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The ONE who is the Eternal, the Atman,
He Himself is the traveller on the path of Immortality,
He is all in all, He alone is.

MATRI VANI

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

63.

If the body is well, all is well.*

64.

This exactly is what the world is like : life is full of worries and anxiety. Without the remembrance of God there cannot be even a prospect of peace in this world ; such is its very nature. It is always the parents who have to suffer in all respects on account of their children. Like a hero you will have to remain unperturbed and persevere in patience. Appeal to God for His own sake, then only may you hope for peace.

65.

The vessels used for puja and one's own vessels should always be scrubbed by oneself. Moreover for one who lives the life of a sadhu it is only fitting so to do. The other day I met a young man who told me that when it was for the Lord's service he enjoyed doing any kind

* Every spiritual effort is based on the physical body, for only as long as man continues in the physical body it is possible for him to make real spiritual progress.

of manual labour, such as going shopping, cutting vegetables, cooking, performing the puja, cleaning the vessels and so forth. Even if someone offered to relieve him he would decline, saying that he wanted single-handed to attend to everything necessary for the service of the Lord. He delighted in carrying out all these tasks. At the same time he looked healthy and fit. In this way one keeps happy and contented, for one is working for the Lord, and it is work performed as service that purifies heart and mind. To live in this manner promotes well-being of body and mind.

Furthermore use your leisure to read religious books, to listen to discourses on spiritual subjects, or seek *Satsang* and so forth. Do not give the mind any chance of indulging in impure thoughts. The young man mentioned above had hardly enough to eat. If someone gave him a fruit he would be exceedingly pleased. Shri Gopinath Kaviraj was saying in this connection that through need and poverty one could learn what was favourable for one's *Sadhana*, such as dependence on God and so on. For those who have dedicated their lives entirely to the Supreme Quest it is good to live in this spirit; although among householders there are many who enjoy affluence and plenty. Anger, pride and the like are not helpful on the path. Reliance on God is that which is of real assistance and to feel at all times that whatever He arranges is for one's true welfare. For you yourself do not know by what means God will draw you nearer to Him.

Drink half a pint of milk a day and eat rice or roti with dal and vegetables twice daily. For so many days you have lived on a pint of milk or fresh cheese without specially benefiting by this diet. Therefore try now for a time to take normal diet and exercise, do not strain yourself unduly and see how you feel as a result.

You will have to strive earnestly to remain ever centred in God, no matter in what way He may keep you. If the mind is fixed on God the question of material wants or complaints, of honour or disgrace does not arise. The more you let your thoughts dwell on Him the more you will find yourself improving in health of body and mind. By discussions on Divine things and by a simple, frugal life you will have to prepare yourself. You must become calm and healthy. When thinking think of Him, when working let it be His service only. You are by nature good and kind-hearted, but you will have to become good in every respect. On no account allow your

thoughts to dwell on wants and complaints. Learn to adapt yourself to circumstances as they arise—then only can there be hope of peace and tranquillity.

Mataji expressed joy on hearing of your daily programme and your collective time-table, your observing silence at fixed hours, etc. She also said: "Really, it would be a matter of rejoicing if, like good boys, they could pass day and night in Divine thoughts and occupations. What is required of a pilgrim on the Supreme Path is that he should ever keep on walking. To spend one's time in the remembrance of the Eternal does indeed mean to be a traveller on this Path."

66.

In your sorrows and troubles address your prayers and petitions to Him. To Him you should confide all your difficulties, for He is the Fountain of Goodness.

MATAJI'S AMARA VANI

(17)

Mataji : You want to know whether Grace* is without cause or reason ? Certainly, for Grace is by its very nature beyond cause or reason. When working one reaps the fruits of one's actions. If, for instance, you serve your father and he, being pleased with your service, gives you a present, this would be called the fruit of action. One does something and receives something in return. But the eternal relationship which by nature exists between father and son does surely not depend on any action. The Supreme Father, the Supreme Mother and the Supreme Friend — verily, God is all of these. Consequently how can there be a cause or reason for His Grace ? You are His and in whatever way He may draw you to Him, it is for the sake of revealing Himself to you. The desire to find Him that awakens in man — who has instilled it into you ? Who is it that makes you work for its fulfilment ?

This is why you should try to arrive at the understanding that everything originates from Him. Whatever power, whatever skill you possess, why, even you yourself, from where do they arise ? And do they not all have for purpose the finding of Him, the destroying of the veil of ignorance ? Everything that exists has its origin from Him alone. For all that you must try to realize yourself. Are you master even of a single breath ? To whatever small degree He makes you feel that you have freedom of action, if you understand that this freedom has to be used to aspire after the realization of Him, it will be for your good. But if you regard yourself as the doer and God as far away and owing to His apparent remoteness you work for the gratification of your desires, it is wrong action. You should look upon all things as manifestations of Him. When you recognize the existence of God as such, He will reveal Himself to you as compassionate or gracious or merciful in accordance with your attitude towards Him at the time. Just as for example to the humble He becomes the Lord of the Humble.

* *Ahetuka Kripa* — Grace without sufficient reason.

If you say : : He is immutable, although action is attributed to Him by man, why call Him the 'Actor' when in reality He is free from all action ? It is because your ego sees itself as the actor that you think of Him as equally performing action.

Of course, He is whatever you take Him to be. On the other hand where THAT is, just think, who is to become the doer of what action and upon what is he to act ? Without feet He walks, without eyes He sees, without ears He hears and without mouth He eats — in whatever way you may describe Him, He is thus.

When a *sadhaka* starts worshipping an image (*vigraha*) representing his Beloved, he will in the course of his practice reach a state where he actually beholds the form of his Beloved in whatever he looks at. Next he comes to realize that all other deities are contained in his Beloved; that everyone's Lord — in fact everything is contained in his own *Ishta* and that He dwells in all of them, as indeed in everything. The *sadhaka* comes to feel : As my Lord resides within me, so He who resides within everyone else is truly the same Lord. In water and on land, in trees, shrubs and creepers — everywhere in the whole universe abides my Beloved. Further, all the various forms and modes of being that we behold, are they not expressions of my Beloved ? For there is none other save Him. He is smaller than the smallest and greater than the greatest.

Actuated by your various inborn tendencies you each worship a different deity. The true progress in one's spiritual experience depends on the sincerity and intensity of one's aspiration. The measure of a person's spiritual advance will be reflected in the manifestations that are vouchsafed to him of his *Ishta*, who will by no means remain inaccessible or separate from His devotee, but let Himself be contacted in an infinite variety of ways. Conditioned though you be, you will find the All within you and on the other hand be able to grasp that your own innate tendencies are also part of this All. What has been said here represents one point of view. You cannot dissociate yourself from the Whole.

The multifarious kinds of beasts, birds, men etc. — what are they all ? What are these varieties of shapes and modes of being, what is the essence within them ? What really are these everchanging forms ? Gradually, slowly,

because you are rapt in the contemplation of your Beloved. He becomes revealed to you in every one of them ; not even a grain of sand is excluded. You realize that water, earth, plants, animals, birds, human beings are nothing but forms of your Beloved. Some experience it in this manner ; realization does not come to everyone in the same way. There are infinite possibilities and consequently, which for any particular person is the specific path along which the Universal will reveal itself in its boundlessness, remains concealed from the average individual.

What you have just heard in the discourse on the *Srimad Bhagavata* about the universal body of the Lord comprising all things — trees, flowers, leaves, hills, mountains, rivers, oceans and so forth — a time will come, must come, when one actually perceives this all-pervading universal form of the One.

The variety of His shapes and guises is infinite, uncountable, without end. So then, 'He who is multishaped, who constantly creates and destroys these forms of His, He is the One whom I adore.' To the degree that one grows in the ever wider and fuller recognition of this truth one will realize one's oneness with each one of these numberless forms. In this immensity there are diverse shapes, diverse modes, manifested in diverse ways, without end, without number — and yet there is end and number. When a *sadhaka* enters this state he becomes conscious of the perpetual transformation of all forms and moods and awakens to true understanding, which is the comprehension that the Supreme Himself manifests as the power of understanding. Now as to 'skill' : when the current of one's thinking that was directed towards worldly matters is reversed and turned inwards, the One Himself becomes revealed as this 'secret skill'. Look at the everchanging world, where what exists at one moment is non-existent the next, where being is continually entering into non-being — who is there in the form of this non-being ? Even the non-existent exists .

In this connexion it must be said that if you want to find Truth you will have to realize everything as it is in its own place without choosing one thing rather than another. It is a Kingdom without end, in which even what you discern as non-existence is equally an expression of the ONE. In the purely spiritual (*chinmayi*) world all forms, whatever they be, are ever

eternal. Therefore simultaneously and in the same place there is non-existence as well as existence and also neither non-existence nor existence and more of the kind (if one can proceed further).

Very well, the Beloved is thus comparable to ice, which is nothing but water, and consequently He is without form, without quality and the question of manifestation does not arise. This is a state of Self-realization. For to find the Beloved is to find one's Self, to discover that God is one's Self, wholly identical with Oneself, one's innermost Self, the Self of one's Self. Then according to the exigence of time and circumstances various possibilities may take effect as for example the peculiar modes of revelation of *mantras* by the ancient Rishis. In such cases *mantras* or the whole of the *Vedas* were revealed to them. All this cannot but occur in consonance with the individual Karma and the inner dispositions of the person concerned. When a *sadhaka* realizes what form and formlessness essentially are, it is indeed a consummate realization. He realizes what *Bhava* is, its connexion with the *Shabda Brahma**, numerous types of languages, language without end and also language in the form of *Shabda Brahma*.

Sounds of infinite varieties and kinds manifest themselves to him in concrete forms ; this occurs on the plane where sounds appear as visible forms, (similar to forms known to us.) Well, yes, form is really void ; one sees that freedom from form means that form itself is the void. In this way the world reveals itself as void, before it merges into the Great Void (*Mahashunya*), because the void that is perceived within the world is a part of *Prakriti* (nature) and therefore still form. From this void one will have to proceed to the *Great Void*.

It is the perception of the world based upon the identification of yourself with your body and mind that has all along been the source of your bondage. A time will come when this kind of perception will give place to a knowledge founded on your oneness with the whole universe, which will reveal itself as an aspect of Supreme Knowledge. When this knowledge of the Essence of Things, when universal consciousness has awakened, what happens to the Essence Itself ? Ponder over this ! When insight into form and the formless

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

dawns in its boundlessness everything will be uprooted. On transcending the level where form, diversity and manifestation exist one enters into a state of formlessness. What can this be called? Godhood, the *Paramatma* Himself. As the individual self becomes gradually freed from all fetters, which are nothing but the veil of ignorance, it realizes its oneness with the Supreme Spirit (*Paramatma*) and becomes established in its own Essential Being.

Now to another aspect of the matter. Everyone has his own path. Some advance along the line of Vedanta, but as they progress they find the path of a Rishi opening out for them. To others also whose spiritual practice, worship or yoga proceed with the help of images and other intermediary aids, the same path of a Rishi may become disclosed. Yet others, who are guided by voices and locutions from the Unseen, at first hear these voices as audible sounds, but gradually in perfect language which conveys the full significance of the thoughts and ideas it expresses. By and by it becomes evident that these voices emerge from one's own Self and that they are He Himself manifesting in that particular way. No matter what be your line of approach, in due course the path of a Rishi or a similar path may open out for you in some form or manner. But at what time this will occur and to whom is beyond the ken of the ordinary person's knowledge.

Well, now suppose a man follows his own specific path which happens to be the worship of a concrete form. When he has a vision of it, is it only of the particular deity it represents or does it not also refer to the abstract form of the Self? It thus becomes clear that the Supreme is present as much in the abstract form of the Self as in the concrete form of the deity. Someone who by the method of Vedanta has in a natural way (*Sahaja Bhava*) become fully merged in the Self, will realize that as water is contained in ice so the Supreme Reality can be found in the image. He will then come to see that all images are really the spiritual forms of the ONE. For what is hidden in ice? Water of course. Therefore when we speak of the All, the Universal, there are obscurations, veils, grades of un veiling etc. like solid and melting ice. Whereas in the pure Self there can be no question of stages. With ice, even though it may be melting, there is potentially the possibility of its existing as such again here or elsewhere in future. Consequently for Him, who Himself manifests in the form of ice, there can be no question of the eternal or the non-eternal.

Hence when one speaks of *Dvaitadvaita*, (monism and dualism at one and the same time), both are facts. Just as you are father, son and husband all at once. How can there be a son without a husband or a father without a son ? This shows that none of the three is less important than the others and that in this case there can be no question of higher and lower states ; there is only equality, sameness (*sama*). However there is a place where one can actually speak of higher and lower states. Each of the two standpoints is complete in itself. No simile can be applicable in every detail, therefore take note only of that much for which it is intended. To sum up : water and ice exist eternally. Likewise He is as indubitably with form as He is without form. When with form which can be compared to ice, He appears clad in limitless different shapes and modes of being — which are actually spiritual in nature. Depending on one's avenue of approach prominence is given to one particular form.

Through every religious sect He gives Himself to Himself and the value of each of these sects for the individual is that they each indicate a different method to Self-Knowledge. He alone is water as well as ice. What is there in ice ? Nothing but water. On the plane where *Dvaitadvaita* exists, both duality and non-duality are facts ; expressed from this position there is form as well as freedom from form. Again when saying there are both duality and non-duality, to which level of consciousness does this kind of statement correspond ? There is certainly a state where both difference and non-difference exist simultaneously — in very truth He is as much in difference as He is in non-difference. Do you not see that from the worldly point of view you quite obviously assume that there are differences ? The very fact that you are endeavouring to find your Self evinces that there must be the feeling of separateness in you, that in agreement with the manner of the world you think of yourself as apart. From this point of view difference undoubtedly exists. But then the world is heading towards destruction (*nasha*) inevitably, since it is not the Self (*na sva*), not He (*na sha*). It cannot last for ever. Yet who is even in this guise ? Ponder over this ! Well then, what goes and what comes ? Behold, it is movement as that of the sea (*samudra**), He expressing Himself (*sva mudra*). The waves are but the rising and the falling, the undulation of the water, and it is the water that forms into waves (*taranga*)* — limbs of His own body (*tar anga*) —

* Here Mataji plays upon words : *samudra* = sea, *sva mudra* = His own expression ; *taranga* = wave, *tar anga* = His limbs.

water in essence. What is it that makes the same substance appear in different forms as water, ice, waves? This again is the problem of a particular plane of consciousness. Reflect and see how much of it you can grasp! No simile is ever valid in all respects. Yet it has helped you to view this with reference to the world. What lesson have you actually derived from it? Find out! What you thought of as with form you have discovered to be formless. Further that the realization of Truth cannot come through this process of speculation you will also have to understand.

The aforesaid implies that He eternally manifests displaying desire and quality; but also without form and quality; and still further it infers that there can be no question of attributes and attributelessness, since there is solely the ONE without-a-second. You speak of the Absolute as Truth, Knowledge, Infinity. In pure *Advaita* no question of form, quality, or predication — be it affirmative or negative — can possibly arise. When you say: "He is only this" and then "He is *also* this," you have confined yourself within the limits of the word "also" and as a result assume the separateness of the thing referred to. In the ONE there can be no "also." The state of Supreme Oneness cannot be described as THAT and also as something other than THAT. In the attributeless *Brahman* there can be no such thing as quality or absence of quality, there is only the One Self and nothing but the Self.

Suppose you believe that He is with quality, embodied and you become wholly centred on this aspect of Him, then formlessness does not exist for you — this is one state (*sthiti*). There is another state where He appears with attributes as well as without. There is yet another state—(these states are not progressive but each complete in itself) — where difference as well as non-difference exist, both being impenetrable, where He is quite beyond expression. Besides one can take the stand of the *Vedic Karmakhanda*. This and all that has been said above is within the Supreme State of which it is said that even though the Whole is taken from the Whole, the Whole remains the Whole. There can be no additions and no subtractions, the wholeness of the Whole remains unimpaired. Whatever line you may follow represents a particular aspect of it. Each method has its own *mantras*, its own ideas and states, its beliefs and rejections—to what purpose? To realize Him — your own Self. Who or what is this Self? Depending on your orientation you

find Him—which is your own Self—as a perfect servant in relation to his master, as a part in relation to the Whole or simply as the One Self (*Atma*).

Look, if one believes in God (*Bhagavan*) His Divine Power (*Shakti*) is already taken for granted. It is in this connexion that the distinction of gender appears, namely God as male and His Power as female. Yet there is no question of male or female—from one standpoint; whereas from another the Divinity is conceived as divided into male and female. The Eternal Virgin (*Kumari*) does not depend on anyone, She Herself is the ONE as Power. Where everything is perceived as Power it is Power in the form of Being (*Satta*): with form or as the formless everywhere it is Power as such which constitutes His form. When idea (*bhava*) and action manifest then only can form emerge. Further if you think of *Bhagavati* Herself as the Supreme, there are untold manifestations of Her Power. Again *Maha Shakti* (Supreme Power) which is the root-cause of everything -- of Creation, Preservation, Dissolution -- just as with a tree boughs and branches spring forth from its root, so all kinds and orders of deities, angels, archangels, etc. are generated as the manifestations of that Power.

The specific character of Shiva is a transcendence from all change and mutation which is symbolized by a *Shava** and denotes that in the death of death lies Immortality, namely *Shiva*. On the plane of Creation, Preservation, Dissolution He is in the form of Creation, and as what is called *Maha Vishnu* in the form of Preservation. As regards the various positions He is indeed in all of them, manifesting in diverse ways and as the formless. In each one of them all the rest are contained and in this multiformity behold the ONE. When you gaze at one form you cannot see any other, but in each one of them the All is present and all forms are of the ONE. In the void there is fulness, and in fulness the void. There are possibilities of every sort and description, but the root is the ONE, the GREAT LIGHT. Even when speaking merely of one line — how can the end of it be found? Yet when the individual is unable to proceed any further then there seems to be an end.

What is in the form of Being (*satta*)? The Self (*Atma*), the Supreme (*Paramatma*), call it what you will. That which you variously style God (*Bhagavan*), Divine Power (*Bhagavat Shakti*), the Lord of the world, Divine

* *Shava* ordinarily means corpse, but in the case of Shiva the transcendence of Supreme Power which has withdrawn from Shiva's body so that it remains corpse-like.

Majesty, Glory, Splendour etc. is only He, the ONE. Very well, God is immutable, the non-actor (*akarta*) since He is free from all activity. Only one who engages in action may be described as the actor in respect to that action. Since He Himself is in the form of all causes and effects, how can one speak of Him as controlling or not controlling them? Hence here He is not the actor. But where His *Maya* is, where the display of His Divine Power and Majesty is to be found, and where nature functions mechanically, who manifests there? The ONE of course. The static and the dynamic, these one-sided points of view of yours belong to the veil of ignorance. You speak of Him as the Actor or Non-actor, trying to limit Him to the one or the other. These distinctions are but natural on account of the angle from which you regard them. He is whatever you take Him to be; you see Him according to your way of thinking and as you portray Him so He is.

As long as the curtain, the veil of ignorance exists you are bound to see and hear in this restricted way; until the obscuration is removed how can you expect the revelation of Truth to occur in its totality? When the veil is rent asunder the fact will be disclosed that all the diverse forms are none but He Himself.

Very well, the many creeds and sects serve the purpose that He may bestow Himself on Himself along various channels — each has its own beauty — and that He may be discovered expressed in countless ways in all shapes and in the formless. In the form of the Path He attracts each person to the particular line that will guide him in harmony with his inner dispositions and tendencies. The One is present in each sect, even though outwardly there appears to be abiding conflict among them, which is due to your ego-nature being full of doubt. This body however does not exclude anything. If you follow one particular creed or sect you will have to go right up to the point where all its characteristics will be known to you. When advancing along one line, in other words when adhering to one particular religion, faith or creed, which you conceive as distinct and as conflicting with all the others you will first of all have to realize the perfection to which its Founder points, and then beyond that the Universal will of itself become revealed to you.

What has just been explained is applicable in the case of each of the various sects; yet it is of course true that if one stops short at whatever can be achieved by following one line, the Goal of human life has not been reached. What is required is a realization that will uproot conflict and

divergence of opinion, that is complete and free from inherent antagonism. If it be anything less than that it means that one's inner experience is partial and incomplete. In true Realization one can have no quarrel with anyone — one is fully enlightened as to all creeds, faiths, doctrines and sects and sees all paths as equally good. This is absolute and perfect Realization. So long as there is dissension one cannot speak of attainment. Nevertheless one should undoubtedly have firm faith in one's *Ishta* and perseue with constancy and single-mindedness one's chosen path.

Now as to the fruit of action : just consider, if one's action is continuous, without a break and one remains ever conscious of the Goal — who will be revealed by such action ? The Indivisible One. But even in every action as such the Perfect one stands Self-revealed — this is the true significance of each action; to strive is the distinctive characteristic of the individual. It is natural for man to perform actions which are the expression of his true being and it is natural for him to feel the urge to engage in actions of this type. Man's true nature is *Sva*, *Svayam*, *Atma*, call it by any name, He, the Supreme — I myself.

SOME OF MOTHER'S WAYS

By

Vijayananda (Dr. Adolphe Weintrob)

(Translated from the French)

I certainly am not so presumptuous as to claim to understand Sri Ma's methods. In this short article I should merely like to give some idea of my impressions concerning this subject. These impressions must of necessity be limited and, as it is with everything personal, are not to be entirely relied upon. For to really understand Sri Ma would mean to have had the vision of the *Paramatma*; this is why one's words are like arrows that fall back having missed the target.

What has particularly struck me is Sri Ma's extraordinary mastery in dealing with human beings and their feelings. She gives me the impression of a great magician who knows thoroughly all the strings that cause the marionettes that we all are to move, and which She pulls with consummate skill.

When I use the word "magician" it is only for the sake of simplicity of expression, for Sri Ma never imposes

on anyone any point of view or way of thinking. She leaves everybody absolutely free and does not give orders, only suggestions, and even what She suggests is always what is most suitable for us. If we do not accept Her advice, She does not insist, but very often proposes another solution. In our blindness She guides us where, from the very depths of our being we really want to go—towards the Great Illumination. Only under exceptional circumstances, when it is Her 'Kheyal' She may give what seems to us a definite order and then we feel compelled to obey.

But what I wish to refer to here is not a guidance expressed in words, but one which emerges from our inner being. We ourselves choose our path, prompted by the Dweller in the human heart, the *Antaryamin*, the *Hridayavasini*, of whom Sri Ma is the visible aspect which we perceive through the veil of our ignorance. Our destiny, our *Prarabdha Karma** comprises a number of possibilities, the total of

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

which cannot be changed, yet may be utilized in various different ways. Just as for instance when several brothers inherit equal shares of their father's property, each one of them may use his heritage in his own way. The first might squander it on riotous living, the second use it parsimoniously and the third make it the basis of a huge fortune. Mataji teaches us how to manipulate wisely the share of wealth that destiny has bestowed on us, namely to transform it into *Paramdhan*, Supreme Wealth.

In order to cure us from the disease of ignorance and delusion and to direct us to our Supreme Goal, the great healer of souls whom we call Sri Anandamayi Ma employs innumerable remedies and techniques which vary according to the needs of each individual.

Perfect and lasting happiness is what all of us seek, consciously or unconsciously. Our discontent is the result of our feeling that we are incomplete, that we lack something. The happiness we hope to find in family life, friends and possessions is nothing else but Reality Itself, viewed through the distorting prism of words and emotions; we look for it in the wrong direction. (I am repeating here, possibly not quite faithfully, an idea that I have heard expressed by Sri Ma.) We chase our own shadow

that can never be caught. It is by looking within that the solution of our problem is to be found. But this great pilgrimage can only start from the point at which we happen to be. Here, I feel, lies the incomparable universality of the message of Sri Anandamayi Ma. Most sages address themselves only to those who already are aspirants on the spiritual path, whereas Sri Ma can help anyone at any stage or level provided he possesses a spark of good-will. She Herself is free from ego or individuality. Divinity and Love Eternal flow from Her in great abundance. She radiates the happiness which we seek in vain in the objective world and which in fact is nothing else but our own essential being, our own true nature. Thus She is able to alter the course of our feelings and thoughts, focussing them entirely on Her own person. The psychiatrists would call this an emotional transference. But this is only the first phase of the operation She performs on us. For to limit the Divine to one form, however inspiring, however noble, is not the ultimate goal. Love for one particular form can never be real 'Love', it is *moha*, attraction through delusion, attachment. So long as the idea of duality persists there must always be a mixture of attraction and repulsion. True Love is the realization of the Oneness of all things.

Once I heard Sri Ma use the following simile : (Again I am only giving the gist of what She said, not Her own words) : ‘In order to wash one’s face one has first to use soap, but afterwards it has to be rinsed away with pure water.’ In a similar way She cleanses us from our attachment to the world by attachment to Her own person and later teaches us how to divert this love towards the source of all Love.

Let us now consider the second phase of the operation. By Her radiation of Love Divine and by Her Grace She awakens in us a taste for Divine things. According to the temperament of each individual seeker She greatly intensifies his *sadhana*, be it Kirtan, Japa, meditation or any other practice.

Finally, at a third phase, when we have become sufficiently engrossed in the path that leads to Self-realization, She gradually breaks the bonds of our personal attachment that bind us to Her. She makes us understand that the joy that we feel in Her presence has its opposite, the pain of separation when She is far away, and that this is the same with all things belonging to the objective world : whenever one has a taste of pleasure or happiness it will inevitably be followed by pain or suffering. She makes us see that these joys as well as sorrows are

impermanent and as fleeting as a puff of air. Mataji often says that enjoyment derived from sense objects (*vishaya*) is like poison (*vish hai*). Certain very exceptional bhaktas may avoid this painful breaking of their attachment to Sri Ma’s person by transmuting it directly into the Divine Love that is revealed through Her. But such bhaktas are of a rare type.

The way to the Knowledge of Reality leads through the jungle of our innumerable desires. One by one they have to be uprooted and it is ourselves who have to do this work, who have to recognize our errors and abandon them. Nevertheless Mataji gives us powerful help in this. I should like to draw the attention to one special point in Her way of dealing with a situation. It resembles very much the use of vaccination or inoculation by doctors. If for instance virulent bacilli of cholera are absorbed into one’s system, one is almost certain to catch the disease, which might possibly prove fatal. But if these bacilli are modified in a certain manner by a laboratorial product that is then injected into the human body under favourable conditions one will most probably develop a little fever, in fact cholera on a very reduced scale, which however will render one immune from this particular disease. In a very

similar way Sri Ma sometimes arranges circumstances for us so that we may reap the fruits of a desire already conceived, but under conditions that will not harm us, only to make us conscious of our error and thereby cure us from it.

I shall now describe a personal experience that will elucidate this point. Last summer I travelled to Solan to spend some time in Sri Ma's presence, after having lived for a whole year in Her Ashram in Almora. At the end of that year it seemed to me that there was nothing left to justify my staying on in India and that to renew my contact with my family, my race, etc., would prove a definite aid to fresh spiritual progress. I had decided either to return to France or else to visit Jerusalem, the holy city of the Western people. Soon after my arrival at Solan I solicited a private interview with Sri Ma so as to learn Her opinion on the matter and to obtain Her permission to undertake the journey. But She does not only read our thoughts even before we have clearly formulated them in our own minds, She also understands our hidden motives of which we ourselves are unconscious. Usually when asked for an interview, She grants it almost at once or at any rate very soon. In this case however She postponed it from day to day and when

finally, two months later, at Dehradun I got the chance to talk to Her, the sweetness of Her presence had in the meanwhile melted completely the crust of ice that had held me enclosed and I had quite forgotten my intention to leave India.

Nevertheless my desire had been intense and according to the psychological laws it would have sooner or later had to bear its fruit in action. When Mataji left Dehradun for Vrindaban She advised me to remain for a time in one of Her ashrams near Dehradun. There I found myself among a group of people who treated me with great kindness and affection. Their friendliness, conditions in the Ashram in general, the whole setting, friends, neighbours, the climate—everything co-operated to give me a taste of my home in France. I came to understand the futility and perhaps even the harm from a spiritual point of view that a confrontation with my home atmosphere might have meant. I therefore finally gave up the whole idea. After a time I left Dehradun and stayed in the Ashram at Banaras. There I became friends with a young man from Israel, a fine and serious type of person. He seemed to me to represent the people of Israel and the Holy Land. Through this friendship I came to realize that a visit to his country would have been entirely

different from what I had imagined. I then understood that the Guru is the true father and mother, the *Dharmapita* and the *Dharmamata*, that all those who have chosen the Path of Immortality are my brothers and sisters; that the dwelling-place of the Supreme is my real motherland and whatever helps towards Self-realization my *Svadharmā*.

This is how by Sri Ma's Grace I learnt to recognize and renounce my mistake at very little cost, whereas according to the ordinary laws of nature I should have had to undertake a long and tedious journey, beset with all sorts of snares and dangers, inimical to the spiritual life.

It is well-known that Mataji neither gives *Mantra Diksha* nor claims to be a Guru or to have disciples. One day I asked Her what I should reply when people wanted to know, as they often did, whether I had received *Diksha* and who was my Guru. She told me that I might reply in the affirmative to the first question. As to the Guru I should say "God alone can give *Diksha*; there is only one Guru, namely God Himself". (Whenever I quote Sri Ma it must be remembered that I usually do not recall Her exact words but am only giving the meaning of what She said).

On various occasions I asked Sri Ma whether I might regard Her as my Guru. Once She said: "God Himself is the only Guru". On another occasion when I was very insistent, She replied: "I am what you think me to be". Yet thousands revere Her as their Guru.

What underlies the apparent contradiction between what Sri Ma says and what seems to be a fact to us? What exactly is a Guru? Surely the One who opens up the path that leads to Self-realization and guides the disciple till the final Goal has been reached. Initiation by Mantra has real value only if it is instrumental in opening up that path. The opening is really a communion with the Divine and it is the Divine Itself, the Supreme Guru who brings about this communion. The physical Guru acts as a focus, a channel for the Divine Power. But in the case of Sri Ma there is no difference between the physical Guru and the Supreme Guru. I once heard Mataji say: "The Guru is not a human being. It is a sin to look upon him or her as a human being. One must have the same attitude towards the Guru as towards God (*Ishwara Bhava*)".

It is the illusion in which we are caught that makes us limit Mataji to the physical form we perceive. The

perfect sage is by no means confined to what we see and call his body.

If in these few pages I have attempted to describe some aspects of Sri Ma's methods, it must be taken

as entirely from my own limited and unenlightened angle of vision. For only one who has direct knowledge of the Supreme Reality which functions in the body which we call Sri Sri Anandamayi Ma will be able to understand Her.

MY FIRST VISIT

By

U. C. Dutt, M. A., P. E. S. (Retd.)

I think it was in May, 1929. In the summer vacation I was going to Mussoorie, the queen of the Hill Stations as a guest of a military officer. I was in high spirits.

I halted at Hardwar at the foot of the Shivalak hills — quite a modernized town in the lap of nature. The long ranges of hills on one side contrast with the everflowing Ganga and the canal on the other. I heard the call of the Himalayas — a clear call it was, I could not resist. I took a different route and moved towards the North. Crossing the Ganga I spent about a week at some Chattis on the way leading to the holy shrine of Badrinath.

Against my wishes I had to return to Hardwar for the sake of a friend of mine who was accompanying me. In the evening I went to Har-ki-pairi and there on the platform met Mahamahopadhyaya Pt. Gopinath Kaviraj, Principal, Government Sanskrit College, Banaras. My joy knew no bounds to see him there quite unexpectedly and I enquired of him if there was any real Mahatma in that locality. Kavirajji told me that

Mother Anandamayi had been at Hardwar a few days back, but suddenly had left for Ajodhya. Her father and Kunja Babu (Swami Turiyananda) were waiting for Her at a Dharamshala at Bhimgora. He advised me to make further enquiries about Her return at Bhimgora next morning.

As the day dawned I went to the place where the party had stayed. The Mother did not turn up. Her father and the Sannyasi too were reported to have gone to Brahmakunda. I left the place in despair, wandered about at Brahma Kunda and then came down almost exhausted to sit on a ghat in front of the Bhola-giri Dharamshala where we were putting up.

Someone came to me and told me that Mother was calling me. "Which mother?" said I. The reply was 'Mother Anandamayi'. I was taken aback. How was it that one so far could be so near? She did not know me. How could she call me? I followed the messenger and went upstairs. Entering a room I saw an exquisitely beautiful lady sitting cross-legged on the floor together with some other

persons. She appeared to be divinely inspired. At once She greeted me with a smile and talked to me as if I had been known to Her for a long time. Respected Kavirajji was there. I sat beside him close to the Mother. Someone requested Her to sing a song. Without a moment's hesitation She started singing, "O Mother, be gracious and make me like a child. Do not allow me to grow old leaving the charms of childhood behind." In a few minutes She was transported to another sphere, Her face was illumined. She lost outer consciousness and plunged into Samadhi. We felt a divine Presence. One was reminded of Sri Rama Krishna who, while singing or talking, passed into the superconscious state at ease and often. After some time in that state some Vedic hymns in a regular rhythm of rise and fall found expression through Her tongue. It appeared that She was an expert in Vedic lore. Kavirajji whispered to me, "Mantras like those of the Vedas are being revealed once more." I was struck dumb with wonder.

Pt. Gopinath Kaviraj and his family put up in the Bholagiri Dharamshala, I too was there. At our request Mother agreed to stay there and the party shifted from Bhimgora. I felt very happy to be in close touch with such an exalted being. Mother was

extremely human and at the same time supremely divine — a meeting ground of heaven and earth.

That same evening Mother was sitting on the terrace of the Dharamshala. Just below the Ganga Canal flowed steadily to an unknown destination. The moon shone brightly creating thousands of silver ripples on the running stream. The yonder Shivalak sent occasional sighs to dull the smiling Ganga. The sight was charming. Mother's presence elevated the entire surroundings to a level above the earth. I felt a child at the feet of the Mother. She began to tell me about Her life — how as a girl of three She appeared to lose consciousness on hearing kirtan at a neighbour's house, how this kind of thing repeated itself often, so that Her family became apprehensive and consulted some doctors and Vaidis; and how a distinguished physician Dr. Mahendra Ch. Nandy of Kalikutch told Her parents that She needed no treatment, since the symptoms indicated a highly spiritual state. What resembled fainting fits were by no means attacks of epilepsy or due to any disorder of body or mind. They were signs of God-intoxication. People who knew Dr. Mahendra Nandy had great faith in him. Since then Mother was looked upon differently.

A word must here be said about Dr. Nandy. Being a resident of the same village I knew him personally. I have travelled from Assam to the Punjab, but I do not remember having seen the like of him anywhere. A unique personality with a giant figure, a flowing beard and hair all white, of serene appearance, with large, penetrating eyes, dressed in dhoti, chadar and a pair of slippers, he was universally respected. To see him was to touch his feet. Late Bepin Chandra Pal, the great political leader, orator and savant, called him the Tolstoy of Bengal. Though an eminent physician and surgeon he was considered to be a *Siddha Mahatma* (a man of realization). So was his father, the late Ananda Babu, known as Ananda Swami to his numerous Hindu and Muslim disciples. He was an intimate friend of the Brahma-leader Keshav Chandra Sen and of Mahatma Vijay Krishna Goswami. His grandfather, the late Ram Dulal Dewan, minister of Tripura State, was no less distinguished. Even his son, Ashok, who died in prison during the Swadeshi days, is described by Sri Aurobindo in his *Karakahiny* as *Yogabhrasta* (fallen from divine union). A word from a saint like Dr. Nandy was enough to convince people of Mother's greatness.

I asked Mother if She had commi-

tted to memory some of the Vedic hymns which She had recited in the morning. She answered calmly: "Here there is no question of committing anything to memory. Whatever comes, comes of itself. People say it resembles Vedic Hymns." I thought with Carlyle of the great Unconscious through which Truth is revealed to mankind. I got the impression that Mother's mental states were of two kinds: The one of a state of overwhelming, uninterrupted bliss (*Ananda*) and the other even more sublime state of *Samadhi*.

I think Mother derives Her name 'Anandamayi' from the first state which was almost a constant phase of Her life at that time. A feeling of unbroken joy becomes natural for one who lives on the plane of bliss or reaches the *Anandamaya Kosha* (sheath of bliss). The other state dawns on transcending all the five sheaths—the physical, the vital, the mental, the psychic and the spiritual. It is a supramental and highly exalted state, comparable to *Nirvikalpa Samadhi*—a state without modifications, without pleasure-pain tone. Words and thoughts stop short and come back suffocated so to speak, from that unusual height. Blessed are those who attain to that state. They become one with the Supreme Reality. They become omniscient and omnipotent.

As night was approaching I took leave and left Mother to Herself. She sat for long hours all alone, shining in Her own glory.

Next morning I came to learn that Mother had passed into a deep Samadhi some time during the night and there was no sign of her regaining normal consciousness soon. I observed Her for a pretty long time. She appeared to be in a deep sleep, but She was not sleeping, for Her eyes were half open and drawn within, they seemed to have lost all lustre and to be wholly oblivious of the world of the senses. The outer form was lying there, the inner spirit detached from its garb seemed in holy communion with the world-spirit.

A friend of mine, Dr. Nigam of Faizabad happened to be there. I told him to see Mother in that state if he wanted to get an idea of real Samadhi. The doctor was amazed when he saw Her and paid Her homage.

Hours passed. The sun went down the meridian. It was 1 P. M. or so. All felt hungry, even Mother's old father did not take anything without feeding his divine daughter. He began to utter loudly Divine Names close to her ears. No response for about

15 minutes or so. Four or five of us including Kavirajji were in the room. The chanting of Divine Names was continued and a slight change could be noticed on Her features. The eyes began to show signs of life and shed tears in torrents. Her face boomed in a glow. At once I thought of the sattwic signs: *Ashru* (tears), *Pulak* (joy), *Kampa* (trembling), etc. and said in an undertone to Kavirajji that the next thing might be '*Kampa*'. No sooner was it said than Mother began to shiver violently. All those states began to appear and reappear one after another. Then commenced a sort of tug of war between the sensuous and the supersensuous elements of Her life. As soon as physical consciousness started dawning on the body it was drawn in and She was again lost to the senses. The process continued till outer consciousness reasserted itself. She opened Her eyes and tried to speak, but failed. Some catables were placed before Her, not so much for Her as for the sake of others, as they wanted Her Prasad. With great efforts She could utter a word or two expressing Her inability to eat anything. Then She lay quietly for some time.

I had seen others in Samadhi, but never before had I witnessed a Samadhi of that type. Such a long period of su-

perconsciousness, no sign of life so to speak and above all the wonderful states that accompanied the regressive process of climbing down to normalcy. I have seen the snow-clad Himalayas touching the sky, the source of the sacred Ganga babbling on pebbles and the sun rising from a blue sea but I have not seen a sight so touching in its majesty as Mother's Samadhi. I may forget everything else, but I can not forget what I saw at Hardwar 27 years ago. It was superb. It was sublime. It surpasses everything.

In the evening I approached Mother and told Her that I had a mind to go to Mussoorie, but if She stayed at Hardwar for some time, I could postpone my departure. Mother gave me to understand that Her movements were uncertain. She might leave at any moment. So She advised me to keep to my programme. Accordingly I arranged to leave Hardwar the following day.

The next morning (3rd day) I bowed to the Mother and told Her that I was going to Sahasradhara first and then to Mussoorie. She suggested going to Sahasradhara as well. I felt very happy to have the privilege of escorting Her to a lovely spot, and to be able to live in Her company at least for a day more. Several ladies and gentlemen together with Mother's father and the Swamiji accompanied Her. We went

to Dehradun by train, then took a bus to Rajpur. From there to Sahasradhara we walked a distance of three miles. I hired a dandi for Mother, but She was at the head of the party, walking very fast and leading others. The dandi was used by turns by two old people.

We reached Sahasradhara. A projected hill top was dripping water all the 24 hours, through not thousands but millions of openings. There were a temple of Shiva by the hot spring and a small Dharamshala. We took our bath in the spring and sat round Mother in the temple of Lord Shiva. One could easily imagine that the Divine Mother Parvati had come to her father Himalaya with her children for a short stay. All of us began to feel the presence of a living Goddess in a lonely valley of eternal life. We took our midday meal, talked and laughed and felt that we were children again. We knew one person and She was our wonderful Mother.

Before the sun went down the party left the sweet retreat and moved to Rajpur. A bus was ready to take them back to Dehradun. With a heavy heart I took leave of the Mother and felt very wretched, like an orphan.

That night I passed at Rajpur and thought of the unique experience I had had during those three days.

Years after in 1950 I met Mother at Banaras. She referred to the trip and told a large number of devotees who had collected for Her darshan, that She first went to Dehradun with me and liked the area. Later Bhaktas built some Ashrams there. Then She said jokingly : But Baba went away leaving this small child behind."

Life is a mystery. The intellect is a light no doubt, but not strong or pure enough to pierce through the thick curtain that conceals Reality. A better instrument is needed for the purpose. It is intuition, *Prajna*. Intuition can be easily developed with the help and grace of a dynamic spiritual personality like the Mother. She soars at dizzy heights but keeps Her look on the earth as well. Her earthly life is a reflection of the life beyond. She serves as a connecting link bet-

ween heaven and earth and through Her one can know 'the Great Unknown'. Her presence creates an atmosphere in which the human mind naturally comes to know its limitations and knocks at the door of illumination. In the words of Goethe 'one's soul is charmed, enraptured, feasted, fed.'

I believe that as a form of divine Energy (*Sakti*) Mother has come down to the earth to inspire and guide blundering humanity. May Her visit to this dark planet be sufficiently long so that those who walk with eyes open, may no longer grope in the dark, but see a moving pillar of light. As a mark of profound gratitude I offer my humble tribute of sincere homage and adoration to Mother on the happy occasion of Her Diamond Jubilee Celebrations.

Mother as Revealed to me from a Distance by Looking at Her Picture

(II.)

By

Miriam Orr (Paris)

Whenever I am alone and not obliged to talk I take Mataji's pictures out of my handbag and look at them. This habit or rather this inner urge is so strong that the action of taking Her pictures out of my bag often does not occur. I feel far too near Her and therefore all movements stop. I can picture Her, see and feel Her near me. This however does not mean that I do not need Her pictures, I love to feel them in my bag and am grateful they are there. But when an inner experience of Mother's presence overcomes me I forget Her photographs. It is somewhat as I would not pull out and smell a pocket bottle of perfume when finding myself suddenly in a lovely garden full of flowers, being overwhelmed by their sweet fragrance.

Mother sometimes reveals Herself to me through a strange experience that can hardly be put into words. I feel Her presence in the shape of a globe of radiant light, which is very large and very small all at once and

not clearly outlined in the manner of a material form. It has no inner structure as for instance a body with bones, veins, nerves etc., nor diameters like a geometrical sphere. There is nothing of the kind in it, yet it is intensely alive and acutely present. This light seems to have the shape of a ball—but not necessarily—at times it assumes the shape of Mother, at other times not. When it does, it continues to be this light, radiating through Her eyes, through Her smile, streaming forth from Her lofty forehead and from every pore of Her body. I sometimes feel Mother's presence embedded or condensed in the center of this vast globe of softly radiating light. I then can visualize Her movements that are totally different from those of other human beings, although Her body appears to be a human one, made of matter. Our movements spring from wishing and willing, Hers do not: they seem to me the expression of something unfathomable, something beyond this radiance.

Feeling Her moving about or sitting quietly another strange experience supervenes. The light pouring from Her is also a delicate perfume and at the same time a new sort of air. One might perhaps compare the experience to the exhilaration one feels when high up on a mountaintop, where the air is thinner and more transparent than in the valley, when all of a sudden one feels charmed by the scent that streams from the pollen of tiny white mountain flowers; there everything is suffused with a clarity and width unknown elsewhere.

I feel that Mother moves and abides in a circle of radiant light-air-perfume and that this triad contains a new breathing element, or better a new experience, a new inner sense. Mother reveals Herself to me as a flower made of light, crystallized into the appearance of a human body exhaling a rarified, fragrant mountain air that refreshes us and makes us feel lighter. This experience has taught me that the adjective 'light' and the noun 'the light' mean both the same. Where the Light of the Divine Presence is, we feel 'lighter', we have less weight, are less bound to the earth and less identified with our body.

In this context one can imagine why it is that Mother's body becomes almost weightless at times. She who is Light has not appeared in the shape of a body through a desire, through the will of an ego that creates form and action. Being Light Divine She is egoless. It is my personal belief that a vast group of bhaktas, perhaps unknown to one another, who were deeply devoted to the Divine and loved it with all their hearts, with every fibre of their being "pulled Her down." I mean to say that a powerful, heart and ego-breaking yearning for God lifts us up to Him—Her or pulls Him down to us. The words 'to lift up' and 'to pull down' are inadequate, being antropomorphic and spatial. There can be no 'up and down' in the Divine Light which is beyond space, time and form. God, Mother are very near, quite close to us. I feel Mother to be much nearer than can be put into language. She is within us, permeating every cell, every atom of our being. We have only to pierce through the veil that hides Her from our inner vision. I imagine that our heart and ego-breaking yearning and crying for Her has had the effect of making the Light precipitate as it were into a body perceptible to our senses. On the other hand that heart and ego-breaking longing and weeping

for Her might also perhaps 'lift us up' or in other words destroy the curtain woven by us that conceals the ever-present, formless Light from our vision.

Now, when Mataji addresses people as 'father' and 'mother' and calls Herself everybody's little daughter I feel that we, Mataji's children have pulled Her down into Her body by our calling, weeping and crying; by praying with the fervour of one who is dying from thirst and craves for water: 'Reveal Thyself, make Thyself visible to us.' In this way we may be called Her parents, although of course I do not and cannot know Her reasons for speaking of Herself as everyone's little daughter.

There are some tangible experiences too that I shall try to relate. One morning, a few months ago I received a letter from Germany, which greatly surprised me as I am not in correspondence with anyone in that country. When I opened the envelope eleven snapshots of Mother came out together with a kind letter from a person unknown to me. When examining the photos and puzzled at their number being eleven—(usually 6, 10 or 12 are sent in central Europe and elsewhere)—I felt a sort of inward touch and Mother's soft, warm eyes resting on me. In a flash I remem-

bered what I had forgotten, namely that it was the 11th of the month, my birthday. There is nobody left in this world who would offer his or her wishes on this occasion. Besides I had thought birthday wishes and parties were for babies and birthdays unimportant after a certain age. I am nearer to the departure from this body than to the beginning of life. Suddenly Mataji had reminded me that everything is important in its own right way and that a birthday can be a stimulating event recalling before our inner eye the beginning of our life, our parents, childhood, growth and the time when we began to call Mataji. Thanks to Her I realized that there is no need to forget our birthday and I addressed fervent thoughts of gratitude to my parents, both deceased, — for have I not come to know of Mataji in this body, their gift to me? Thus I hope that my parents will benefit by Mataji's Light in their present abode. I do not know how it happened that the letter by the German lady arrived just on my birthday and why she should have sent the unusual number of eleven photos to me.

Now to another experience: Often I imagine all the details of how it will be when I shall be face to face with Mother's physical form, the body which I believe is Light and gross

matter all in one. The yearning for this event keeps me going, I daresay it keeps me alive in a worn-out, unhealthy body. One evening before falling asleep I pictured Mother to myself in Her Ashram, and fascinated by the subtle, fragrant air-perfume She seemed to exhale, I fell on my knees and then flat to the ground in my whole length before Her, my head touching Her Feet and flooding them with tears of joy and pain. Then sleep overtook me and the next morning I had forgotten all about this I had a busy day in town and as I went to catch the underground late in the evening I remembered that there was hardly anything to eat at home. Feeling hungry I quickly ran to a food-store the shutters of which were just being let down, and overpowered by the desire for some special food, I fell as I ran. I felt myself fall first on my knees and then flat to the ground. I cried inwardly: "Mother, why do you want my knees to be hurt and my expensive eye-glasses to be broken?" But when I rose to my feet again I found to my amazement that my eye-glasses were intact although I had fallen on my face. My knees did hurt for a little while, yet strangely my stockings were not torn. In a flash I understood Mother's lesson; why do you want to fall down before me when you are still greedy for

some special food and not well disciplined in your daily life? Curiously enough I had fallen exactly in the manner I had planned to do when I should be face to face with Mother.

The inner presence of Mother has changed my character. I used to have strong likes and aversions. This tendency seems almost wiped out by now. When travelling by the underground at times overcrowded, where close physical proximity to all sorts of people, washed and unwashed, clean and utterly unkempt, smelling of alcoholic drinks cannot be avoided, I do not feel the same revulsion as I used to formerly. Often I look at the most unclean drunkard or vagabond — there are quite a lot of them in Paris — reflecting: he has not yet discovered the Light that is so near him, nay within him, but one day he will and may be sooner than I myself.

The presence of Mataji could indicate new ways for psychotherapy. Psycho-analysis as it is now is no doubt a help to many, but not to all who have undergone psycho-analytical treatment. It deals with the instinctive drives of human beings, and that these exist nobody will doubt. But they are not all there is, even in the case of those who almost seem to consist of them. I do not intend to quote

case histories here and much less even those (luckily rare ones) of men who seem to have no other drives or interests than their instincts and the gratification they derive from giving way to them. Such men are sick men no doubt and very hard to cure from their disturbances. Mother's lesson here too is most precious: "Regard everyone you meet as God who reveals Himself in this particular guise."

Mataji, you say that the whole

creation is but His garment, is He Himself. Yet how difficult it is for ordinary mortals like the writer of this article to perceive the Creator within His creation all in one! The very instant we can realize the oneness of the Creator and His creation, although apparently they seem separate from one another, we shall be able to touch the essence of man. Perhaps then a more complete way of psycho-therapy may be found, thanks to your Grace, Mataji.

REFLECTIONS FROM EUROPE

By

Richard Lannoy

I had been away in Europe and had not seen Sri Anandamayi Ma for eighteen months. The car drove along a track and came to a halt before an unfinished dyke. All around was silent in the night. Two boys gestured into the blackness and told me the Ashram was some way off in the middle of a plain. Carrying my bundles I set off through the thorns and scrub. Soon I could make out a small light and the dark, indistinct silhouette of buildings. As I approached I heard a gong sound—it was a quarter to nine and the time of silence. On tiptoe I came near to the terrace and could make out a small building and a single lamp. Figures were seated; there was no sound at all as I peeped into the room but in the flickering light I could distinguish Her seated, wrapped in a white robe, motionless. It was as if this small concentration of silence, serenity and power were quite outside of time, as if it had always been so, had remained just so, an oasis of quiet, subsisting beneath the flux and activity of life and my own mobility, my journeys, my time spent

travelling across the sea in Europe and Africa. There had been no apparent interruption, for I felt, as I stood silent in the doorway looking towards Her, that in spite of myself this domain of stillness had resided within me all those months too, but that I had been blind enough to close myself to it and to ignore it. Ever since I first saw Sri Anandamayi Ma I have felt that Her ways and doings, Her activity, Her presence, were not entirely exterior and separate but had its correspondence within myself, were subtly contained within an inner realm of which I have very little knowledge beyond a dim sensing that it exists there. Furthermore I feel it a necessity as well as a duty to make myself more aware of its constant presence and activity and that because the circumstances of my life demand it I cannot depend on frequent contact with the exterior, cannot depend upon being in Her presence very often.

Mine are circumstances not in any way dissimilar from those of millions of people involved in the complexity of living, but who feel a need for

periods of complete quiet and freedom from rush and anxiety. Such periods are not necessarily devoted to religious study, but are nevertheless basically a time when spiritual questions are most likely considered. Man turns from work to quieter occupations, to relaxation of many kinds, to amusement, entertainment, to his dreams, to his children playing about him, to the scenic world, to beautiful architecture and works of art. He does these things as instinctively as eating and sleeping. The rhythm of life demands that we take refreshment, nourish our minds, rest from the strains and worries of work, from the constant necessity to find money enough to keep ourselves alive. The resources available for our relaxation are extremely diverse, in Europe and America almost fantastically elaborate. More and more people in the world have access to libraries, cinemas, the radio, more and more opportunities to discover for themselves the riches of the human heritage, the repositories of wisdom in all cultures. The potentialities inherent in such an opportunity are enormous, so long as the individual is himself prepared to discriminate in his studies and to apply his knowledge to constructive activity. It is impossible to enumerate the benefits of the wide modern dispersal of knowledge. Synthesis of cultural influences is

moulding many of the noblest projects in contemporary society and I would cite the Pestalozzi village in the Swiss mountains where orphans of many nationalities are being cared for, educated and the physical ravages of starvation alleviated by medical skill. But the very ease with which people may now have access to the heritage of civilization and can pick and choose from every culture of past and present whatsoever they may be attracted to, has led to very considerable restlessness and to intellectual gymnastics which dissipate the concentrative potential of study into aimless amassing of facts. We have lapsed into a belief that a perceptive far-ranging intellect will end all confusion and solve every problem. If this were really so our ideas could be satisfactorily evolved by an electronic calculating machine.

India herself is in a ferment of change and it may be fairly said that the terrors of famine have been considerably reduced and that her people are more prosperous and hopeful than they have been for a long time.

One cannot regard these things as purely materialistic developments, for Man is not born liberated from his physical limitations, and until that is achieved he must needs work. We are not such perfect instruments as to be in a position to sit back and

do absolutely nothing but wait for God's will to be done. Thoreau, one of the inspirers of Mahatma Gandhi, once said that "the average man spends his life in quiet desperation." People have more in tones of anger than of sorrow often remarked of my home city, London, that the inhabitants have no vitality or freshness and no stillness; but the sad fact is that the demands of a monstrously artificial city life drain the energy from them. Both collectively and individually they are responsible for their own condition, as much as the people of any community, but when an immense fatigue settles upon a people, the saddest fatigue of all, that induced by wars, the helpless desperation of a man before his dwindling reserves of joy calls for inspiration by great leaders possessed of dynamic spiritual force.

And where are such leaders to be found? Whatever may be said for the fact that the ultimate source of spiritual regeneration lies solely within the breast of the individual, and within the Self alone his salvation, it needs a giant of strength to maintain and develop the natural flow of the spirit, as it were, against the main current and trend of a whole people. The consciousness of modern man is complex and delicate; it is the result of mass education and the stimulus

of a complex industrialized and technically organized society, with swift global communication. The very ease of contact between the peoples of one nation and another, and the multi-racial nature of the big universities have brought about a high intellectual consciousness of problems on an international scale. It is as if the mind of modern man has almost overreached itself. This delicate organism, should it go wrong, may take years for a psycho-analyst to unravel and be led to recovery. There is too little time and too little money for this kind of lengthy treatment, itself the outcome of the increased consciousness achieved in the present century by the pooling of knowledge from every research study in the world. We cannot simplify all this by ignoring it or thinking we can escape from it, because a momentum of mental energy has gathered, of such power that to dam it up would end in disaster. Assumption of a false simplicity would leave a residue of uncommanded, seething mind untouched by formal, outward renunciation.

You may be wondering why I am emphasizing at length the complexity of the world, in a journal devoted to things of the spirit. I am attempting to clarify the situation which must be facing many of us who, whether

from our own choosing or from circumstances beyond our control; approach Sri Anandamayi Ma with our minds as yet still greatly confused by our environment in a world of complex business and intricate daily affairs wherein lies our source of livelihood. Many of us are not Indians but travellers from all parts of the world, conditioned very differently to follow customs unknown in India and enmeshed, perplexed, driven to despair by the apparent hopelessness of a strife-torn world. Around us our colleagues, friends, families, bear the marks of a spirit mutilated by contemporary events.

Yet, when we come face to face with the momentous simplicity of Sri Anandamayi Ma the power of such calm can instantly dissolve inner turbulence. Whenever I re-experience this encounter I am awe-struck that Her impeccable simplicity is yet so strong, Her bearing containing and emanating such grandeur as to annihilate the knotted mesh of discursive thought and release an energy that at once stills and clarifies my mind. I do not wish to suggest that any particularly violent conflict surges in me, but I know that, as I travel through many countries to picture with my camera the lives of their people, the drama of the world encroaches upon the comparative delicacy of my personal

inner life. How frail the human being involved in the bigness of political and social ferment really is ! Yet one feels so secure and rich within, as soon as one finds oneself again in this magnetic presence. Whenever I see Her I am reminded of two great artists — Rembrandt and Beethoven, who, as their vision of immortal things was stirred after many years of creative effort on a splendid, yet grandiose scale, were finally purged and attained an austere simplicity in their paintings and musical compositions which bore the mark of serenity. The accounts which I have read of Her life lead me to believe that Sri Anandamayi Ma has however never had conflict, struggle or climax, but has resided always in the grace of pure attainment. Besides a luminous Joy, Her appearance yet conveys the gravity of the challenge She presents to us — for She calls out in our hearts the urgent, fundamental need for true humility, and we become very, very honest about the feeble soul which we smother with an apologetic, pondering mind. Forgetful of the fact that in the mind we have the swiftest instrument with which to bring about a centralizing of meandering ideas, when we approach Sri Anandamayi Ma we recognize that She embodies every quality and level of genuine experience. We discover that, paradoxically, renunciation calls

not for the curtailment of our faculties but brings our whole being to bear upon the dynamic surge of our inner momentum — which is one-pointed, arrow-like, desirous of attaining Joy. How much we know about pleasure, how little about Joy !

Many people have commented upon the feeling, not only of profound contentment which they have felt in the presence of Sri Anandamayi Ma, but of a sense of boundless richness and strength within themselves. She has this unique power of revealing to each in his own way the vitality of his psyche. This is no arm-chair comfort; for She brings this about by Her own example of beautiful simplicity and Her way of exhorting us to do work of the simplest kind, in itself no shirking of hardship, and the assumption of mature responsibility. I feel that this workaday background is of some considerable significance wherein lie the fundamentals of spiritual effort, because in recent years many people in Europe and America have sought comforting creeds in Asia rather from a wish to evade their own psychic problems, than from an integral desire to face crucial and elementary steps in their Sadhana. The medium of routine, even of routine religion has provided them with the fatal excuse of decking out their own weary souls in exotic trappings. It is

probably the gigantic scale of world problems and the apparent ineffectuality of the individual which has caused this kind of panic and made many feel an inner poverty. The way to avoid this tendency to "assume borrowed feathers" is surely to become aware of the riches of our own true Selves. The absolute simplicity of Sri Anandamayi Ma presents an urgent challenge to the most crucial personal problems that we are most liable to shirk. There is scarcely any doubt that many who depart from India after brief contact with its mystical tradition are the dupes of their own attempt to adopt anything exotic rather than face themselves. I feel that with Her profound compassion and with Her practical and individual guidance Sri Anandamayi Ma helps one to avoid these pitfalls.

There is a terrible crisis of religion in the West, because we have failed to maintain its vitality in the face of modern civilization. As a result we feel impoverished and empty within, for the signs, symbols and wonders that inspired our forefathers have mysteriously lost their potency, and we must plot new maps for new territory conquered by the mind. We have lost the power to abide in the solitude of the soul and to find contentment at the sources of life, for this instinct has been smothered or disturbed by the

stress of life today. There is no meditation now in the West such as could create Chartres Cathedral in the 13th Century. Through tragedy, heroic struggle and "quiet desperation" Western man may indeed still grow to his full stature, and by a miracle many do achieve serenity. Sheer effort has led Western man away from the profound riches of the soul and from the noblest in his traditions to a condition of separateness, of individual isolation. Significantly enough the most universal sign of a need for religion and an attempt at least to supply a substitute is maintained by the much increased awareness in the West of great religious works of art. The need is there but a way to find serenity is very sorely needed.

No corner of the modern world has felt the absence of this great crisis,

but India is fortunate in that Sri Anandamayi Ma lives there, offering welcome and abiding contentment to whomsoever feels an inner need for Her help. To those for whom the world is an almost ineradicable distraction that has split man in two and divided him from himself, by Her simplicity and compassion She presents the supreme challenge. She guides, She inspires, She helps one to cease from shirking one's true responsibilities; above all She leads us to fundamentals, to sincere humility without which there is no beginning. For those who are afraid of life, afraid of God, afraid of religion, She guides them by the supremely beautiful example of Her own pervasive Joy. She begins by offering happiness but She also promises man his birthright—realization of Self.

DIARY LEAVES

By

Atmananda

(8)

In summer 1947 Mataji was spending several weeks in Her Ashram at Kishenpur near Dehradun. Sri Hari-babaji Maharaj with his party and many of Mataji's devotees had gathered. In June a young couple arrived with their son Ramlal, aged about three. They had been to Har-dwar and the child had caught fever there. It looked like a slight indis-position at first, but the fever kept on rising and after a few days typhoid was diagnosed. It was a serious case. Complications soon caused great anxiety to his parents. The patient developed double pneumonia and per- foration of the intestines and lay unconscious for days. The doctors had given up all hope of his recovery and the child's mother grew frantic. Very nearly out of her senses she fell at Mataji's feet, sobbing loudly and beseeching Her to save the life of her only son. Mataji used to go to the sickroom several times daily and give minute instructions as to the nursing of the child. His chest had to be padded with cottonwool and She Herself supervised the making of the padding. It was arranged that

small groups of us should take turns in singing kirtan at regular intervals just outside of the sick-room. Special japa and puja was performed.

On the 14th day Ramlal's condition seemed extremely critical. Late at night Mataji called Sri Gurupriya Devi (Didi) and asked her to sit by Ramlal's bed from 1-45 a. m. till 2-15 a. m. and do japa while catching hold of his body. "Mind you, do not fall asleep", She said, "keep up your concentration without a break. Don't forget to put plenty of cold water on your eyes." Didi did as she was told. When she left the patient's room Ramlal's temperature had come down to 101° for the first time after several days of unabating high fever. Mataji asked Didi whether she had felt any- thing special while sitting by Ramlal. "There was a sense of great fear", Didi replied. "If you had not touched Ramlal's body during that time, he would have felt the fear," Mataji said. Then She related the following: ' This night was the most crucial one of the illness. I saw the apparitions of two men. One was sitting just outside of the garden gate. He

seemed to wait for someone whom he was to take with him. The other figure was standing in the Ashram compound near the window of the sick-room. He was looking at Ramlal and making a gesture as if to say: "At 2 a. m. everything will be over." I then had the *Kheyal* to ask Didi to perform *japa* while holding Ramlal's body. To the old man at the gate I said: "Go somewhere else!" and he went."

Thereafter Ramlal gradually recovered. He is now a big school boy, hale and hearty.

* * *

It was a rainy day in August 1949. At that time I was staying at a distance of nearly 5 miles from the Ashram. Nevertheless whenever Mataji was at Banaras I used to go to the Ashram every evening almost without exception. But on that muddy day I had given up all hope of getting to Mataji. It had poured with rain for many hours and the sky was still overcast with heavy black clouds. To venture out would have meant wading through mud and rain-puddles for half a mile before I could get a conveyance, if at all a rikshaw-man could be persuaded to take me to such a distance; and even then there was every probability of arriving at the Ashram drenched to the skin

and splashed with mud. But lo and behold — a visitor who lived in the Ashram lane turned up in her car. "Mataji is very gracious", I thought, "when I have no other chance to get to Her a car comes along". Without difficulty I got a lift. When we passed through the chowk the owner of the car stopped to make purchases. I availed myself of this opportunity to buy a garland. There was only one flower-seller to be seen and what he had was not at all to my taste, but in spite of this something made me buy a garland.

At the Ashram I found Mataji seated in Her usual place in the hall with only a few ashramites sitting on either side of Her. No one had ventured out into the pouring rain. As a rule Mataji receives lots of garlands but on this occasion no one had brought even a single flower. I felt very apologetic because of my shabby garland. However I offered it and was going to sit down in my usual place when Mataji made signs to me to get out of the way. Surprised I turned round; exactly opposite to Mataji at the West end of the hall I saw an emaciated old lady lying on her bedding that had been spread on the floor. She was very ill and had shifted to the Ashram a few weeks ago, as she wished to die in Mataji's presence and in sight of the Ganges.

It was obvious that her last hour had come. Her son was sitting close by her chanting holy texts while her daughter was attending to her. The dying woman had her rosary in her hand. She was hardly breathing but evidently fully conscious. Her blouse had been loosened and one could see every one of her protruding ribs, in fact she already looked more like a skeleton than like a living person. Mataji was watching her intently. Off and on she would say with a loud voice: "Mother, are you doing *Japa*?" The old lady could respond only by almost imperceptible gestures. Her daughter confirmed: Yes, she was doing *Japa* and listening to her son's chanting. Mataji suggested sprinkling some Ganges water on her chest and a few drops of the sacred liquid were instilled into her mouth with the help of a piece of cottonwool, since she was too weak to drink. Not for a moment did Mataji let her eyes off her. I was reminded of the sight of an eagle watching its prey from the air, ready to swoop down on it at the right moment. Suddenly Mataji left her seat and walked straight to the dying woman. With great motherly affection she gazed at her, placed the garland on her chest and then with a swift and determined gesture passed both her hands over the shrivelled

body from head to foot. The end had come. It was an unforgettable, a most impressive moment. I thought to myself: "Surely this is not death, this is liberation."

"Call the girls to sing *Kirtan*!" said Mataji. The Brahmacharinis of the Kanyapith came and sang, some of them children of nine or ten. What a beautiful idea it is to make children face death in this atmosphere of peace and serenity! Everyone felt moved, but there was no weeping, no lamenting, no regret; on the contrary there was a hush, a sense of quiet, pervading joy, of fulfilment. "Death means changing one's clothes," one can often hear Mataji say.

The *Kirtan* continued for a little while, then the body was taken down to the ghat. Some Ganges-water was poured over the spot where the old lady had breathed her last and an oil-lamp placed there. Everyone left the hall. Fortunate is he who ends his days in this manner.

Some time ago I read that when Sri Ramana Maharshi's mother was about to die, He placed His hands on her head and heart. When afterwards someone referred to her passing away, He corrected: "Not passed away, absorbed."

* * *

An animated discussion was going on, one argument following another, without its leading to any feasible solution. Someone who was getting tired of this endless controversy said : "Mataji, there is a saying that when a lemon is squeezed too much it becomes bitter."

Mataji : When fire is raked up it burns brighter. Similarly by discussing religion and philosophy one's interest in these subjects grows. Of course it is also true that a lemon becomes bitter if squeezed too much. But when an earnest seeker discusses with the sincere desire to find Truth, his eyes will be opened. Some people's confusion is cleared up by reasoning, while others become only more perplexed by discussing. Every one has his own way. When one's problems are made more acute one feels disturbed and thereby one's Search will be intensified. Before thread can be spun and woven into cloth the pod in which the cotton was enclosed has first to be broken and entirely destroyed. To prepare oneself really means to uproot completely the sense of 'I.' So long as a trace of it is left He cannot shine forth, the revelation of Truth cannot dawn.

* * *

The following question was asked :
"Must the fruits of one's actions always be reaped ?

Mataji : Certainly.

The Questioner : The following is being told about Maudagalāyan, one of the beloved disciples of the Lord Buddha. One day when Maudagalāyan was deeply absorbed in meditation, some dacoits came and belaboured him with sticks until he was mutilated and died. When asked why one of his beloved disciples should be subjected to such a dreadful fate, the Lord Buddha explained that in a previous birth Maudagalāyan, misled by the wicked advice of his wife, had lured his parents into the jungle and dealt with them in very much the same way as the dacoits had with him.

My question is, although Maudagalāyan no doubt did incur deadly sin by his despicable action in a former life, could not the fruits of his strenuous *sadhana* counteract the evil results ? Is it not possible to neutralize vicious karma by deep devotion to God and by *sadhana* ?

Mataji : So long as Truth has not been realized one is bound to reap the fruits of each action. Since every effect is the cause of a new effect, as long as one moves in the circle of action and its fruit one can go on indefinitely, there is no end to it. But when you reach the state where you become a mere tool in His

hand and feel that He is the actor, then you become free from moral responsibility. In that state fire cannot burn you, nor water drown you. But if you only *think* you are His instrument without this actually being the case, fire will burn you and water drown you : then to leap into fire or water amounts to suicide.

* * *

Mataji sometimes tells the following story which illustrates that destiny cannot be avoided :

"There was a very learned *Brahmana*. One day a poisonous snake entered his house and he saw it sting his wife, son and daughter, one after another, without being able to prevent this. All three succumbed to the bite. In his grief and bewilderment he followed the snake which speedily left his house. After walking a short distance he saw the reptile being suddenly transformed into a buffalo that began to fight with another buffalo and killed it. No sooner was this done than the buffalo changed into a lovely young girl. Two young men come along, each claiming her for himself. They came to blows, one was wounded, the other died and the girl went away. The *Brahman*, utterly mystified, followed the girl and soon overtook her. "Who are you ?" he asked. "First you were

a snake, then a buffalo and now you are a young woman. You must explain to me who you are." After much pleading the girl at last said : "I am Destiny." "If that is so you will have to tell me how I shall die." "Your death will be in water." With these words she disappeared.

Having lost his wife and children the *Brahmana* decided to leave his home and settle somewhere in the hills, far away from a water course, in order to avoid death by drowning. As he wandered along he came to the house of a rich man, who soon found out how learned he was and on hearing that he was homeless, asked him to remain in his house and become the teacher of his only son. The *Brahmana* agreed and soon became as one of the rich man's family. His pupil grew up, got married and had a son, who became very attached to the old *Brahmana*.

It so happened that on a certain occasion the whole family prepared to go to Banaras to bathe in the Ganges on a specially auspicious day. The *Brahmana* was invited to join them but declined. The little boy who was so fond of him clung to his neck and begged him again and again to accompany them and finally refused to go without him. His grandfather also tried to persuade the *Brahmana*,

who remained adamant, yet when pressed very hard finally disclosed his reasons for avoiding to bathe in a river. "Oh, if this is all," exclaimed his host, "you need not feel anxious in the least. For you and the child I shall have a special bathing place constructed, enclosed by a strong fence. You may be quite sure there will be no danger at all." At long last the Brahmana conceded. His host kept his word, but when the Brahmana went to bathe with the child, the little boy put his arms round him and suddenly changed into a crocodile: "Don't you recognize me? I am Destiny," he said, broke the fence and carried him away into the open river. Destiny will have its way."

* * *

Some time ago a lady from Switzerland wrote a letter to Mataji. Here are her questions and Mataji's replies.

Question : Since the religious conception is the highest, the only goal in life, what becomes of those who do not attain to it in their life time ?

Mataji : Those who do not attain to the Goal of human existence, have to continue in the realm of death, which is the ceaseless round of birth and rebirth.

Question : Since our only reason for living is to return to that from which we came, why is there this life, why were we separated from this Being ?

Mataji : Everything is His Will. He is absolutely free, He is His own law. This coming and going is His very nature, His dispensation. He Himself plays with Himself, everything is He and He alone.

Question : Will man ever destroy this world and himself ?

Mataji : Man has certainly not got the power to create, preserve or destroy. In Him, whose play all this is, all possibilities are contained. The destruction of one's own self virtually amounts to the destruction of the universe. Where this self is, there the world exists. Destruction is the very nature of that which is of the world and therefore perishable; it is ever destroyed, it is being destroyed now and it will be destroyed. But where He is and He alone, who is to destroy whom ? There the question of destruction cannot arise. Where is He, who is THAT SELF ? Find out ! The SELF is not subject to destruction. The ceaseless endeavour to know THAT SELF is man's bounden duty.

Question : Is there no love between mortals or must all love be first for God and then love for another being ?

Mataji : Between individuals true, unadulterated love or fondness is impossible. Where love or affection has grown perfect this question cannot arise, for in such a case who is the beloved ? God and God alone.

* * *

On December 15th, 1956, the day before *Mataji* left Banaras for Vin-dhyachal, a very aged gentleman who loves to discuss with *Mataji*, asked :

"How is it that so many people, old and young are attracted to you ?"

Mataji (laughing) : This child is so very small and does not belong to anyone in particular, so all come to her. It is also like this : one who owns nothing and nobody in the world finds that all are his own.

The old man : Now you say you belong to nobody, whereas usually you call everyone your father and mother.

Mataji : This also is true. All are my mothers and fathers and this is why they come to see their little daughter.

The old man : That is what you say. But we cannot look upon you as our little child.

Mataji : Well, then you come because you are so merciful, so compassionate ; you just take pity on this tiny child.

"No," vigorously contradicted the old gentleman, "certainly not, I am neither merciful nor compassionate. Under no circumstances will I accept this kind of explanation."

But *Mataji* cannot be cornered. "All right," She said, "look, is it not natural to come to one's own Self, does it require a reason or an explanation ? The most natural thing for everyone is to come to his own Self."

MATHI LILA

(February — April 1956)

In the last issue of Ananda Varta we had already reported that Mataji reached Banaras on Febr. 3rd from Delhi, only to leave for Vindhya-chal on the 5th. Professor Dr. M. Boss, one of the leading psychiatrists of Europe accompanied Her and had long discussions with Her daily until She left for Banaras on the 10th. A medical doctor from California and two English ladies motored to Vindhya-chal from Banaras in order to have private interviews with Mataji.

At Banaras Didi's birthday was celebrated by a day of Samyam Vrata with its full programme as well as the food restrictions pertaining to it. On February 16th, Vasant Panchami day, Saraswati Puja was performed in the new hall at the house opposite to the main Ashram building, which has been acquired and added to the Ashram some time ago. It was then in a rather dilapidated condition and has since been completely changed and rebuilt. The general kitchen and store rooms have now been shifted there. On that auspicious day, which is specially sacred to Saraswati (the goddess of learning and music), the

Ashram library which had formally been opened on the occasion of Saraswati Puja in 1952, was assigned a permanent room. It contains books in Sanskrit, Hindi, Bengali and English on religion, philosophy, yoga and allied subjects. Below the library an underground set of rooms has since been constructed and above it a large room with verandas on all four sides.

On March 25th morning a Sanskrit College for Girls was inaugurated in Mataji's presence in a large room above the new hall. Miss Padma Misra, Professor of Sanskrit at the Banaras Hindu University who has been teaching Sanskrit privately for the last several years in the Sri Anandamayi Kanyapith gave the first lesson to a number of young women connected with the Ashram, some of them post graduates in other subjects. Mataji Herself led the Kirtan singing "Satyam, Jnanam, Anantam, Brahman" as appropriate to the occasion.

Here one could observe Mataji taking keen interest in the education of women, seeming to encourage them to study Sanskrit and Philosophy.

There is hardly a constructive activity in which at some time or other we do not see Mataji take active interest, yet She remains aloof and cannot be identified with anything in particular. At one moment She seems immersed in one thing and the next moment we find Her doing or saying something else which may to us express the contrary or else She appears far removed from it and remote. She is indeed quite unfathomable and not to be understood by the mind and if we judge Her by our standards we shall surely be wrong.

On March 1st Mataji went to Vindhyaachal returning to Banaras on the 2nd. On the night of March 4th She left for Vrindaban where She remained over Shivaratri and Holi.

When after touring South India about three years ago Mataji went to Dwarka and visited Prabhash, a place specially connected with the life of Sri Krishna. She found a Shiva Linga there. Soon after three Shiva Lingas that had been lying under the bel tree near the entrance of the Banaras Ashram were installed in a small house at the gate of the then new Vrindaban Ashram. We guess that there must be a connection between Mataji's visit to Prabhash and the installation of the three Shiva

Lingas at Vrindaban, although we cannot say what exactly is the nature of it. The three Shiva Lingas all hail from the banks of the holy river Narmada in Gujerat, of which it is said that it is as sacred as the Ganges and that every stone on its banks is a Shiva Linga.

Once many years ago before the Bhimpura Ashram had come into existence, when Mataji stayed at Vyas, (a place on the banks of the Narmada where the sage Vyas is supposed to have lived for a time), a Dandi Swami offered Her a Shiva Linga which was subsequently brought to Banaras. It was one of the Lingas later installed at Vrindaban. On the occasion of the Shivaratri festival this year two more Lingas were added, donated by two bhaktas in memory of their deceased fathers. All the five Shiva Lingas were then installed in the new Shiva temple in the Ashram grounds, which had only just been completed. The consecration of the temple took place on the morning of Shivaratri, on March 10th in the presence of many Mahatmas and Bhaktas who had gathered from far and near, and throughout the following night Shiva Puja was performed as usual by a large number of men and women sitting in circles round Shiva Linga in the space between the Sri Gauranga and Shiva temples, in the Shiva temple

itself and outside. It was a most solemn occasion. We have for the last two or three years described in detail similar celebrations at Banaras.*

On March 25th Holi was observed in the usual manner with all its fun and frolics.**

On March 28th Mataji left for Hoshiarpur. Last winter before he fell ill, Sri Haribabaji Maharaj had started building at Hoshiarpur a Satsang Bhawan, a spacious hall to be dedicated to religious gatherings only. Adjoining to it he had a set of rooms constructed specially for Mataji's use. The rooms were just ready when Mataji arrived. As they invariably do, Sri Haribabaji's people gave Mataji a tremendous and spectacular reception. These receptions are something unique, quite indescribable, something that one must have seen to be able to imagine it.

We feel that we must here say a word of praise about the enthusiasm and religious fervour of the Punjabis, especially the women, who attended the Satsang with surprising devotion and regularity, sitting quietly for many hours and keeping excellent discipline, even when they came in huge crowds.

On April 8th Mataji proceeded to Jullundur, from there by car to

Chandigarh and on the 9th evening to Vrindaban. On the 11th She was at Aligarh from where She entrained on the 12th morning, reaching Banaras the same night.

On April 13th, *Chaitra Sankranti*, the last day of the Bengali year, the anniversary of Didima's taking Sannyasa was for the first time solemnly celebrated in the Banaras Ashram by a full programme of Arati, Kirtan, the reading of Scriptures etc. and at night Swami Shashwatananda gave an inspiring talk about Her life and character. 'Didima', as Mataji's mother is lovingly called by all the thousands of Mataji's children, took Sannyasa at Hardwar soon after her husband passed away about 18 years ago. Sri Mangalananda Giri, the Guru of the late Swami Akhandananda, Sri Gurupriya Devi's father, gave her Sannyasa and her name since then has been Swami Muktananda Giri.

Utterly simple, quiet and unassuming she has always been of an extraordinary saintliness. Throughout her life she never felt angry or quarrelled with anyone. Never has she spoken ill of others, never told a lie. Little is known about her childhood, but it is a fact that she was an ideal wife and mother. Her life has

* See Ananda Varta, Vol. II / 1, p. 100 and Vol. III / 1, p. 36.

** See Ananda Varta, Vol. I / 3, p. 134 and Vol. III / 1, p. 38.

by no means been an easy one. Her husband, a saintly person like herself, was given to much meditation and at times went away for shorter or longer spells to live the life of a Sadhu, so that the task of looking after house and family had often to be faced by her alone. She had to manage on a bare minimum, but this did not embitter her in the least, she accepted her lot without questioning, never losing faith in Providence.

From the beginning she felt that Mataji was not an ordinary child, but this did not make her proud in the least. At Mataji's birth there was no labour, nor did Mataji cry as babies do first thing when they are born, nor did she ever cry during Her childhood except once when She saw Her mother mourn the loss of her three little brothers—and even then She only cried to divert Her mother's attention so as to be able to console her.

One of Didima's outstanding qualities is her intrinsic kindness and compassion. She concerns herself with the weal and woe of everyone who comes within her orb and is ever kind and helpful even to those who are considered bad by others and find no sympathy elsewhere.

After taking Sannyasa she showed a spirit of true renunciation and, revered and loved by all, she later

began to give Mantra Diksha, since Mataji Herself does not give Diksha. Thus the gentle, unassuming old lady is now the Guru of a large number of disciples. who one and all look up to her, not only because she is Mataji's mother, but for her own outstanding qualities; for she lives the ideals that she professes and asks them to follow. She is a true Guru, without a trace of a feeling of superiority towards anyone, leading a life of complete dedication to the Divine. Few know that there is also an artistic side to Didima. Although she has had nothing more than a village education, she has composed a great many religious songs and poems.

* * * *

From April 19th to 22nd Vasanti Puja, which is the Durga Puja of the spring season, was celebrated. It is an annual function of the Banaras Ashram, which this time gained special impetus by Mataji's presence. On this festive occasion the inauguration of a permanent set of rooms took place that has at last been built for the *Anandamayi Karuna* and the "Shishu Kalyan", charitable institutions related to the Ashram. Both were started in 1952 due to the initiative and the spirit of untiring service of Dr. Gopal Das Gupta and have ever since been of active help and assistance to the poor. But

no permanent place had been allotted to them so far. The '*Anandamayi Karuna*' is a homoeopathic dispensary which gives free medical advice and medicine to everyone. A competent homoeopathic doctor assisted by a compounder are in attendance twice daily for several hours and a very large number of patients are taking advantage of the institution. We hope to be able to add a small hospital to the dispensary. The '*Shishu Kalyan*', distributes free goat's milk to some very young children of the destitute. For this purpose some four years ago a small goat farm was started on a plot of land near Sankat Mochana.

On conclusion of the Vasanti Puja Mother very graciously granted the prayer of Her devotees at Banaras to stay on for the forthcoming 60th birthday anniversary commencing from May 2 and lasting till May 28. We have already mentioned in our earlier issue about the decision to celebrate this happy occasion in a befitting manner. It is indeed a piece of singular good fortune for us that we have got this rare opportunity in our lives to witness and participate in a unique function

like this. As has been said "the descent of the Divine Mother on earth, a descent of the timeless in time, marks in itself an important event but the completion of the cycle of the first sixty years of Her holy life is an event of even greater spiritual significance in the history of man". In order that all Mother's Bhaktas and devotees in India and abroad may have the fullest opportunity to avail themselves of this glorious occasion and participate in the various functions, the Sangha has set up a new work of centres in all parts of the country functioning in close co-operation with and under the supervision of the main centre and head office of the Sangha at Banaras. This attempt at organized work, it may be added, on an all-India and even wider basis is the first venture of its kind undertaken by the Sangha. The work in preparation for the forthcoming Jayanti Celebration has so far fulfilled our expectations and this encourages us to hope that, with Mother's blessings, the various actual functions scheduled for the celebrations will be crowned with success and thereby become a harbinger of incalculable good for all humanity.

A Message from
MAHAMAHOPADHYAYA SRI GOPINATH KAVIRAJ
ON THE OCCASION OF THE SIXTIETH JAYANTI CELEBRATIONS
OF
SRI SRI MA ANANDAMAYI

The Sixtieth Birthday Anniversary and the Sixty-First Birth Day Celebrations of Sri Sri Ma Anandamayi fall together and will take place at Banaras in May 1956, commencing from the 2nd day of the month and continuing up to the 27th. The descent of the Divine Mother on earth, a descent of the timeless in time, marks in itself an important event, but the completion of the cycle of the first sixty years of Her holy life is an event of even greater spiritual significance in the history of man. The international horizon is overcast with ominous clouds and the moment is really fraught with immense possibilities for the future. Mother's Bhaktas are taking the lead in gathering together from different parts of the country under the banner of the Anandamayee Sangha at holy Banaras and organizing themselves in a befitting manner to celebrate this most happy occasion by participating in its varied functions. It should be our earnest endeavour to resolve to dedicate ourselves as far as we can to Her beneficent will as the only tribute worthy of the occasion we can lay at Her feet and to propitiate Her to reveal to us Her abounding Grace by purifying and elevating the human mind and by showering upon it on transformation Her choicest blessing.