

“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.*)

On Various Subjects.

19.

Verily, abounding sorrow is the essential characteristic of life in this world. Fix your mind upon God.

20.

Ishwara, the Lord of the world is not a thing to be perceived by the senses or grasped by the mind. By contemplating the Divine peace is won. God Himself draws you towards Him.

21.

Never let your mind be idle ; endeavour to keep it concentrated on the Eternal.

22.

In all matters without fail depend wholly upon God. To Him you should submit your heart's petitions and yearnings. Your whole life will have to revolve round Him, you have no other resource ; on your own you are utterly helpless, for are you not His creature ? Whatever He does is all for the highest good. You certainly are not in a position to choose what seems best to you. Why should He permit you, who are the offspring of the Immortal, to stray towards that which is of death ?

You may deem yourself fortunate, for as you yourself say, God has rescued you from the jaws of death and preserved you to this day. Place your reliance on Him alone. The sufferings and obstacles bred of desire which you encounter, even these should be welcomed as in fact the doing of His merciful hands. To become agitated is of no avail. If you must be impatient, be impatient for God; cry "To this day I have not received any response from Thee and invaluable time has been spent in vain." Do not let your mind and body be tormented with restlessness induced by worldly longings.

23.

On hearing the news of someone's death, Mataji had the following conveyed to the bereaved: "Such is the law of worldly existence. You must dwell in fortitude. Surely, you have realised by now what is the true nature of the world? Peace can be found only by directing one's mind towards God. The more time you devote to *Japa* and meditation — whether so disposed or not — the greater the likelihood of your obtaining deliverance from your grief."

24.

To perform one's duties is a good thing. At the same time one has to be mindful of man's real Duty.

25.

Since everything belongs to Him alone, there is no other means but to lie prostrate at His Feet. If there is to be anxiety, it must be solely for Him.

26.

Under all circumstances depend on God. "Of Him is all that need be said, the rest is vanity, woe." Wherever you may find yourself and in whatever condition appeal to Him. In this way only may you expect peace.

27.

Set your mind on God. Whatsoever He, the Fountain of Goodness, does is the very best that could have happened.

28.

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

Whenever practicable seek *Satsang* — (the company of Sages, Saints) and seekers after Truth.

* The *Mantra* and the *Ishta* are one, the *Mantra* being the sound aspect and the *Ishta* the form aspect of one and the same thing.

MATAJI'S AMARA VANI

(7)*

Question : You say all moments are contained in that One Supreme Instant. I cannot understand this.

Mataji : By the instant of one's birth one's experience of life is conditioned; but the Supreme Instant that is revealed in the course of Sadhana leads to the completion of action, to the exhaustion of one's Karma. You should understand that one who is engaged in actions is subject to the workings of nature (*Prakriti*). The constitutive elements of nature are called *Gunast*† because they multiply themselves; for this world is not eternal. The perception of the world that consists of the three *Gunas* is in time and transitory and looked at from this point of view it can be recognized as perishable. Desirelessness (*Vairagya*) can consume only that which is combustible, Divine Love and Devotion dissolve only that which is soluble. But the moment in which there is neither burning nor dissolving—that Moment is eternal. To try and seize that Moment is all you have to do. In reality this is That — all that is perceived is He — how can He be apart from anything? This is so when one has entered *the stream*, and then present, future and past are no longer separate. A Yogi can get something that is on the other side of a wall merely by stretching out his hand. When this is possible the wall is not there although it exists, and even if no wall exists yet it is there. Behind the veil lies Reality, but before you is the veil. The veil was not there previously, nor will it be in future and hence it does not really exist now. In a certain state it is like this.

You should understand that the yogic process due to which the veil has no power to hamper the free activity of a Yogi is analogous to the method by which an ordinarily invisible object is perceived by him, (both being due

* The Bengali original appeared in 'Ananda Varta', Vol. II, No. 4.

† The word 'guna' means 'to multiply' as well as 'quality'.

to the fact that the Yogi is in touch with All-pervading Reality). Furthermore motion and rest, although each remaining what it is, lose their distinction for one who has right vision ; in that state there are unlimited possibilities. But this body does not tell everything at all times. All this belongs to the realm of the marvellous.

To return to the moment : the moment that you experience is distorted, whereas the Supreme Moment contains stability, non-stability, everything — yet all these are there and at the same time not there. And then there is a further state in which the question of the Supreme Moment and the fragmentary moment will not occur.

(8)

When later the topic of the moment was raised again, Mataji said :

Mataji : Moment means time, but not what you call time. Time (*Samaya*) means *Sva-maya*, that is to say everything is seen as the Self alone — where nothing whatsoever can exist outside of the Self.

Question : You say there is stability (*Schiti*) within motion (*Gati*) and motion within stability. What does this mean ?

Mataji : When the seed becomes united with the earth, when the two have mingled, at that moment there is motionlessness. But the process of germination sets in immediately after and this surely implies motion. Motion (or movement) means not to remain in one place. Nevertheless it was in one and the same place — why was ? — it still is. Each stage in the growth of a tree represents a point of stability, yet is also passing. Again the leaves grow and then fall off, which is not the same state : it is and it is not, for after all it is of the one tree. The tree potentially contains the fruit, this is why it will yield it—'it will' means 'it does.'—No simile is ever perfect in all respects.

On another occasion, when referring to the moment, Mataji said :

Mataji : In reality all along there is nothing but the one Moment. Just as one single tree contains numberless trees, innumerable leaves, infinite movement and unbroken stability, so does one instant contain an infinite

number of instants and within all these countless instants lies the one single Instant. Look, *now*, at this very moment there is motion as well as rest. Why then should you have to concern yourself with the revelation of the Moment? Because misled by your perception of difference you think of yourself and of each and every thing in the world as apart from the rest. This is why for you separateness exists. The sense of separateness in which you are caught, that is to say the moment in which you are born determines your nature, your desires and their fulfilment, your development, your spiritual search — everything. Consequently the instant of your birth is apart from that of your mother's and from that of your father's birth and your nature and your temperament are different from theirs.

Each one of you in accordance with your own particular line of approach, must seize the time, the moment that will reveal to you the eternal relationship by which you are united to the Infinite; this is the revelation of Supreme Union (*Mahayoga*). Supreme Union means the whole universe is within you and you are in it and moreover there will be no more occasion to speak of a universe, (for it will then no longer exist). Whether you say it exists or does not exist, or that it is beyond both existence and non-existence, or even beyond that — as you please; the important thing is that it should become revealed, be it in whatever form.

Having found that Moment, that Time, you will have gained the capacity to know your Self. To know your Self would imply the realization of the moment of the birth of your father and of your mother and not only of your parents but of the entire universe. It is that Moment which links up the whole of creation. For to know yourself does not mean to know your body only, it signifies the full revelation of THAT which eternally IS,— the Supreme Father, Mother, Beloved, Lord and Master — the SELF. At the moment of your birth you were in ignorance, but when you have caught the Supreme Moment you suddenly come to know Who you really are, and at that instant, when you have found your Self, the whole universe will have become yours. By receiving one seed one has potentially received an infinite number of trees. Therefore you have to capture the One Supreme Moment, the realization of which will leave nothing unrealized.

The sense of want, of emptiness (*abhava*) and one's true being (*svabhava*) are in exactly the same place — in fact they are THAT and THAT alone. What is this 'sense of want' and what 'true being'? He and nothing

but He. For the simple reason that there is one single seed, which is the tree as well as the seed as well as all its various processes of transformation —truly the ONE alone. You attempt to appease want by want, hence want does not disappear and neither does the sense of want. When man awakens to the acute consciousness of this sense of want, then only does spiritual inquiry become genuine. You must bear in mind that when the sense of want becomes the sense of the want of Self Knowledge then only the real Quest begins. Whether you call it the One, the Two, or the Infinite, whatever anyone may say, all is well.

Glimpses from Mataji's Life

A personality, unique, immeasurable and unfathomable; yet cherished by millions today as the living personification of man's ideal of eternal values, and so, one most familiar, intimate and dear to the heart. The gracious calm which is indefinable in its perfection makes Mataji unapproachable; yet through Her compassionate understanding which knows no horizons, She can reach the heart most estranged. There is no hiatus between Her transcendence and immanence. Because, "There is an unborn, unbecome, uncreated, unformed; were there not this unborn, unbecome, uncreated, unformed, no escape could be found for the born, become, created, formed."

According to Mataji's own words about Herself, She has not passed through any stages of infancy and childhood to maturity; neither from that of a spiritual aspirant to a state of Realisation. She remains inherently changeless through all the physical and emotional changes that seem to affect Her body and mind. There has been no progressive knowledge for Her, because there is nothing hidden from Her. Mataji has

not passed through any previous births and therefore Her body is not the manifestation of accumulated *samskaras*.

In this life She has no mission to fulfil because no desire or personal will influence Her actions. Her apparent activities occur spontaneously according to the need of the time, place and people.

Mataji has never performed any Sadhana in the accepted sense of the term. In fact Her simple village life was not conducive to such ways of esoteric religion. A very short period of Her life however was given to what might appear to be a highly concentrated form of Sadhana, just as other periods of it were given to infancy, childhood and maturity.

Although at one phase of Her life the ways of a Sadhaka became unequivocally manifest in Her actions this was not a radical change from Her previous way of living. Mataji always appeared strangely affected by devotional music and the reciting of Scriptures. Even during Her infancy She would get into transcendental states which people variously interpreted as sleep, unconsciousness or fits.

There were other unique features of Her infant life. Her infallible memory amazed Her parents. She once reminded them of an incident that had occurred when She was thirteen days old. Instances of a wisdom beyond Her years were plentiful. She would have been an awe-inspiring prodigy, had not Her gracious winsomeness made Her a very lovable little child.

Didima (Mataji's mother) says that Mataji was never unhappy and did not cry except once during Her childhood, when She saw Didima grieving the death of Her three little brothers. Mataji broke out into such heart-rending sobs that Didima instantly forgot her own tears in the attempt to console her little daughter. The much enduring mother never found any further occasions for indulging in her sorrow. All heartaches were healed, then as always by Mataji's radiant presence.

Sri Sri Mata Anandamayi was born on the 19th Vaishakh 1303 (30th April 1896 A. D.) in the village of Kheora (Distr. Tripura), now in East Pakistan. Her father, Sri Bipin Bihari Bhattacharya belonged to the distinguished Kashyap clan of Brahmins of Vidyakut. He was well known for his upright nature, other-worldliness and love for devotional music. He had a fine voice and

taught his daughter to sing Kirtan. His wife Srimati Mokshada Sundari Devi was equally worthy of the privilege conferred upon her by Providence. The blessed couple, pious and simple, were however extremely poor. It is said that although Lakshmi withheld her material gifts, the very spirit of the goddess of wealth seemed to reign supreme over the content little household. 'Didima' was never at a loss to produce for the most unexpected guests some sort of refreshments from her meagre yet seemingly inexhaustible supply. The dire indigence neither embittered her outlook nor made her slovenly. She was the most careful of housewives and looked after her family so competently that its members hardly ever felt the trials of poverty.

Didima is still the kind and gentle soul she has always been, unaffected by all the radical changes which have transformed her outward life. Her self-sufficiency is saintly : she chooses self-effacing retirement when she could command the attention of many ; and yet no one is ever deprived of a kind word or a blessing from this sincerest of all well-wishers.

Mataji was the second child of Her parents, named by them Nirmala Sundari Devi. She was fair and beautiful and Her bright and sunny disposition endeared Her to all. The

extreme guilelessness of Her nature puzzled many who even thought Her lacking a little in intelligence. She was very obedient and dutiful. In fact Mataji's habit of carrying out orders to the letter sometimes led to amusing consequences and sometimes quite otherwise. When still a child She was taken to a fair by a relative, who put Mataji down before a Shiva temple and told Her to sit there quietly, while she herself went away with her other companions. Incidentally she forgot all about the lonely child. Remembering Her at last after a long time, she hurried back and was amazed to find little Nirmala Sundari sitting in exactly the same position she had left Her. She had not moved at all.

Once Didima, giving Her lessons in reading, had pointed out that She was to pause only when She reached a full stop. If Mataji came across a long sentence She would twist and contort Her body in Her effort to arrive at the full stop in one breath. If She was forced to take a fresh breath in the middle of a sentence, She would start all over again. Such extreme obedience naturally annoyed Her mother, but the child's palpable innocence and obvious good intention disarmed all rebukes.

Mataji's education was quite elementary. She was a pupil of the

local school for a short while. But since She helped at home with the housework and also looked after Her brothers, She could not attend school regularly. In spite of this She was one of the star pupils and got promoted to the primary school in an inexplicably short time. Referring to Her school life Mataji once said laughingly, "Somehow or other I invariably happened to look up the very lesson the teacher would ask and consequently he always found me well prepared. Actually my education is extremely sketchy."

Even at this early stage Mataji sometimes fell into supra-mundane states, which however nobody saw, or seeing, failed to understand. People generally agreed that She was a most unusual child.

In 1909, at the age of twelve years and ten months Mataji was given in marriage to Sri Ramani Mohan Chakravarty, who later became known as 'Pitaji' or 'Bholanath'.

Thus ended the first period of Mataji's *Lila* in the role of a carefree girl in the house of Her parents. From the moment She entered Her husband's house She behaved as a shy and retiring bride. Her husband's people felt charmed by Her grace and beauty, and soon were amazed to discover that the young and inexperienced girl could easily

outdo the expert in housewifely work.

Immediately after Her marriage She was taken to live with the family of Bholanath's elder brother. He was a station-master in the service of the Railway Department. Mataji remained with them for nearly four years. She did the entire work of the household and personally looked after the children of Bholanath's brother. She easily managed to give full satisfaction to Her somewhat exacting sister-in-law. Mataji, then as always, so completely followed the written and unwritten rules of behaviour that no one could possibly find fault with Her. It was not that She consciously tried to remain on Her best behaviour, but it was in the very nature of things that Her conduct would never fall short of the ideal. There could be no half-measures for Mataji, from things trifling to matters great. Young married women are supposed to keep their faces veiled before elders, but are generally not very particular about this and also often obliged to lift their veils to enable them to move freely. Mataji however never lifted Her veil and consequently suffered untold inconveniences.

She never complained against the occasional unjust behaviour of others, nor did She try to defend Herself if

taken to task for another's negligence. She Herself never found fault with others. Once Her silver anklets were taken away by an acquaintance. Mataji smilingly refused to disclose the culprit's name.

She had a close friend and companion in Bholanath's sister (Pishima). These two young girls often played harmless and mischievous pranks on their sister-in-law (Bholanath's brother's wife), mostly in the form of misappropriation of pickles and preserves.

(Pishima died a few years ago in Benares. Till the last moment this beautiful bond of friendship did not slacken between them.)

The heavy work could not change Mataji's happy disposition. She had a tendency to excel in whatever She attempted. She was good at canework, also at weaving and spinning fine thread and at various other crafts.

In fact Her housekeeping was an art in itself and other housewives came to see and admire Her kitchen and store-rooms.

Although Mataji was as gentle and obliging as the most exacting heart could wish, the extraordinary nature of Her character was never seriously in dispute. She sometimes entered into Samadhi in the midst of housework. At that time however, these lapses into the supra-mundane did not

change Her general behaviour very greatly, and the simple people unaware of its true significance were glad to gloss over this aspect of Her life.

During all those years Bholanath had been without work. When in 1914 he found employment in Ashtagram, Mataji came to stay with him. From the very beginning, he was impressed by the unusual character of his bride. There was never a question of his exerting the rights of a husband over Her. Mataji has said that their relationship was that of a father and his daughter. Although he was convinced that it would never be possible for him to lead a conventional family life, he was quite happy and satisfied with this state of affairs.

Mataji looked after him and kept house for him as faultlessly as She had done for his brother before coming to Ashtagram.

In Ashtagram She became acquainted with other young girls. Her pleasant disposition and charming manners soon made Her a general favourite.

Mataji's behaviour spontaneously adjusted itself to Her surroundings. Being completely in tune with Existence no force of circumstances can find Her unprepared.

Conscious endeavour plays no part in this scheme of things and

therefore Mataji's conduct is always infallible.

It was in Ashtagram that She was first called "Ma" by Harakumar, the brother of Her most intimate friend.

A few close companions had begun to notice Her peculiar reactions to Kirtan and to the chanting of Scriptures. But these occasions were rare and Mataji was still the shy and retiring young wife. Harakumar defying the customs and traditions of village life visited Her every day to do *pranam* and ask for *prasad*. Mataji however would not comply with his requests. Hidden behind Her veils, She would stand at a distance, quiet and unresponsive. In despair Harakumar appealed to Bholanath, saying that his entreaties which left Mataji unmoved would have melted the heart of a statue. Bholanath, impressed by his sincerity and devotion, asked Mataji to give Harakumar Her *prasad*. Mataji always tried to obey Bholanath as implicitly as She had obeyed Her parents, and Harakumar had his wish fulfilled. He used to say, "Now it is only I who call you Mataji. Some day the world will recognize you and call you so".

When after staying in Ashtagram for about a year and four months Mataji fell ill, She came to Vidyakul to live with Her parents. She was not very seriously ill and recovered

soon, but stayed on with Her parents for nearly three years.

In Her own village She could dispense with Her heavy veils and move about freely among neighbours and friends. Hindu as well as Mussulman villagers loved to have Her visit their homes and talk to them.

Referring to this period of Her life, Mataji said, "My mother did not need my help and so I just spent my time with my friends. In the evenings I used to stroll about by myself. Sometimes in the dark I saw a strange effulgence enveloping My body and this light seemed to move about with me."

In 1918 Bholanath was transferred from Ashtagram to Bajitpur and Mataji went to join him there. He worked under Bhudev Babu, whose wife became one of Her closest friends.

Bajitpur has acquired a new importance today as the place where Mataji manifested Herself in the role of a Sadhaka.

Kirtan and the reading of Scriptures had always affected Her strangely, and sometimes no outward stimulus was necessary to bring about these states of *samadhi*. Nevertheless up till then such occasions had been rare and far apart and could be explained away somehow or other; whereas at Bajitpur Mataji's ways and

activities became increasingly those of a Sadhaka. She would enter into a *Samadhi* in the midst of household work. On his return from office Bholanath often found Her lying on the kitchen floor, the food half cooked or burnt. She would be oblivious of the world and he could do nothing with Her, until of Her own accord She would come back to normal.

He naturally did not understand this aspect of Her at all, but wisely let Her alone.

Gradually Mataji started practising Sadhana in a systematic manner. Her knowledge however was meagre. All She knew was how to repeat the names of Hari (The Lord), learnt from Her father. This, She did whenever free. Bholanath was rather disturbed in consequence and asked Her one day, "Why do you repeat the names of Hari? We are not Vaishnavas, we are Shaktas".

Mataji said, "Then what do you want me to do? Shall I repeat the names of Shiva?"

"Yes, you may do that", Bholanath replied.

It was all the same to Her. Besides, the yogic *kriyas* which manifested themselves on Her body did not appear to be affected by the change of names.

At the end of the day's work She would thoroughly clean Her room and

surroundings, and when Bholanath settled down to his rest, She would sit in one corner of the room in an easy posture.

Bholanath then saw Her going through various yogic postures, *asanas* and *mudras*. Some he recognized, but most of these processes in their variety were quite beyond his comprehension.

He was amazed, enthralled and awed, but never frightened or repelled. It was apparent to him that these motions were gone through automatically, as if they were happening to Her. Referring to the spontaneous nature of these *kriyas*, Mataji later said, "If I tried to help my limbs while performing an *asana*, the sequence of movements would automatically receive a set-back".

During these periods of *sadhana* Mataji was oblivious of everything. Even acute physical pain did not affect Her. She often got scorched by kitchen fires. Sometimes when engaged in complicated yogic postures Her long black tresses would get entangled with Her limbs and Her hair often got torn out by the roots.

The *sadhana* mostly took place at night, but Mataji's person was changed during the day also. She seemed remote and far away. Her

constant companions, puzzled and apprehensive, began to avoid Her. They regretted that so charming and lovable a young girl had become possessed by evil spirits. This opinion gained ground and Bholanath was variously advised to consult doctors and *Ojhas*.* Feeling helpless in the face of strong adverse criticism as well as sincere friendly advice Bholanath finally called in one or two *Ojhas*. They however could not 'cure' Mataji. The last man experiencing the manifestation of a strange power in Mataji's presence advised Bholanath against this treatment.

A doctor of medicine, Sri Mahendra Nandi, after seeing Mataji told Bholanath that She was in an exalted spiritual state and should not be exposed to the gaze of the vulgar. Bholanath was glad to follow this suggestion.

On the full moon night of August 1922, at midnight, Mataji all by Herself, went through the actions of a spiritual initiation (*Diksha*).

There were no external accessories, and She Herself was the *Guru Mantra*, and *Ishta*. For the next five months Her *sadhana* assumed a more concentrated form. Sometimes after pronouncing the mystic syllable *Om* She would recite mantras, although She had no previous knowledge of Samskrit and mystic mantras.

* Men who drive out evil spirits.

One day She told Bholanath that he would be initiated on a particular day which She stated.

On that day Bholanath with a vague idea of avoiding anything that might happen, hurried off to his office without taking his breakfast. At the appointed time however Mataji sent for him. When Bholanath replied that he was busy and could not leave the place, Mataji sent word to him that if he did not come home immediately, She would go to the office. Not daring to risk this, Bholanath reluctantly came home. Mataji asked him to bathe and change his clothes and then to sit down. Thereupon Mataji uttered some mystic Mantras and gave him spiritual instructions.

Bholanath of course had never looked upon Her as his wife, but from that moment She actually became his spiritual preceptor. Yet outwardly Her manner towards him did not change at all. She remained the affectionately dutiful wife till the moment of his death in 1938. Bholanath never had occasion to disapprove of any of Her actions. In fact She rarely did anything without his consent.

Just before his death, he openly called Her 'Ma' and asked for Her *prasad*. Up till then only consideration for appearances had kept him from acknowledging himself a child

before his Mother. The proximity of death broke down all false barriers. A few moments before he left this world, Mataji blessed him by thrice passing Her hands over his body from head to foot. The great physical agony which he was suffering then disappeared entirely and he died in peace with Mataji's hand resting on his head.

From the month of December 1922 Mataji became *Maunam* (completely silent) for three years. Sometimes She would draw a circle around Herself and utter a few mantras. After this She spoke for a little while and again turned silent. There were no rules or fixed times for these occasional interruptions of Her silence.

Mataji, referring to this period of Her life, said that the question of Sadhana did not arise for Her, since She did not need realization. It was just that for a short period the ways of Sadhana manifested themselves in Her body.

There was however no element of pretence or make-believe in this. For the time being She was as truly and completely a Sadhaka as She, had been a child in Her parents, house and a housewife in Her husband's.

She has said that the ways of Sadhana are of infinite variety and

each way has innumerable aspects. All these became a living experience to Her when She played the role of a Sadhaka. She went through countless forms of worship, not only the various Hindu forms but all other non-Hindu rites and ceremonies as well. In Her character of Sadhaka the minutest detail of each faith was

revealed to Her in its true significance.

Later on in Dacca She once recited the *Namaz* in one of Her transcendental *bhavas*. A Mohammedan gentleman who happened to be present declared that he had never witnessed a more correct rendering of the *Namaz*.

(To be continued)

Methods of Self-Realization according to Yogavasistha

By

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Yogavasistha, whoever its author and whatever the time and place of its composition, is a work of the utmost value for those who strive after Self-knowledge and Self-realization. Here an attempt is made to present in brief some hints this great work has given on the process of Self-realization.

All those who have tried to probe into the nature of man have found that the depths of human personality are unfathomable. All the little we know about ourselves indicates that we are in reality co-extensive with the infinite Universe and immeasurable in powers; and transcend all the limits of time, space and individuality. A modern writer, John Herman Randall, has given expression to what modern knowledge has discovered about the nature of Self in the following words: "No other view is possible than that the true Self in each individual is a form under which Reality, or the Life-Principle

or God, finds expression. We are forced to admit that in their deepest essence all beings are one Being, and all individual selves are one Self; and there are no such things as private, separate, exclusive, individual beings or selves, save in the false and illusory thinking" (Randall: *The Spirit of the New Philosophy*, p. 157). In a recent work, Tyrrell, a great psychic researcher, writes, "Thus actual experience vindicates the view that Selfhood is indefinable, inexplicable in words, incomprehensible to the intellect, which can no more grasp it than an animal can grasp the differential calculus. The monadic view of the Self is a pragmatic illusion forced upon us by the practical mind" (*The Nature of Human Personality*, p. 114). "The great and central fact is that the higher we ascend in the scale of awareness the more reality opens to us. Ascension in this way brings direct awareness; and this is, and

always has been the immortal road to Truth" (*Ibid*, p. 119). The author of *Yogavasistha* who soared very high in Self awareness, has told us on the authority of his own personal experience that the personality of man is nothing short of the Infinite, Absolute and Omniscient Brahman, the very being and essence of the Universe. Thus says he: "He knows truly who knows that the Self is Infinite Consciousness, which is immanent in all things, omnipotent and without a second. (Y. V. IV. 22-28) He knows truly who knows that the Self is the Infinite Ether (of Consciousness) which has within itself all time, space and movements (IV.22-25). Like pearls in a thread, all these objects are beaded in me (IV. 22. 31). In fact, everything in the Universe is a part of myself" (IV. 22. 33).

For some reason or other, to discuss which we have no occasion here, we have limited ourselves to finite ignorant, and pragmatic individualities with the consequence that there is struggle, conflict and suffering in the world of finite individuals. To get rid of them we have to regain our consciousness as the Supreme Reality and reinstate and reinstall ourselves in our real and really never-lost Godhead. This is the ideal before those who are tired of wandering in the ocean of the miserable world,

and the process which leads to the realization of the Ideal (called Self-realization) is, in India, called *Yoga* which may be translated into English as re-union of the limited self with the unlimited and transcendental aspect of our being. *Yogavasistha* calls the ideal as the "installation in Godhead" (*Paramatmani Sthiti*—VIa. 128.50) and says that this experience is characterised by "immense joy" (*Mahat sukham*)—(VIa.128.51).

The process of *Yoga* or the re-union of the limited with the unlimited or of the pragmatic with the transcendental aspects of the Self is, according to *Yogavasistha*, to work along all the three levels of the individual life, namely, physiological, psychological and the spiritual. On the physiological level, the physical and electro-magnetic forces and powers of the body and its environment should be brought to focus and control; and the mind should redirect them inwards. This is called *Prana-nirodha*, *Pranayama* or *Prana-vilaya* in which all the finer physical forces are harnessed for spiritual concentration. On the mental level an effort is to be made to resolve and dissolve all the hidden complexes of desires, aversions, love and hate, etc. by becoming fully conscious of them and by realising that the real and lasting satisfaction of our life can be

achieved only when a balanced, peaceful and unagitated state of mind is experienced. This process is called *Mano vinigraha* - bringing the mind under complete control. And on the spiritual level, the individual has to dehypnotise himself into his absoluteness, infinitude, and godhead by a double process of *denial* of illusory limitations, perceptions and conceptions and *affirmation* of one's Godhead, Infinity, Omniscience, Omnipresence and Blessedness. Thus says *Yogavasistha* : "Yoga, in brief, means three processes, namely, the Inhibition of the activities of Prana or the vital forces, the control of mind and affirmation of the One Reality" (VIa. 99-27). The process is described in great details in *Yogavasistha* for which there is no space here. We shall only make a reference to what according to *Yogavasistha* is not a necessary part of the process. *Yogavasistha*, unlike other great Spiritual works, is very uncompromising on this point.

"It is not necessary for Self-realization to live in a forest, to undergo any penances (VIIb. 199.30), to perform or renounce any actions; to perform any ritual (VIIb. 99.31). Pilgrimages, distribution of alms, bath in sacred rivers, meditation on any object, performance of any sacrifice, etc. are

not required (VIIb. 174.24). Reading of any Scripture, taking shelter of any Guru, or worship of any god or goddess is not necessary (VIIb. 197.18). No Scripture can make us realize the Self if we do not make our own attempt along the right interpretation of our own experience, and thereby have the direct intuition of our Real self" (VIIb. 197. 18 ; VIa. 41.15). *Bhakti* of or devotion to any particular god or goddess is not required for attaining self-realization. Nobody can confer Liberation (from limitations) as a boon on any person, unless the latter deserves it by his own right. "One is one's own friend or enemy. If one is not one's own saviour, there is no hope for him (VIIb.162.18). What is not attained through one's own constant efforts, *vairagya* (indifference to worldly concerns) and control over senses, cannot be attained through anything else in the three worlds (IV 43.18). Gods, like Vishnu, however long propitiated and however pleased, cannot bestow Self-realization on one who does not think for himself (IV.43.10). Nothing great (in the spiritual field) is ever achieved through any god, *guru* (teacher) or wealth (V.43 17). If a spiritual teacher could raise one to the height of self-realization without one's own efforts, why can he not raise a bull, an elephant or a camel

to that status (IV.43.16) ? Those who, leaving the God residing within their own heart, run after other external gods, are like those fools who throw away the precious gems in their hands and run after ordinary glass pieces (V.8.14). The artificial and

showy ways of worshipping God are meant only for the ignorant and for those whose minds are not fully matured and are restless (Vla.30.5). Self-knowledge is the only thing required to worship God which is "within" (Vla, 38, 24-25).

What Mother Means to Me

By

D. Padmanabham, I. C. S. (Retd.), Barrister-at-Law.

Genius is of many kinds. History has records of men who dominated their age by sheer weight of their personality. There were leaders of men who swept across Continents, founded and destroyed empires and have shaken society to its foundations. Asia remembers with a shudder the turbulent violence of the Mongol conquerors and even today the word Jengis Khan sends a shiver down the spines of millions of human beings. Then there were men of great intellectual genius who changed the course of history by their deeds. The discoverers of the laws of nature and the inventors of machines, men like Al Beruni, Leonardo Da Vinci, Roger Bacon, etc. belong to this class.

Then there is the third group of leaders of humanity whose achievements cannot be assessed by the standards applicable to normal beings. These are the men and women who have devoted their lives to the pursuit of the ultimate reality—the substratum behind the universe, and who by their gentle lives and kindness have impressed themselves deeply upon the memories of men and will live as long as and

longer than records of history. The Buddha, Christ, Shri Chaitanya and Bhagawan Ramkrishna belong to this class. It is to this hierarchy of genius that our Mother belongs.

It is very difficult to define a mystic. In a book I read recently the writer has attempted a definition more or less as follows :

If you tell me you know, but that you cannot explain to me how you know then your experience may be termed mystical.

The definition is very inadequate as it lays emphasis on only one aspect of mystic experience, namely, the fact that it can be tested only subjectively. The category of proof or of validity of mystic experience lies outside the course of normal experience. A mystic is not great by reason of conformity with any of accepted tests of greatness. For instance, a mystic need not be an intellectual genius or even a very highly intellectual person. The mystic need not be popular. Men do not necessarily line up in thousands to see a mystic pass from one place to another. The

mystic does not care for popularity. He derives satisfaction in full from his own inner experience and it renders him indifferent to the praise or lack of it from his fellow beings. There are however certain characteristics common to all great mystics and I should like to briefly refer to them in connection with Mother.

Firstly, the mystic is essentially a very simple and childlike person. His mind does not move in the tortuous labyrinths of fabrication and invention, and therefore the mystic generally is very truthful and reacts like a child regarding questions addressed to him. In the case of our Mother, I am sure all her devotees will bear me out when I refer to her startling simplicity and childlike reaction to her surroundings. I have seen her taking off a heavy garland put round her neck by her devotees and transfer it to the person of a little child who happened to be in the vicinity. Those of us who have had the privilege of sitting with her on the rare occasions when she refers to problems of the soul will remember her extremely native and direct replies to questions and childlike acceptance of facts. She has the child's sweetness without its pettishness and obstinacy.

I remember an occasion when the author of this article at Madras was

asked by Mother to drive her along the Beach Road, the while she plied him with questions about the aquarium which she referred to as a place where beautiful and many coloured fishes had been collected for exhibition. It is this characteristic simplicity that puts one at ease in Mother's presence. This quality has been noticed also in the case of the other two great mystics who have lived in our country in the last few decades Shree Rama Krishna and Shri Raman Maharshi.

The other characteristic of the great mystic is an absence of normal emotion (at least it appears to be an absence of emotion from the outside). The mystic appears to be indifferent to the things which agitate us and make us unsettled in mind. He faces joy and misery with perfect equanimity of temperament; neither can a tragedy shake him nor can great success turn his head. He derives solace or satisfaction from some source other than this our world of experience. Consequently he appears to us Godlike and in some cases a self-centred being.

In the case of Mother, the statement is not entirely correct. The Mother cannot be said to be devoid of emotion. I have seen her eyes light up with joy at the sight of an

child. I have also seen her coldly indifferent to ostentatious wealth or its display. I have had also the privilege of sitting in the presence of Bhagawan Shri Raman Maharshi on many occasions, but I have felt that in his case there was a barrier of reserve beyond which one could not pass. He seemed as fundamental and immovable as the peaks of the Himalayas and one felt a sense of majesty and spiritual power. In the case of Mother we are conscious of more tenderness and kindness, and while absolute 'viragya' is also there she seems nearer us.

Those of us who attended the installation of Shri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu's murthi at Brindaban recently will remember the energy and enthusiasm displayed by Mother. She did not seem to be in the same place for more than a few minutes at a time, but was directing scores of working people, setting things right when they had gone wrong, advising devotees and in general she radiated kindness all round. By a piece of great good fortune, the murthis of Shri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu and Nityananda installed by Mother seem to pulsate with life and those of us who saw the expression in their eyes will carry the memory of the ineffable sweetness and mystic vision in them all our lives. In Mother's

own words "they have Jeevabhava in them".

The author of this article was informed of an occasion when the Mother listened in absolute silence for several minutes to a young person who was trying to teach her her duty: while he went on upbraiding her for going about from Ashram to Ashram, instead of sitting like a tortoise at one spot, she continued to smile and when he even told her that he himself was a highly evolved soul and he did not feel the need for rushing about, she had no comment to make. This amazing gentleness and simplicity recall an incident in the life of Lord Buddha who was once reviled and insulted by several monks but only smiled and blessed them. Does not the Dhammapada lay down :

"Nahi Vairena Vairani Samantiha
Kudachanan,

Avairena cha Samantiesadhammo
Samanthano"

"Hatred is not quenched by hating but hatred ceases by love, this is the ancient law".

From what I have seen of Mother she does not encourage profitless discussion and this was a characteristic shared by Bhagwan Shri Raman Maharshi as well. The mystic realization of the Absolute seems to be intuitive and not intellectual and wordy argument and analysis are

abhorrent to him (or her). In the words of the carpet maker of Baghdad :

“Myself when young did eagerly frequent

Doctor and Saint and heard great argument about it and about,
But ever more came out by the same door as in I went”.

It has been recorded about some of the great mystics that on rare occasions they have even displayed flashes of temper. For example, the Buddha upbraided the Emperor of India for directing and conducting animal sacrifice. Christ drove out the money-changers from the temple with whips, etc. I do not know whether in the case of Mother there has been an occasion for a display of temper, but all the time I have had the privilege of coming into contact with her she has seemed to me the very personification of kindness and

sweetness. Even when she has to brush aside a stupid or pointless question, it is done with such grace that there is no sting or painful memory left behind.

It is said that for a proper perspective about a great person nearness in time is a barrier, i.e. it is only across the vista of ages that you can properly estimate the genius of a great leader. If this be correct we are not in a proper position to assess Mother's greatness. It is doubtful whether anyone could ever estimate adequately her spiritual genius except another great mystic like Ramana Maharshi or Bhagwan Shri Ramakrishna. But judging from our limited opportunities and with the facilities at one's disposal, I am convinced that Mother will leave her name on the pages of history associated with a fragrance that will live for many ages.

Unity of Prophets and Saints

Baron H. P. Van Tuyl Van Serros Berken

It is not easy for a Westerner to write a word in remembrance of the privilege he has enjoyed of coming a little in contact with Shri Shri Anandamayi Ma. She is wonderful, but that often misused word does not really convey much and in any case you, people of India, know far better how wonderful Mother is than we do. We Westerners have not the same right to write about saintliness as Easterners have, who are much more at home in it. Moreover the talk of a pupil is not to be compared with the Voice of the Master. On the other hand it is almost a duty to say a word of thankfulness for all one has received.

I am a Sufi-pupil of Murshid Inayat Khan who was born at Baroda in 1882, who went to the West to preach the old and still new point of view of Sufism, who left there many pupils and who died at Delhi on the fifth of February, 1927. In the beginning of 1950 I was in Banaras, where Mother Anandamayi held at that time a reunion at her Ashram and where she received us, me and my wife, very kindly, where we were introduced in her Kirtans and had the privilege of having a talk with her.

Being Sufis it was not strange for us to sit at the feet of a Hindu saint, as we regard all real saints and sages as a door through which to enter the dwelling of God. But then there are so many who call themselves saint, or guru, or murshid, without really being so. How can we ever be sure of recognizing a real one. In the first place it must be said that if one errs it is one's own fault. False saints have also their task to fulfil in life, they give guidance to those, who are not ready to receive the blessing of a real saint. And then there is a lesson which our Murshid taught us, that we cannot recognize a saint by what he says or does, but only by his atmosphere. "If you make yourself very meek and very mild, very still and quiet, free from any activity of the mind and you feel in the presence of the Saint coming into your soul through your heart a ray of the presence of God, a bliss, then be sure that he is a real one, a true master". Moreover those who claim to be are never the real ones. I have met many of them in India and since Murshid Inayat Khan was in the West there have been false claimants in the West in great numbers.

But I have the conviction that at different times in my life I have met three real great saints, all from India, of course, to know : Shri Ramana Maharshi (also called the Maharishi) who lived till the beginning of 1950, when he died at Tiruvannamalai ; then Pir - O - Murshid Inayat Khan, who went to the West (America & Europe) to preach what he called the Sufi-Messsage, a new branch of an old tree, and thirdly the well-known woman-saint of India, Mother Shri Anandamayi.

This is a personal conviction. There is never a proof. But there is something which comes very near a proof, when one takes to heart the words of the prophets, instead of, as most people do, only taking those parts to heart which suit their own ideas. Yes, I decidedly believe there is a proof in this, which I will try to explain.

Let me first state that I have known the Maharshi only through his books, but they appealed to me very much and I always felt a real contact with him. This may be imaginary, but none the less for me it has always been real.

Of Murshid Inayat Khan I was a pupil and for some time travelled with him as his Secretary. Shri Anandamayi Ma I met personally at Benares at the beginning of 1950.

The remarkable proof now is that though they come from quite different spiritual traditions, these saints, all three of them, give—originally and independently of each other—the one old Message, in the same renewed outward garb. That shows that what they say together, all three of them, is the Message of God for this time. This is very remarkable.

If one compares the Message of the Lord Manu with that of Shri Rama, that of Shri Krishna, that of the Lord Buddha, as to their outward form—which is always the answer to the needs of the time—there is an evolution to be noticed in them. This same evolution is to be found in the Messages of the Jewish Prophets from Abraham to Jesus Christ and with the Moslem Prophets from Abraham to the Prophet Mohammed. It is caused by the progress of time. Will these Messages of God stop coming on earth ? No, God's Messengers will always keep coming on earth, from time to time, as long as mankind is living in darkness. As it is said in the world-famous Bhagavad Gita : "Whensoever and wheresoever virtue wanes and vice waxes, then and there do I create myself" (commentary of Shri Ramanujacharya). The Teacher always comes with the one and only task to lead humanity nearer to God.

The inner part of the Message "man becoming actually united to God"—which is an inner creation, brought about on earth by God's Prophets—is wrought in silence, without words. The outward part of the Message is the expression in words which the mind can understand. In this outward garb of the Message progress is noticeable, keeping pace with the possibilities of understanding which people have in different ages. It is therefore that religions are essentially one, although outwardly differently expressed. For this reason also it is a virtue when people accept the teaching of a new Prophet without mixing it up so much with the habits and beliefs accumulated round the teachings of former Prophets. Holding fast to a former Message for too long, makes man lose his virtue of keeping to the One message of God, which is outwardly renewed every time. Keeping in pace with the outward succeeding expressions of the Message is a great virtue. This is easily done by following what is called mysticism, because mysticism, the inner part of the Message, is the part which is always one and the same, be it Christian, Moslem or Hindu mysticism, be it in the line of the Yogis or in the line of the Sufis. Wherever there is difference, there is the outward side,

the religious side. In their depth therefore all religions are one; in their outward expression religions show the difference of the ages in which they were expressed. The time has come that inner understanding should become the property of the whole of humanity. Peace, *not* based on this inner understanding, can never develop into a real brotherhood, a real democracy. Peace means peace in God and peace with mankind at the same time, the one in step with the other. It is the dharma of this age, to create a real brotherhood on earth.

The Arians from the West and the Arians from the East are one race which came, via the Caucasus, from Egypt. They departed from there in two directions, one going to the West, the other to the East. They received from God two different ideals or tasks or dharmas: India, to cultivate the heart and to seek God, and the West to develop organization and brotherhood. Now the time has come for them to mix and become one. Worshipping God and serving mankind are two ends of one and the same ideal. If only this were understood! The West should look to India in order to learn the realizations of God and the East should look to the West to take over its organization,

DIARY LEAVES

Atmananda

(4)

Mataji calls all children Her friends. Children no less than grown-ups adore Her. I know some youngsters who can never keep still for five minutes, yet they love to go to see Mataji and as if fascinated, sit quietly before Her for an hour or two without showing any restlessness. It is of course true that Mataji gives them a lot of attention. She presents them with garlands and flowers that have been offered to Her and whenever possible with sweets and fruits. She laughs and jokes with them, while at the same time She takes them very seriously. She asks even small children of five or six to think of God. "You are my friend, aren't you? Then will you listen to me? Are you willing to do something for this friend of yours? All right, Be careful to remember what I am going to ask you!

"First of all as soon as you wake up in the morning do *Pranam*, bow down to the ground before God, pray to Him to make you a good boy or girl and say: 'Lord, I do not know where you are, grant that I may find you!' At night before going to sleep do *Pranam* again, and if you have

done anything wrong during the day, ask God to let you do better the next day.

"The second thing is: try to obey your parents and teachers.

"Thirdly: study well! Give your mind to your lessons and endeavour to master them.

"Fourthly: always do your utmost to speak the truth,

"and fifthly: laugh and play, run and jump to your heart's content and if you can carry out the first four things I have asked of you, there is no harm in being a little naughty as well".

To bigger children Mataji frequently says: "How much time can you spare for me? Don't reply in a hurry; think it over and see how much time you can give me! Five minutes daily or ten minutes? Not only once in a way — every day for the rest of your life. All right, for those five minutes think of God. Choose the time of day which is most convenient. If you can sit still and be by yourself, so much the better. But if it is not possible, whether lying, standing or walking, think of Him — lying in bed or whilst having your

bath—but never give it up. These few minutes of every day belong to God, although you may be travelling by train or bus, under all circumstances.”

* * * * *

Many years ago in East Bengal, the parents of a young woman who was having long spells of unconsciousness that resembled Samadhi, approached Mataji for cure. The girl would lie for hours without a sign of life, her hands and feet turning cold. One day she was brought before Mataji in this condition. As soon as Mataji whispered something into the young woman's ear, she rose and seemed quite normal. Everyone present felt greatly awed at the miraculous cure and wondered what the Mantra could have been which had such a magic effect. Actually all that Mataji had whispered was: “You will soon get news from your husband”. There was nothing especially wrong with the girl. Her fits of unconsciousness were simply due to anxiety, as she had not heard from her husband for a long time. “Under the circumstances,” Mataji explained later with a smile, “what I said to the girl was at the time the appropriate Mantra for her”.

* * * * *

Once a young man was taken to Mataji. He used to get visions as for instance of Shri Krishna teaching Arjuna, etc. He would do *pranam* and remain in that posture for hours, with tears streaming down his cheeks, immersed in visions of this kind. To the surprise of his people Mataji made the following remarks: “If a *sadhaka* cannot keep firm control over his mind, he is liable to seeing and hearing all sorts and conditions of things. He may even become subject to the influence of a ‘spirit’ or some other power. Such experiences, far from enhancing pure Divine aspiration, are therefore rather obstacles than anything else. To hear someone address you in a vision in this wise may become the source of a kind of self-satisfaction or egotistic enjoyment. To lose control is not desirable. In one's search after Truth one must not allow oneself to be overpowered by anything, but watch whatever experiences may present themselves, keeping conscious, wide awake, in fact retaining full mastery over oneself”.

* * * * *

Someone wanted to know whether the *Shraddha* ceremony which is performed for the dead, benefits a man even if he has taken birth in another human body.

"It does," replied Mataji, "I have heard the following story. A man in a certain village in Bengal was very friendly with a fakir. One day when the fakir came to see him, he said: 'How lucky that you have come. I am greatly puzzled and perhaps you can solve my problem. Since this morning I have been getting a strong scent of jackfruit and even the flavour of it in my mouth. I have looked everywhere in the garden and in the neighbourhood without being able to locate the source of this sensation. I cannot discover any ripe jackfruit anywhere. Besides it is not the season now, although there are trees that bear all the year round. Neither can I get rid of that flavour, nor take my mind off it. I wonder whether you can help me with an explanation. 'Come with me,' replied the fakir. He took his friend across the river by boat and after walking some distance they came to a house where they saw a very old man performing *Shraddha* and offering jackfruit to his deceased father. 'This was your son in your previous birth,' explained the fakir. 'You used to be very fond of jackfruit then, so he has managed to procure some for the ceremony although out of season. Now you understand, don't you?'

"This story illustrates how prayer offered up for a person will certainly

have its effect, although he may have taken birth in another body."

Question : If someone has no relatives at all and nobody therefore performs *Shraddha* for him, how will he progress ?

Mataji : If a man endeavours to attain the Supreme Goal of human life his progress depends on his capacity and on the intensity of his efforts. It is the son's duty to perform *Shraddha* for his father so as to make his path smooth. In case there is no son, another relative may carry out the ceremony, as for instance the husband for his wife, and so forth. If a person does not get married and regards the Almighty as his one and only support, leaving all matters to Him, God Himself will draw him towards his goal. Do not forget one thing: in actual fact nothing exists but the ONE; if you think, without a wife or son or husband you will miss all the good they could have done for you, you are greatly mistaken. He, who is the creator of all, has made perfect arrangements for His creature. Keep in mind: 'Thou art father, mother, friend and master'--there is no cause whatever for worry.

* * * * *

The Banaras Ashram was inaugurated in 1945. Although by no means quite an imposing block of building, it never seems to near completion.

some construction or other is usually in progress. Bricks and other building materials had been heaped up in a corner of the courtyard. One afternoon at about two or three o'clock, Mataji suddenly rushed out of Her room and walked straight towards that pile of rubble, shouting: "Quickly remove all this, some plants are being choked underneath". Those present at once set to work. Sure enough five pomegranate plants were found hidden below the bricks. No one had remembered that they were there. Mataji explained: "When I was lying on my bed resting, these plants came to me pleading for their lives, drawing my attention to the fact that they were in danger of being suffocated".

* * * * *

In the course of a discussion about the relationship of *Guru* and *Shishya** someone asked: "What is the work of the *Guru* and what the work of the *Shishya*?" "It is said," remarked Mataji, "that the *Shishya*'s task is to efface the ego and become as a blank. There is a story of a king who invited the best artists to paint frescoes in his palace. Two painters were working in the same hall at opposite walls, with a curtain between them, so that neither of them could see what the

other was doing. One of them created a marvellous picture which evoked the admiration of every onlooker. The other artist had not painted anything at all. He had spent all his time polishing the wall — had polished it so perfectly that when the curtain was removed, the picture of the other painter was reflected in a way that made it appear even more beautiful than the original.

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

"But then the major portion of the work has to be accomplished by the *Shishya*?" put in the enquirer.

"No," said Mataji, "because it is the *Guru* who paints the picture."

* * * * *

Some Westerners had come for Mataji's *Darshan*. "What is right for me," asked one of them, "to live an active life in the world or a contemplative life in seclusion?"

Mataji: To whichever of the two you give your heart and soul, that is right for you.

"Have you anything to say to me?" questioned a young woman who had travelled all the way to India to study Buddhism.

Mataji: Live the teaching that you profess.

* Disciple.

“How can I avoid saying the wrong thing at the wrong time?” a third person wanted to know.

Mataji : By waiting before you speak. If you pause for a little while you may think better of it and never say it at all.

“I know that certain people have a bad influence on me, yet I fall victim to it. Is there a way of saving myself from it?”

Mataji : Curtail to a minimum the time you spend in their company.

The questioner happened to be a film actress.

“How can I,” she said, “my work forces me not only to be with them, but also to eat and live with them.”

Mataji : How then can you save yourself from their influence? If you go near fire, won't you feel its heat? If you put ice on your hand, won't it freeze?

“We feel greatly honoured to have had the privilege of meeting Mataji,” said one of the foreigners on taking leave

Mataji : ‘Honoured’? When you meet another you may feel honoured, but when you come to your own self, there is only joy and happiness.

It is always delightful to hear Mataji tell a story. Here is another one.

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

“It is possible,” commented

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"It is possible," commented

Mataji, "to live for a long time in close proximity to Sadhus and Mahatmas, Sages and Saints, without being able to recognise their true quality, whereas one who has the *adhikara*, who is inwardly prepared

and really ready for such a contact, may come from a great distance and within a minute know the Great and Holy for what they are—it depends on one's capacity to penetrate to the essence of things".

NOTES AND COMMENTS

As we had hoped, Mataji gave us the inspiration of Her presence during *Shivaratri* at the Banaras Ashram. The festival fell on the 20th of Feb. and was celebrated as usual by a fast of thirty-six hours and a vigil with four pujas throughout the night. In last year's Birthday Number* can be found a detailed description of how Mataji moved about or sat among the worshippers who were grouped in circles round Shiva Linga on the verandas in front of the Annapurna temple and of the Chandi Mandap as well as in the temples themselves. The arrangements this time were more or less similar. Yet where Mataji is, mechanical repetition finds no place, everything that is done or happens is always new and a live experience. Several distinguished guests who had come from Allahabad, Lucknow and other places, joined in the observances with enthusiasm. To their surprise they discovered that in an atmosphere surcharged with Divine aspiration, Peace and Joy it is no hardship to forgo eating, drinking and sleeping. For those who have spent longer or shorter periods near Mataji it is nothing new that in Her presence one's need of

food, sleep and physical comforts decreases to a remarkable degree. On occasions such as *Shivaratri* this becomes even more evident. The injunction for this festival, if carried out to the full, demands that one should have a day's complete fast without a drop of water and at night fall sit down for worship without ever leaving one's *asana* until the next morning after sunrise, when the *sandhya* (the daily worship at dawn) is joined to the pujas of the night. Many who took part in the celebrations, some of them old people of indifferent health, were able to achieve this feat naturally and easily, without feeling any strain or weakness either at the time or afterwards. Such days convince us of the supremacy of the Divine in man and bring about a radical change of our values: we begin to wonder why we spend so much time, thought and energy on the things that matter so little, as for instance bodily needs and comforts.

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In the early hours of the morning on February 23rd Mataji left by car for Jhusi, where She stayed for the rest of the day at Sri Prabhudatta

* See 'Ananda varca', Vol. 2, No. 1, P. 100.

Brahmachari's Ashram and the following night at Allahabad. At 3 a. m. on the 24th She took the train to Brindaban.

The Ashram there is comparatively new, although three other Sri Anandamayi Ashrams have been inaugurated even more recently, namely at 'Chandraloka' New Delhi, at Ranchi and at Rajagriha in Behar. Only in March 1954 the Brindaban Ashram was opened ceremonially in the presence of Mataji, Sri Haribabaji Maharaj & many Saunyasis, Sadhus and devotees. Some time ago Manohar, one of Sri Haribabaji's disciples, suggested to Mataji that it would be a good idea to erect a temple for *Mahaprabhu* (Lord Gauranga) in the spacious grounds of the new Brindaban Ashram. When soon after someone donated Rs. 5000/- for Mataji's service, She remarked : "Why not start building the shrine for *Mahaprabhu* with this sum ?" About a year ago the construction was begun, but for lack of funds the temple remained without a dome until last November, when a devotee expressed his wish to present electric fans for each room of the Brindaban Ashram. Didi objected : "Should we make the Ashram so luxurious ? Would you not rather spend the money on the dome of the new temple ?" The generous donor at once agreed and

the building work could be resumed. Now the *Vigraha* had still to be procured. Didi wondered whether Dr. Pannalal, who happened to be at Brindaban, could not be approached on the subject. But Mataji cut her short, saying : "This body never asks anyone for anything." The next day, however, Dr. Pannalal of his own initiative sought and obtained Mataji's permission to take on himself the responsibility for getting the sculpture made. He thereupon commissioned an eminent artist at Calcutta, Sri Nitai Pal, to carve a statue of Lord Gauranga. The consecration of the temple had been fixed for March 8th, Holi at midday and the sculptor himself brought his creation to Brindaban, arriving there on the 5th. Everyone was amazed and delighted at the sight of the wonderful piece of art. From the beginning it seemed alive. It is no exaggeration to state that it is one of the most beautiful *Vigrahas* of Brindaban. "Due to Haribabaji's great devotion and his Kirtan, Mahaprabhu has manifested Himself in this shape", declared Mataji. She also mentioned that some people had told Her how very congenial they found the Brindaban Ashram for meditation and Sadhana in general.

For the consecration of the temple all the goswamis and Mahatmas of

Brindaban were invited and many of them came. Needless to say that Sri Haribabaji Maharaj and his party were present. A large number of devotees had gathered from far and near on this auspicious occasion. There was great rejoicing. Some felt that no other *vighraha* of quite the same quality existed in the whole of Brindaban.

The next morning Dr. Pannalal requested Mataji to take part in the Holi play, as She had done in former years.* Mataji said; "What do you want me to do?" Dr. Pannalal had a 'pichkari' (a syringe filled with coloured water) and 'Abhir' and 'Gulal' (red and pink powder) all ready in the hope that Mataji would come out into the open and start off the play. Mataji was at the time in the room of Didi (Gurupriya Devi), who is still ailing and unable to leave her bed. She is however in very good spirits and one can often hear her laugh and joke. "Why not begin right here?" she suggested. The response was instantaneous. Mataji squirted the first lot of coloured water on Didi. The frolics continued in the sickroom for quite a while. When Mataji at last came outside, the crowd round Her swelled rapidly and Sri Prabhudatt Brahmachari joined

in the fun. As usual on these occasions people not only felt elated, but forgetting their age, their self-importance, their preoccupations and worries, enjoyed themselves like happy, carefree children. "Look at Dr. Pannalal", Mataji called out jokingly, "does he look like a man of 72?" All present went to the new temple where Mataji blessed them by putting *Abhir* on the forehead of each one. A day or two later a feast was given to about 500 Mahatmas and Sadhus.

From the outset Mataji had expected to remain at Brindaban for about a month. Subsequently Her stay was prolonged till April 11th, but Her departure had to be postponed once more. On March 31st as Mataji was walking down the steps of the new temple, She slipped and fell, hurting one of Her big toes. Some doctors even suspected a slight fracture and an X-ray picture was therefore taken at the hospital. In any case Mataji had to take a rest from walking for several days. "It all happened through the Grace of Mahaprabhu", She remarked with Her ever radiant smile. Mataji is free from Karma. Accidents and illnesses therefore not only do not disturb Her in the least, but they also have quite

* See 'Ananda Varta', Vol. I, No. 3, p. 34.

another significance than is the case with ordinary mortals. From what we have observed we have come to the conclusion that when Mataji gets hurt, it is to save someone from a fatal or at any rate very serious accident. It has also happened that sick persons who met Mataji were cured, while the symptoms of their illness appeared on Her body for a very short time. There are however no rules about anything concerning Mataji and we can only surmise.

Didi and most of Mataji's party left on the 11th for Delhi en route to Solan, whereas Mataji remained in Brindaban. She started on the 20th April for Solan, where Her birthday will be celebrated from May 3rd to 11th.

Mataji often says that She is always the same, that no changes exist for Her, that She never goes anywhere, never does anything. For Her there is no birth and no death and hence no birthday. But for us Her birth, Her advent into this world, is of the utmost importance—in fact nothing that might happen can stand any comparison with the magnitude of this event. Divine Love, flawless, immaculate has ass-

umed a body and is walking the earth. What greater miracle is there than this? If only we could be awakened to the full significance of it, if only we could be aware of it at every moment of our lives—would our petty personalities have a chance to continue? It is well therefore that every year we should celebrate Mataji's birthday as we do by intense and profound rejoicing, by a searching of our hearts, by uninterrupted Satsang, worship, meditation, Kirtan, wherever possible for several days or weeks, or at least throughout the one night which is the anniversary of Her birth.

Let us all unite and pray to Mataji with one voice that She may remain with us for many, many more years; that we may become worthy of this Ocean of Heavenly Light that has crystalized into the shape of a human body to irradiate the darkness of the world of men; that we may be granted the capacity to celebrate this ineffable wonder not once a year, not once a month or once a day, but ceaselessly, with every breath of our life, with heart and soul and mind and body; that thereby we may be transformed into what we really are, for all times to come and in eternity.