the swarming mass of humanity? He was struggling to drag a boat along for Mataji. Meanwhile a few of the second batch, who had been separated from the main body, managed somehow to catch sight of Mataji from a great distance and fought their way to Her through the multitude. They related all their various adventures. Nothing was then known about the remainder of the second batch.

Paramananda was still trying to pull along the large boat. His efforts seem-

ed in vain. Mataji and Her party therefore got into a small boat and rowed to the Sangam. Mataji did not bathe. She put a little Ganges water on Her head and then sprinkled some on all who had come with Her. Onlookers were intrigued to know who were this strange lady and her companion (Didi), who were satisfied with a little sprinkling of Ganges water on a day when bathing was considered so exceptionally auspicious. By that time the Swamiji had succeeded in pulling along the large boat and all returned to Mataji's Camp. She asked: “Is there any news?” No one could then have any idea of the real purport of Her question. Later when we learnt about the dreadful disaster, Mataji said: “I could clearly see great heaps of human corpses!” After a thorough search in our Camp it was luckily ascertained that every single person was present, hale and hearty.

There was naturally much consternation about the catastrophe and everyone began to question Mataji as to the fate of its victims. According to the Shastras '*Apamrityu*,' untimely death by accident, causes the departed to undergo a state of restless ghostly existence. In some cases the deceased is tied to the place of the accident, unable to proceed to higher states of consciousness.

Mataji said : "What the Shastras declare holds good in the ordinary course of events. In special cases it is different. In this case, just consider : the 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 renunciation. Death occurred at that auspicious moment : this must certainly mean the opening out of a path to higher planes of consciousness. Just as there is such a thing as '*Apamrityu*', there are other possibilities as well."

A few days later Mataji sent Her car for Mahamahopadhyaya Sri Gopinath Kaviraj, who visited our Camp for a day. With him also Mataji discussed the disaster. "What is your opinion about the fate of its victims ?" She asked. Sri Gopinath Kaviraj gave the following reply : "The condition of man after he leaves his physical body depends on his state of mind at the instant of death. On that auspicious day and when at the crucial moment everyone was deeply concentrated, I cannot believe that this could have been a case of *Apamrityu*. It is of course true that the time, place and manner of death are the result of one's past actions ; but since it happened during the constellation of the *Maha Kumbh*, at the Triveni, in the holy month of *Magh*

and in the presence of so many Saints, Sages and Rishis, I feel as good as certain that there can have been no question of *Apamrityu* ; on the contrary the departed must have had the very rare good fortune of being raised up into higher states of existence."

On another occasion the topic came up again and Sri Gopinath Kaviraj enlarged on the subject, saying : "I know of a similar occurrence where, by some special Divine Grace the dying in their subtle bodies were severed from their physical just an instant before death took place, and were lifted up into higher states of consciousness. I have a strong feeling that here also, due to the intervention of some special Divine Mercy the dying were blessed with the capacity to ascend straight away into loftier states of being." Mataji very definitely seemed to endorse the Mahamahopadhyaya's view. He added : "I have visited three other Kumbh Melas at Prayag. The crowd was equally dense on those occasions ; but this time I have been aware of a very exceptional atmosphere of Divine Blessing, which I did not notice then."

Someone asked Mataji : "When you exclaimed 'they are being crushed, suffocated', did you see only those who were trampled to death ?"

Mataji : "I saw those who were saved

as well as those who shut their eyes for ever. I saw pile upon pile of human beings being crushed and choked, and some were completely suffocated. Many closed their eyes and opened them again, others shut them for good. It was as if this body were being crushed and suffocated. I was those who were being stifled to death and those who were trampling on them — and all the time I was lying on my bed in my hut. "Here Mataji smiled Her beautiful, radiant smile, as if nothing had happened. Someone asked: "Why did you feel all this? Did you take their suffering upon yourself?"

Mataji: "What I felt was not suffocation in the worldly sense, just as I seem to laugh as you do, as I seem to speak your language, yet I remain what I am. Who is it that appears as suffocation? Who is it that appears as distress? To take upon oneself the agony of another is a different matter. Every kind of

action is not possible everywhere. Where in very truth all is THAT, where in the shape of misfortune and suffering, in the shape of laughter and play is the ONE who also manifests as suffocation, in that state there is no such thing as taking on the tribulation of others, there is only perfect identify, sameness (*Sama*). Again, the whole thing might not have happened at all; what was is but a play!

"Do I not ask you sometimes, 'why did you go there? Only to meet with much trouble and discomfort?' To say this is as good as not saying it, for all is THAT and here can be no question of taking on suffering. Participation in another's sorrow implies mutual relationship, one talks to another. There is a place for that also. To take suffering upon oneself means to share it: this is possible only when one can still speak of give and take."

SRI SRI MA ANANDAMAYI

By

S. C. Mitter, Barrister-at-Law.

What were my reactions after I saw the Holy Mother ? is the question posed.

In all humility and with the deepest reverence I approach the subject and just in a few lines I give my personal impressions :

When I first saw the Mother nearly five years ago, I found Her in the company of a motley crowd of men and women, some of whom appeared to me liberally minded and a little intellectually advanced of others and some orthodox in their ways and habits of life, and also a few children of varying ages. One person asked the Mother : "Do tell us who you are, from where you come ? etc. etc."

The Mother kept silent, but being pressed again, She answered, "Why not, my child, ask yourself and get the reply ? Surely you do not come to see my earthly frame. Perhaps you get at something within this body which attracts you."

That silenced the inquirer. This picture has remained vivid in my

memory. Ever since this incident, I have visited the Mother's Ashramas several times both in Calcutta and Banaras. And every time I see Her, She reminds me of a guardian angel descended from Heaven on earth carrying a divine message ; and what is this divine message ? "Think of your creator, if not every moment, at least for some time every day ; pray to your Maker to show you the Light ; have abiding faith in Him, love Him so that you may come nearer and nearer to Him and enjoy bliss".

The Mother's gaze appeared to me to be constantly on the Eternal : Her authority comes out of her gentle, loving and serene eyes. My impression of the Mother Anandamayi is of a physical body divinized, of Love personified, of the sweetest flower that lends enchantment to the landscape, of divine music that comes from afar through the medium of a human voice, of something that attracts irresistibly and at the same time is awe-inspiring.

The picture of the image of the

Mother that comes to my mind is the vision of a Deity, of a messenger from Heaven living on earth in flesh and blood, teaching us to love all ; and of one so deeply rooted in *Akhanda Sachchidananda* (Indivisible Existence-Knowledge-Bliss), in constant tune with the Infinite. Her early life is a vivid manifestation of the Divine Mother in flesh and blood, who lures us on to meditate on that Divinity and shake off fear, and by our faith and surrender, genuine and complete, Her Grace descends on us. If we really wish to realise Her, we must cultivate purity, calm and inner strength which alone can transform us. When you give yourself entirely without demand, condition or reservation, so that all in you shall belong to the Divine Mother and nothing be left to the ego, then alone you get a glimpse of the Mother Anandamayi. As a life-long devoted student of philosophy I have been familiar with the highest metaphysical thought, both Eastern and Western, but my approach towards

those eternal values was on the intellectual plane ; whereas sitting at the feet of the Mother and listening to Her words one breathes purer air. Her presence inspires : She diffuses a luminous atmosphere all around Her and fills our hearts with joy unspeakable and helps us imperceptibly to lead healthier, nobler and happier lives. Dry, printed pages of books lack that inspiration. The Divine Mother Anandamayi transcends time and space. That eternal invisible force assumes name and form to lift up her creatures to a higher plane and to demonstrate to the world the eternal truths. But how is it possible to compress eternity in any compass ? Nevertheless these few unassuming lines speak for themselves. May my humble voice reach the hearts of millions of humanity. In the words of Jesus : "Give up everything. Follow me and you shall see the Kingdom of Heaven". So why not make up your mind, go ahead, struggle and turn over the page for real Bliss ?

As The Flower Sheds Its Fragrance

Diary Leaves

by

Atmananda.

In Mataji's Presence even the trivial becomes sublime, the pettiest incident acquires significance. This fact itself is an important part of Her teaching.

* * * *

A young girl approached Mataji with the request to write in her autograph book. I felt sure Mataji would decline with a gracious smile, explaining: "I do not write." Nothing of the sort. Mataji nodded. "All right, on which page would you like it?" Delighted the girl opened the book and handed it to Mataji. With the utmost concentration and a childlike seriousness Mataji drew a tiny dot in the middle of the page. Then raising Her head, She looked straight into the girl's eyes, and pointing to the dot, said: "In this everything is contained!" and handed the book back to its owner.

* * * *

Satsang in the hall of the Banaras Ashram. Not many people were present. Scripture was being read.

Suddenly a fairly large dog came racing into the hall. Two or three men got up and tried their best to drive it away. But the dog defeated all their attempts running round and round the hall, causing much distraction. Mataji made signs to them to sit down quietly and take no notice of the animal, but they were not locking at Her. Swiftly Mataji beckoned to a young man sitting near Her. She took the garland of fresh flowers from Her neck and handed it to him: "For the dog!" The boy at once succeeded in throwing the garland over the dog's head. The animal tugged at it happily and hastened straight out of the hall. A smile of relief showed on everyone's face.

There was something extremely touching about this little incident. We feel indignant at a dog disturbing our religious meeting — Mataji offers it the garland from Her neck!

* * * *

Mataji was sitting surrounded by a group of devotees. An ant was

busily crawling up Her garment. Someone tried to brush it off. With an expression of infinite tenderness Mataji looked at the tiny creature and said: "Why chase it away? It has come out of love."

* * * *

In 1948 Mataji's birthday was being celebrated in the garden of Dr. J. K. Sen's house, at New Delhi. A large crowd attended the Satsang three times daily. Sri Haribabaji Maharaj and other well-known Mahatmas graced the function with their presence.

One morning in the middle of a meeting, a weird looking man entered the garden. He was dressed in a queer fashion and his face bore a look of insanity. He was obviously disturbed. He walked straight over to the women's side and spoke to each woman whose head was uncovered: "Cover your head, be a Devi!" No one heeded him. This seemed to annoy him intensely. He was obviously getting more and more desperate. Finally he approached Mataji and repeated his request to Her as well. She at once complied with his wish and motioned to the girls sitting near Her to do likewise. Every woman in the assembly followed suit. The stranger was visibly pleased at his sudden success, and with a trium-

phant smile walked across to the men's side and sat down quietly. After some time however he got up, announcing in a loud voice that he wanted to leave. Mataji handed an orange to someone to give to him. This for some reason infuriated the stranger and he threw the fruit at Mataji with violence. He aimed well, it hit Her. A wave of indignation surged through the crowd. Two of Mataji's Bhaktas caught hold of the intruder and tried to lead him out of the garden. At the gate he freed himself from their grip and attempted to return to the Satsang. One of the devotees hit him, and with difficulty he was finally turned out into the street.

After the meeting Mataji called the two young men who had dealt with the stranger. She wanted to know all the details. On hearing them, She said: "You are not to prevent anyone from coming to me, moreover you must not beat anybody. To atone for what you have done keep a fast to-morrow, and you who have hit the stranger may not even drink water." "But how could we allow him to throw the orange at you?" protested the young men. "There was no knowing what he might have done next. "Never mind, he wanted to return to me, you should have let him do so."

The next morning the strange

