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Price ; Rs. 1/8/-

Annual subscription ( for four issues ) India Rs. 4/- Foreign Rs. 5/-

Published by—Brahmachary Kamal Bhattacharjee  
for Shree Shree Anandamayee Sangh, Banaras.

Printed by—Shri B. Dutt. at the Eureka Printing Works Private Ltd., Banaras



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.)

78

On the occasion of the death of a devotee's wife, Mataji said :

“Write to him : It will certainly not do for him to be utterly broken-hearted. At this time who is to take care of his sons and daughters? In all things he will now have to be both mother and father to his children. Like a hero, courageous, steady and serene he must attend to every duty as it comes up and have only fortitude, patience and more fortitude. What has befallen him lies in the nature of this world. The Self can never perish. In all beings dwells He as the breath of life, as the Self. The body only is subject to change; body means that which slips away, which does not remain for ever.\* That his mind will be unable to realize this at the moment is of course true, for it is characteristic of the mind to wail and lament, to reel in agony. Nevertheless he will have to take himself in hand and master the situation. What other remedy is there ?

79.

On learning of the death of a bhakta's mother, Mataji said :

Write to my friend : † The fortunate, the blessed one ‡ has ascended to the abode of peace leaving behind her husband, her sons and daughters. To weep and mourn the loss of her body is not right, although it is natural

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\*A play upon words : 'body' in Bengali is 'shori' and the verb 'shora' to go away, to move away.

† Mataji calls all children and unmarried people Her friends.

‡ According to Hindu tradition it is most auspicious for a woman to die while her husband and all her children are alive.

that tears should flow. You will have to resort to fortitude. Just as parents are always eager to make the happiness and peace of their children their own, it is equally the duty of children to adopt a similar attitude with regard to their parents. Those who have not attained to the final Goal but are still struggling on the way and live in this world identifying themselves with the body, cause themselves much pain by becoming agitated and crying out in anguish ; it is indeed deep suffering. Those who have passed away have no means of expressing it, yet this anguish troubles them. Nobody wishes to cause distress to his loved-ones. Recall to mind : Your mother is as your self, the one who bore you—her peace should be your peace. What has happened is God's dispensation and all men are His very own. Where and how, on what path and in what state, He keeps anyone depends on the will of the Almighty.

Do not let your father notice that you are depressed. Serve everyone in a beautiful and graceful manner. Feel that God has entrusted you with the service of the family. Do not allow your father to become gloomy. To see the shadow of grief on the faces of his children will intensify his unhappiness greatly ; mindful of this, be careful to remain composed in your father's presence.

80.

On hearing the news of someone's illness, Mataji had the following communicated to the sufferer :

Depend on Him absolutely. In whatever circumstances you may find yourself sustain the remembrance of Him only. Let this be your prayer : "Lord, Thou hast been pleased to come to me in the form of sickness. Grant me the strength to bear it, gird me with patience, and give me the understanding that it is Thou who art dwelling with me in this guise !"

81.

If you do not allow your thoughts to stray from His Lotus-feet there is hope of your being saved from all manner of temptations. Man's duty is to awaken to true humanity and to cast aside his animal propensities ; to choose what is excellent and to relinquish the merely pleasurable. Let your mind be like a beautiful flower that may be offered to the Lord in worship. In very truth man's sole duty is the search after Self-realization. With but the One Supreme Friend, you my friend, must try to avoid the ties of worldly friendship.

82.

Those who prompted by a deep yearning for the vision of the Supreme Being tread this long and difficult path can do so only by His Grace. To take refuge in patience is the only acceptable attitude of mind. One must never lose hope. Wherever you may be placed and under whatever circumstances, let your thinking be centred in Him and in Him alone.

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## MATAJI'S AMARA VANI

( 18 )\*

*Question :* When the mind is immersed in *Samadhi*† does it have any experiences of the supernatural or not? If so, does this imply that one has deviated from the object of one's meditation? And what is the real cause of this?

*Mataji :* *Samadhi* means *Samadhana* (=solution, completion).

*The Inquirer :* Solution involves a question, whereas *Samadhi* is a state in itself.

*Mataji :* This body does not use the language of the *Shastras*; it refers to ordinary things such as water, earth, air and so forth when it speaks. Those who have understanding are able to comprehend this kind of broken and incomplete language. *Samadhana* signifies the perfect resolution of form, formlessness, manifested being and non-being — of everything. The solution of a problem is one thing; yet there is another kind of resolution where the possibility of problems and their solutions cannot occur; this is called *Samadhi*.

*The Inquirer :* Quite so, thus there are two kinds of *Samadhi*, namely *Savikalpa* and *Nirvikalpa*.

*Mataji :* The first means to become merged into the one Cosmic Existence, and as for the second — there is no such thing even as 'existence'.

*The Inquirer :* No such thing as 'existence'? What then is it?

*Mataji :* So long as thoughts and ideas (*Sankalpa* and *Vikalpa*) persist not even *Savikalpa Samadhi* can occur. *Savikalpa Samadhi* signifies Cosmic Consciousness. But when there is no question at all of existence—when there is no possibility of differentiating 'what is' from 'what is not' — is it possible to express anything, however little? This is *Nirvikalpa Samadhi*. Where is there room for the supernatural here?

*The Inquirer :* Supernatural, in other words transcendental matters are not within the reach of ordinary intelligence, yet they can most certainly be grasped by the mind. If one accepts the mind as a fact, its own creations are themselves the subjects about which it thinks. There is of course something apart from the mind—*Chit* (=consciousness), which is

\* The Bengali original appeared in Vol. IV, No. 2, p. 111.

† Divine ecstasy. \*

said to be complete in itself. Other than this Consciousness that which constitutes the mainstay of the mind is called the supernatural.

*Mataji* : Who perceives the supernatural ?

*The Inquirer* : The mind.

*Mataji* : So then, if there is no mind the supernatural cannot be perceived. Consequently how can visions be seen in *Nirvikalpa Samadhi* ?

*The Inquirer* : My reason tells me that in both types of *Samadhi* the mind must be present. According to the Shastras in *Nirvikalpa Samadhi* the mind is no more. Of course the gross mind does not persist, yet it will have to be admitted that the subtle mind remains in a state of latency. Otherwise how could the experience be known afterwards ? In other words : is it or is it not remembered when it is over ? If it is, then it will no doubt have to be conceded that the subtle mind exists still.

*Mataji* : Some say that a tiny particle of the mind remains, for if it did not, how could there be the manifestation of the body ? But this body declares also this : If by the fire of illumination everything can be consumed should not this tiny fragment of the mind be burnt up as well ? When spiritual experience occurs, the mind must of course exist ; the supernatural is of the mind.

*The Inquirer* : If that small portion of the mind ceases to exist, how can there still be a body ? In which condition does the last trace of the mind disappear ? While the *Prarabdha*† is still active or after it has been exhausted ?

*Mataji* : What is your opinion, Pitaji ! Of course, some maintain that in *Samadhi* the ego-mind does not exist. However this body says that if by Supreme Knowledge everything can be burnt up, should it not have the power to consume the *Prarabdha* as well ?

*The Inquirer* : If the *Prarabdha* has been effaced how can the body possibly persist ?

*Mataji* : Do you mean by this that so long as the body endures there must of necessity be some *Prarabdha* left over and therefore the mind must also have survived ? Well, yes, if you accept the body as a reality you will undoubtedly have to admit the existence of *Prarabdha* and, from your point of view, the existence of the mind too. "Body" means perpetual change, that which is ever moving away.\* But in the state where death may be said to be dead, can there still be any question of a body ?

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

\* A play upon words : "Body" in Bengali is "shorir" and "shora" means to move away.



*The Inquirer* : When one has visions of supernatural beings does it indicate that one has turned aside from the Supreme State or not ?

*Mataji* : When the Ultimate Reality has been attained there can be no question of the supernatural or of deviating or not deviating from Reality.

What is meant by *Videha-Mukti* (= liberation at the moment of death) ?

*The Inquirer* : Not to be obliged to assume another body after this one has been left is called "*Videha Mukti*."

*Mataji* : Very well ; is the body then an obstacle ? Consequently does assuming a physical form signify a downfall ?

*The Inquirer* : No, the fruit and purpose of *Nirvikalpa Samadhi* is to have Knowledge at one's command.

*Mataji* : *Samadhi* also may be called a state. Everything is possible according to the particular stage of a person's development. Everyone will assuredly gain the knowledge pertaining to the state he has reached.

*The Inquirer* : This being so it is obvious that experience of the supernatural indicates a deviation from one's object of meditation.

*Mataji* : When one's object of meditation has become revealed, that is to say, when there is the revelation of THAT in the form of one's object of meditation, how can one speak of deviating from it ?

*The Inquirer* : Has the experience of the supernatural not its root in desire ?

*Mataji* : That only of which the seed is sown becomes manifest ; otherwise how could it come into being ?

*The Inquirer* : Take the waves of a lake ; they do not constitute the nature of the water, they are created by the wind — how is it possible to become desireless ?

*Mataji* : So long as the seed has not been sterilized it is bound to germinate. Now then, what is your opinion, does the body survive or not when Supreme Knowledge supervenes ?

*The Inquirer* : I should think it would survive.

*Mataji* : Yes—as some say supported by the tiny portion of the mind that has been preserved ?

*The Inquirer* : Does a spiritual teacher instruct from the state of Knowledge (*Jnana*) or is he still in a state of ignorance (*Ajnana*) ?

*Mataji* : When the aim of the instruction is Self-realization it would certainly not be right to presume a state of ignorance.



*The Inquirer* : This is why I feel that the Karma cannot have been completely exhausted.

*Mataji* : Just as an electric fan continues to revolve for a little while after the current has been switched off.

*The Inquirer* : In this example the electric current has been cut off completely. Does this then imply that in a similar way ignorance has been entirely destroyed ?

*Mataji* : The connection is broken. What had already begun and is taking effect this is called *Prarabdha*.

*The Inquirer* :—If this be the case, can *Prarabdha* bear fruit or not ? I think that its destruction is not in keeping with the facts.

*Mataji* : Does the teaching of the Enlightened Sage (*Jnani*) refer to the Truth as it reveals Itself before his *Prarabdha* is exhausted or does it refer to the Truth beyond ?

*The Inquirer* : No, not to the Truth beyond. Instruction on pure Truth untouched by *Prarabdha* is given by an *Avatara*. \* The *Jnani's* teaching is limited by his *Prarabdha*.

*Mataji* : Where knowledge is Self-revealed, is its Self-effulgence dependant upon Karma ?

*The Inquirer* : There are two kinds of knowledge : *Swarupa Jnana* (=innate knowledge of the Self) and *Vritti Jnana* (=acquired mental knowledge). The second kind of knowledge which pertains to the *Jnani* enables him to reap the fruits of his *Prarabdha*.

*Mataji* : Do you mean to suggest that just as a child gradually increases his knowledge by continuous study, here also there is progressive accumulation of knowledge ? But this cannot be called the state of a *Jnani* !

*The Inquirer* : *Swarupa Jnana* (=Knowledge of the Self) is Self-revealed, whereas *Vritti Jnana* is knowledge of subjects. *Swarupa Jnana* does not make a *Jnani*, he who possesses *Vritti Jnana* is called a *Jnani*, for knowledge of the Self is common to all.

*Mataji* : Does 'Knowledge of the Self' mean that one is established in any particular state ?

*The Inquirer* : One is established in the Self.

*Mataji* : Quite right, Father, as you say, everyone without exception is rooted in Knowledge of the Self ; yes, indeed this is so.

*The Inquirer* : Nevertheless, not all are aware of this Knowledge. Those who have gained *Vritti Jnana* may alone be styled *Jnanis*, for they will be able to guide an aspirant in keeping with his mental make-up.

\* Divine Incarnation.

*Mataji* : Yes, but what has this to do with the state where the Self in its Glory stands ever Self-revealed ? He who by gradual development has acquired knowledge and been progressively enlightened, he, as you say, is established in *Vritti Jnana*.

Words, argument, language and the like are all of the mind. Another thing is this : where these words arise, [ referring to Her own words ] there language has no place. This body respects whatever anyone may say, because each person's point of view depends on the particular stairway by which he ascends. Whatever idea may be held — be it on a high or on a low level—it is all the same as far as this body is concerned. For this reason whether anyone is of the opinion that the body can or cannot exist without *Prarabha*, or advances a theory from whatever point of view, everything is correct on its own plane. Yet beyond words and all expression, where there is manifestation and non-manifestation, stability and non-stability, space and spacelessness — there nothing holds good. Even the essence of ordinary things cannot be spoken about, the essence of Transcendental Being is something far more remote. Then there is also what is known as 'merging'. But from that into which one is said to have merged, a yogi may be able to extract one again ; this also is a possibility mentioned by you people, is it not ? Yet in the state of which this body tells, there it is not so — and 'not so' does not express it either. By reasoning and discrimination one may arrive at the conclusion that a small portion of the mind remains so long as physical existence continues ; but this body speaks of a state where there is not even a possibility of a trace of the mind.

*The Inquirer* : Does the body then continue to exist or not ?

*Mataji* : In this particular state, if the body were an obstacle, this state could simply not be. In this condition the question whether the body is being retained or not cannot arise.

*The Inquirer* : Can there be inquiry and response in that state or not ?

*Mataji* : Yes, there can be—if the idea of the body is there. For those who think there are disciples and Gurus, for them there are questions and answers.

*The Inquirer* : But then to speak of Gurus, disciples and so forth is quite meaningless.

*Mataji* : The progress of the disciple continues up to where the position of a teacher is held. If he is in a state of ignorance and the question is

asked by one also in ignorance, how can there be even an expectation of a revelation of real Knowledge? Albeit a discussion that aims at elucidating Self-realization will no doubt be helpful and beneficial. Very well, Father, tell me, in the case of a preceptor who is a World-Teacher, is it not natural that there should be questions and answers with a view to the attainment of Self-realization? It is and will ever be so—surely? Is this an untruth? Something else has to be considered: Say, who replies to whom? It is merely the idea of the inquirer at his stage that questions are being put and replied to. Can you call him who gives answers an individual just because he responds? To whom does he reply? Who replies and what is the reply? Who is who in that state of Pure Being? The place of *Vritti Jnana* (subjective knowledge) is where Self-revelation is not. This is difficult to accept, while it is still a matter for acceptance or rejection. On the level where the question of acceptance and rejection cannot possibly arise, how can there be talk and conversation?

Pitaji, when you asked: "Tell me your experience," it would imply that the experiencer has still remained. This cannot be so here; furthermore the question of transmission of power by the Guru to the disciple is equally non-existent. If the body does not exist this question cannot be there either. Neither is there a body nor even the idea of a body. What is beyond even that cannot be put into words in any language. Whatever can be expressed in words or speech is a creation of the mind.

Pitaji as to the saying: "There is only one Brahman without a second"—in the Self there is no possibility at all of a 'second'. The notion of the 'two' has come about through the operating of reason. Just as you say: "Without feet He walks and without eyes He sees".

This body maintains that whatever anyone may say from the plane of reason, with the idea that the body exists, from the standpoint of the disciple, can be supported on the level of reasoning. For one's vision is according to the spectacles one uses. This body declares that whatever theory anyone may hold is based on reasoning which presupposes the existence of a residue of the mind and of *Prarabdha*. But where THAT stands revealed it is quite otherwise: there discriminating or speculating is impossible. Beyond reason, beyond points of view there is a state in which none of these things can stand. Pitaji, in very truth, in THAT there is no room for words.

language or discrimination of any kind or description. To say 'there is not' or 'there is' in order to give its expression—these also are merely words, words that float on the surface. \* This is why it is said that here words, language, utterances of any type have no place. This is the truth Pitaji, do you understand?

In the above discussion Mataji's replies do not respond, as it were, to the questions; in other words the questions point in one direction and the answers in a different.

*Mataji said:* You will not have got satisfactory replies to your queries. From what has been told you will have to take as much as you are able to assimilate.

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\*A play upon words : *Bhasha* means language and also ( spelt differently ) 'to float.'

# THE MANIFOLD ASPECTS OF SRI MA

By Vijayananda (Dr. Adolphe Weintrob.)

For those who want to observe the countenance of Sri Ma with an attitude of reverence and love, without forgetting that they are face to face with the Divine incarnate and not with a human person, this study can be of great benefit for their spiritual upliftment.

When I first came in contact with Sri Ma, I understood neither Hindi nor Bengali and my attention was naturally drawn towards facial expression and gestures. That is the reason why I take the liberty of insisting somewhat on this point.

Facial expression and gestures are a kind of language which comes from a deeper level than mere speech. Their meaning is more total, more direct. Most people are completely unaware of their facial expressions and gestures which follow the numerous mental waves. As regards Sri Ma each of Her gestures is a MUDRA and has the meaning and efficiency of a Mudra. Every change of Her countenance occurs in full awareness and has a

definite reason. Our activity, mental and physical, has as its cause, fear and desire etc., as its object, pleasure and severance from pain, and as a guide, circumstances of our Prarabdha Karma. There is, no doubt, always the imperishable ATMAN behind all our activities although covered by the veil of nescience. But the Divine Being knows neither fear nor desire; He is beyond pleasure and pain and His physical form has not been spun from the threads of Prarabdha Karma, His only motive, is an infinite love.

There is a normal play of the law of Karma; that is to say that, having performed an act, we shall automatically have to experience its fruition. There is, especially for those who have chosen the path of the Divine, Divine protection which restitutes to a certain extent for our errors and softens their detrimental effects. But the descent on earth of the Divine Power who manifests Himself through the physical form of Sri Sri Anandamayee is a miraculous event, APRA-

KRITA, a break with all natural laws. Even the immovable course of Prarabdha Karma can be changed by Her Grace.

I mentioned the "countenance" of Sri Ma; I should have said the "countenances", for they are innumerable. The Divine Power who expresses Himself through the physical form we call Sri Sri Anandamayee is completely beyond our understanding. The light of this imperishable sun reaches us through thick strata of clouds consisting in our conscious and subconscious mental creations, our SAMSKARAS, which are, as Sri Ma has frequently reiterated the fruit of innumerable births. The clouds appear sometimes white, sometimes red, sometimes grey, but the sun, from which they borrow their light, is ever what he is.

Similarly, Sri Ma appears to us according to our actual state of mind. Therefore, whatever I take the liberty to speak of will be only what it seemed to appear to me through the medium of my own mental creations and, consequently, personal and limited.

All who have had the good fortune to be for sometime in close proximity to Sri Ma have noticed how easily She is able to change the expression of Her countenance from moment to

moment, just as a magician might, at will, cause all kinds of personalities to appear on a screen. These changes occur, in my opinion, not by mere chance nor by caprice but have a definite reason of which the central motif is an infinite love. As a mother who watches over Her children, Sri Ma is constantly directing Her attention to Her audience, those who are present, as well as, those who are far from Her physical form, ready to come to their aid at the slightest difficulty, watching for the moment when it will be possible to impart through a fissure of the hard shell of their Ego, something of Her Light.

To each of us, Sri Ma appears under different semblances according to circumstances and the individual. But, for the most part, we do not realise this since we have the old habit of not "seeing" the thing but of superimposing a veil that we take from our memory.

Frequently, I would observe as She was speaking to someone how Her Features would change to the point of a striking resemblance to that person. She would identify Herself with him and, in this way, would help him to carry the burden of his pain, his sorrows. In other circumstances, She takes on the aspect which the devotee would like

to see in Her, Mother, friend, Guru etc.

On several occasions I have been stricken by the fact that Mother's countenance usually beaming with kindness and sweetness had become distorted in a strong grimace which sometimes lasted for a few seconds. The explanation of this fact is I deem the following :—

Sri Ma has on several occasions repeated that each disease has a Murti. That is to say, a personality with a face, human in appearance and sometimes even with the features of an animal. This view may seem strange to the mind trained according to science. But we must not forget that the science of the West studies and takes cognizance of only the manifest aspect of things, that means their empirically discernible exteriors. It does not admit of the subtle planes where lay the levers which move the visible world.

Sri Ma clearly sees the MURTI of the illness before or in the very moment when it tries to penetrate the subtle body, that is to say, long before the physical symptoms could appear. How many times, without our knowledge, She has protected us. Many times also, She has attracted the disease on Her physical body thereby absorbing the fruit of our KARMA.

Once it occurred in Calcutta that I accompanied Sri Ma in a private dwelling which was awaiting inauguration; Mother had spent the night in the house and we all had gone in the early morning to join Her.

As soon I arrived I felt the first symptoms of a nephretic colic. This disease, although devoid of any real danger, produces one of the most acute physical pains. I tried first to hide my pain and asked my companions not to disturb Mother. But my appearance must have been quite alarming, for someone went to call Her. As She came out of Her room, I was crawling in pain and had not the strength to stand up. I looked upwards at Mother. At that moment, Her appearance strangely impressed me. Her normal features are fine and delicate, full of sweetness and loving kindness. This day She looked bigger and broader than usual through the shoulders. Her face was large and round and had a heavy, stern expression. The first idea that flashed in my mind was that of Goddess Kali in Her terrible aspect. But I did not feel any fear for I know that in whatever aspect Mother may appear it is always that of Divine Love. Later, I understood that She was seeing the MURTI of the disease and identifying HERSELF, as it were, with it. She sat down on a chair and remained



until the end of the crisis, approximately one hour. I noticed as the pain was decreasing how Her features were slowly changing, becoming softer and, finally, beaming with an infinite sweetness.

I frequently have been amazed to see how Mother seems, apparently, to take great interest in the performance of the PUJA of religious festivals, such as DURGA PUJA, JANMASHYAMI, SHIV-RATRI etc.

It is the same Divine Who is worshipped in different forms by those who seek Him in His manifest aspect, as is THAT, sought by those desirous of the direct realisation of the Absolute. Mother compares the two aspects to ice and water.

The performance of a PUJA is, no doubt, mere play for Her but a Divine play which has, as everything She appears to do, deep resonances and a meaning of which only a fractional part appears to us. The fruit of a PUJA, when it has been performed according to all the rites is the descent, in a certain way, of the aspect of the Divine symbolised by the VIGRAHA. This communion with one aspect of the Divine can be a considerable aid to spiritual progress for those who are able to open themselves to it.

That is why, I think, Sri Ma gives so much stress to the details of the

PUJA so that those who take a part in it may derive maximum spiritual benefit.

Moreover, sometimes Her features, Her entire appearance and behaviour modify themselves in such a manner that it becomes obvious that She has identified Herself with the worshipped MURTI. And it is not mere play, for at the same moment the communion is established.

This year, JANAMASHYAMI festival, Birthday of Lord Krishna, was held in Banaras in the presence of Sri Ma. The Murti which was chosen for the worship, was that of GOPAL, Lord Krishna as a small child, taken for that occasion out of the little MANDIR near that of ANNAPURNA. The Puja was performed with all the prescribed details and care to the VIGRAHA which was bathed and weighed in five different ingredients, i.e., his equivalent weight in silver, in cloth, etc. Generally on such occasions, Mother sits quietly on Her ASAN and gives orders when necessary without moving from Her place. But that evening She was standing or moving here and there, looking very busy, directing all the details of the SEVA of GOPAL with all the care and attention that a Mother would have taken for Her own child; from the beginning, I was impressed by

the expression of Her countenance. It was that of a young Mother towards her baby. The idea that She could have been YASODA MA, the mother of Gopal, came to mind.

She seemed to me to represent a particular aspect of maternal love, that of the mother to whom no kind of work can be discouraging when it is for the sake of her child's welfare, the mother whose love does not see trivialities or ugliness.

It is in this way that Her all mighty love guides us, disregarding our weaknesses, our trivialities.

In 1955, GURUPURNIMA festival was held at SOLAN. We were all sitting on the long verandah of the Ashram. We had the good fortune of Mother's presence. She was sitting almost entirely without movement for a long time before us. The expression of Her face impressed me very much. Her features were almost masculine. The majesty of Her expression, full of serenity and compassion, gave me the impression that I was face to face with the Divine Guru Himself.

In 1951, I witnessed for the first time JANMASHTAMI festival held

in Banaras in the presence of Sri Ma. I had arrived in India only a few months previously. During the night, Mother was dressed up as Lord Krishna. She was sitting in a small room above the KANYAPEETH building and we all had received permission to come for HER DARSHAN. At that time, I was a newcomer knowing little only about the customs of India and I thought that it was unbecoming to disguise Mother in such a way. So, I went to see Her with some slight irritation of mind. But on entering the room, I stopped in amazement when I beheld Her and nearly forgot to make PRANAM. Then I understood that there was no question of disguise. Her face, though one would still recognise it, was completely changed. A divine beauty, a supernatural calm and sweetness was emanating from Her. She was really identified with Sri KRISHNA HIMSELF.

Many things more might be written on this subject. But let the reader discern for himself with eyes, heart and intellect open wide. His benefit will be much greater than the mere reading of these few lines.

# YOGA

By

Swami Sivananda

Yoga is the method by which the finite self or the individual soul is united with the Infinite Self or the Supreme Soul. Yajnavalkya defines Yoga as "The conjunction of the individual soul and the supreme Soul is called Yoga."

The aim of Yoga is to free man from the thralldom of matter and make him realise his absolute independence. Yoga prepares him for the beatific vision.

Yoga deals in details with the process of restraining the waves of the mind and attaining the super-conscious state in which the seeds of re-birth are fried *in toto*. The Yogi attains perfection or independence.

Lust for power, material greed, sensual excitement, selfishness, passion for wealth, lower appetites have drawn man from his true life in spirit into the materialistic life. He can again regain his lost Divine glory if he practises in right earnest the principles of Yoga. Yoga transmutes animal nature into divine nature and raises him to the pinnacle of Divine glory and splendour.

The practice of Yoga will help you to control the emotions and passions and will give you the power to resist temptation and to remove the disturbing elements from the mind. It will enable you to keep a balanced mind always and will remove fatigue. It will confer on you serenity, calmness, tranquility, quiet and wonderful concentration. It will enable you to hold communion with the Lord and thus attain the summum bonum of existence.

You can develop many physical, mental and supernatural powers by Yogic discipline and restraint of mental modifications. The physical body and the mind should be brought under perfect control by Yogic exercises, such as self-restraint, spiritual discipline, pose, restraint of breath, purity, concentration and meditation. By these practices you will be free from restlessness of the body and mind.

Practise self-restraint. Develop the noble qualities of the head and heart. Arrest the vagaries of the mind. Collect the dissipated rays of the mind. Practise concentration regularly. All

the latent powers will soon manifest. You can see without the physical ears. You can directly see and hear through the mind itself.

The path of Yoga is an inner path whose gate is your heart. You must have courage, perseverance, patience, endurance, real burning aspiration, if you want to tread this path. A timid man is absolutely unfit for this path.

An aspirant in the path of Yoga should be humble, simple, gentle, refined, tolerant, merciful and kind. He should seek Truth everywhere. He should show reverence to Mahatmas, sages and saints. He should have faith in the scriptures.

If you wish to attain success in Yoga, you will have to practise severe austerities and continence. The impurities of the mind are burnt by austerities. All modifications of the mind are annihilated by mental discipline, concentration and meditation. Eventually the individual soul is re-united with the Supreme Soul.

You will have to adopt effective methods to control the mind. Just as the elephant is controlled by the goads, so also the mind is controlled by the effective, prescribed methods only. Develop burning desire for the attainment of God-consciousness and burning dispassion for worldly enjoy-

ments. Abandon all worldly ambitions and mundane desires. Soar high always in the realms of higher spiritual knowledge. Show your manliness, moral courage and spiritual strength now, O Ram !

For the practice of Yoga a teacher is indispensable. But you will have to be careful in the selection of your teachers. In the field of Yoga or spirituality there are great many self-imposed teachers who do more harm than good. A Yogi or an adept who has already trodden this path will be able to take you safely to the goal. He will point out to you the snares and pitfalls on the way and remove the obstacles in the path. If you are not able to get a realized teacher, you can get help from advanced senior students in the path of Yoga. If you can live with your teacher till you are perfectly moulded for some years, it is all the more desirable. But it is necessary for you to live with your spiritual preceptor for some time at least, get lessons from him and practise them. Later on you can have Yogic practices at home and can keep correspondence with them and see them during holidays.

If you have curiosity to get psychic powers or strange mystic experiences, you cannot have success in Yoga. You must have intense aspiration for

the Truth. Then alone you can ascend the rungs of the ladder of Yoga and reach the summit of super-consciousness. You must have burning dispassion also. Without dispassion you cannot have Self-realisation and without Self-realisation, you cannot have freedom, perfection and eternal bliss.

Yoga does not consist in sitting cross-legged for six hours or stopping the pulse or beating of the heart, or getting oneself buried underneath the ground for a week or a month. These are physical feats only. Many people think that there is nothing beyond this in the Path of Yoga. Real Yoga is something more and something higher. Real Yoga is the attainment of highest divine knowledge through communion with the Lord by controlling the senses and the mind.

In super-conscious state the Yogic practitioner gets himself merged in the Lord. The senses, the mind and the intellect cease functioning. Just as the river joins the ocean, the individual soul mixes with the Supreme Soul. All limitations and differences disappear. The Yogi attains highest knowledge and eternal bliss. This state is beyond description. You will have to realise this yourself.

Taste the Immortal sweetness of the beautiful life in the Self within. Live in the Self and attain the blessed Immortal Abode. Meditate and reach the deeper depths of eternal life, the higher heights of divine glory, and eventually attain the full glory of union with the Supreme Self. Now your long wearisome journey terminates. You have reached your destination, your sweet original home of everlasting Peace.

# THE WAY TO DIVINE GRACE

By

Dr. M. Hafiz Syed, M.A., PH.D., D. LITT.

We have heard people talking of Divine grace glibly without their trying to understand what it really means and how it can be obtained. Before understanding what grace is in reality we have to understand whose grace is prayed for and what are the conditions of attaining it.

According to ancient Vedic and Christian thought and tradition we cannot possibly have any idea of the unmanifested, unconditioned, limitless, fathomless, inexhaustible Being called by various names, the Absolute, Nirguna Brahman or the Father as the Christians put it.

Since human beings are limited in their thoughts and visions by physical conditions and have been wholly identifying themselves with physical bodies they cannot possibly have any conception of or come in contact with that Supreme Reality called by various names, Jehovah, Jove, or God.

"The difficulty of those whose minds are set on the Unmanifested is greater ; for the path of the Unmanifested is hard for the embodied to

reach". (Bhagavad Gita—Chapter XII Verse 5). In this Verse Lord Shri Krishna has put in a nut shell the need for Saguna Worship.

In current Hindu phraseology we cannot possibly attain what is called 'God without attributes', the Nirakar, as we are embodied beings ; we can only love, adore and worship one who appears to us in a human form. Whether we look upon some of the highly spiritually developed people, as *Siddha Purusha* or as incarnations of the Divine who come to this earth for firmly establishing righteousness and destroying the evil ways of human beings, there is no doubt whatsoever that they visit this world with the sole view of ameliorating the fallen condition of human beings. They have no need for themselves to live and move in this world of sorrow and suffering. They are actuated wholly by the purest motive of service to erring humanity and thus they sacrifice their uninterrupted blissful condition of life in order to be present in our midst to help and guide us to our goal of salvation or liberation. We cannot possibly pay our debt of gratitude to these

Divine beings who come to serve and uplift us.

The presence of Sri Anandamayi Mata in our midst is the greatest boon given to us that we can ever think of. She lives and moves in our midst, not because She has anything to gain from us or from this world of sorrow and suffering but only in order to elevate us from our degraded condition and raise us to the level of our highest Destiny.

As She is with us for our own good Her grace is ever present. All we have to do is to fulfill the necessary condition for being the recipient of Her grace. In the words of Lord Shri Krishna once again, "The same am I to all beings, there is none hateful or dear. Those who worship me with devotion they are in Me and I am in them." So we see that Anandamayi Mata, although She treats all alike, yet has to give Her attention and grant Her grace only to such deserving beings as qualify themselves by their strenuous self-effort, self-purification and self-discipline. We have to raise ourselves by our single-minded devotion to Her level and should not expect Her to come to our level.

Then what have we to do to attain this privilege of Her grace? The answer is that we have to bear Her constantly in our mind, meditate upon Her divine qualities, surrender ourselves to Her guidance and con-

stantly pray to Her to transform our lives and to lead us from darkness to Light.

"Man is the creature of thought, whatever he thinks that he becomes" says the Chhandogya Upanishad. This commonly accepted principle of mental transformation holds good in all cases. By constantly bearing Her in our mind we shall draw Her attention to us and thus make ourselves a fit recipient of Her grace.

One of the ways of weaning our minds from earthly thoughts and desires is to ask ourselves time and again where we are and what are we thinking of. In our calmer moments we shall come to the irresistible conclusion that we have been mostly dwelling on worldly thought, and cherishing the desire of mostly perishable earthly objects and not dwelling on That which is beyond change and is the source of our Happiness.

So what we have to do is to cultivate a habit of discrimination and dispassion by carefully observing the passing show of life and the transitory nature of earthly objects, however valuable they may appear to be for the time being. When we are fully and unshakably convinced of the fact that this solid seeming outer world has a beginning and an end, is constantly changing and therefore unreal, our minds will naturally turn away



from them and instead of habitually dwelling on them we shall deeply concern ourselves with the real Source of our being whose nature is, Sat, Chit, Ananda.

Let us once for all bear in mind that the Great Ones, the Guardians of Humanity, the Perfect Beings Whom we call by various names, Rishis, Munis, Saints, Sages, Prophets or Avatars, are more keen to draw us near to themselves and help and guide

us to our Goal than we are keen to attain their grace and contiguity.

Thus we see in conclusion that grace is not partiality shown to any one whom Divine beings prefer but grace is the outcome and fruition of our own inner, persistent desire and devotion to our higher ideal of perfection and liberation. When we qualify ourselves by the cultivation of high aspirations, God's or the Guru's grace is vouchsafed to us without any let or hindrance.

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## DIARY LEAVES

( 10 )

The following incidents and conversations all took place at the Banaras Ashram.

16th December 1948.

The chanting of the Holy Scriptures had just ended. A Kashmiri lady brought a basket full of fruit and offered it to Mataji. A little later Mataji called two bhaktas and asked them to distribute the contents of the basket to all present. "Give a whole fruit to each person," She said. Someone who felt afraid that there might not be enough to go round, objected: "Why a whole fruit? Would it not be safer to cut them into pieces?"

Mataji, replied: "No, when there is one for each person, why divide them?"

After everyone had received his or her share, only one fruit was left over for the two distributors. Mataji said to them: "The task of dealing out is only one. There might have been even three of you to accomplish it. Now you two will have to divide the fruit between you." Someone remarked: "In a similar way the action of reciting the Scriptures is one although many join in it; it would have therefore been appropriate for all those who took part to share

one single fruit between them." Someone else added. "But then to listen to the chanting is equally only one task."

*Mataji*: Exactly! There is only ONE; all this is meant to make you grasp the fact. Whatever you do at any time, no matter for what purpose, must aim at the ONE in order to be brought to completion. Indeed this holds good in every case—one must aim at THAT.

"To Ma everything is complete," put in a devotee.

*Mataji*: Whether you say 'to Ma' or 'to me' (meaning yourself)—everything is in reality complete. What does 'here' and 'there' mean? That which is whole comprises everything—not even death can be excluded. Any particular angle of vision is like a fissure or gap in the whole. Even all the varying points of view, in fact anything you please, is contained in that which is complete: indeed in the guise of incompleteness also manifests the Perfect One—in every aspect is He alone.

A *bhakta*: From completeness arises the incomplete and the incomplete develops into the complete; movement evolves into stability.

and stability again into movement—this is how the play goes on everlastingly.

*Mataji*: Completeness is and will at all times remain completeness, incompleteness equally is a thing in itself. Movement is ever movement and stability ever stability.

This kind of discussion continued for some time. When it was over, the lady who had brought the fruit said: "Ma, by mistake two shares of the Prasad were given to me." Now at last we knew why there had been a shortage of one fruit.

"On my way to the Ashram," continued the lady, "a cow followed me, trying hard to snatch some fruit from the basket. In spite of all my efforts to chase away the cow, it kept close to me, so that finally I was obliged to give it one of the fruits."

"That was my share," exclaimed *Mataji*. "Now you see, the number has become complete!"

"In fact," the Kashmiri lady confessed, "while surrendering the fruit to the cow, the thought crossed

my mind. 'May be, in this guise *Mataji* is claiming the fruit!'

\* \* \* \*

23rd March 1949

*Question*: *Mataji*, some say, one Infinite Void alone exists, some say there is no void at all but Infinite Fullness (Plenum); Some speak of It as One-Without-a-second, while others refer to It as Two (One-with-a-Second.) Yet others describe It in an indirect and negative way as soundless, colourless etc.†

*Mataji*: Whom do you refer to as 'some'? It is said that very often the question conceals within itself its own answer. Who is the 'some' (O)? It is Om‡. The question that arises in the mind and is formulated into 'How can I realise Him,' 'how can I attain to Him,' 'how can I learn to meditate on Him in the right manner' etc. indicates a spirit of sincere Quest and if persisted in is itself a clear way to its own solution.§

*Question*: I now understand the meaning of 'O' but I fail to see the function of 'M' in the word 'OM'.

*Mataji*: Well, One cannot rest content with 'O' (the sound which is uttered by opening one's mouth)

\* The idea is that while according to one view the Supreme Reality is an undifferentiated Unity the without least trace of dualism or otherness, the other view insists upon its eternally polarised character, even when the polarity remains hidden within the Unity.

† This means that Truth in its essence is transcendent and is not within the reach of the mind and the senses.

‡ A pun upon the Bengali word 'O' which means 'some' and also forms a part of the entire expression OM signifying the DIVINE BEING.

§ He who seeks with his whole heart is bound to find.

for the mouth has to be shut sooner or later when the manifestation of the next sound 'M' must follow as a matter of course.\* (Laughter)

*Question*: But do you not say: 'Hari Katha hi katha aur sab vritha vyatha (Of Him alone must be the spoken word, all else is but futility and pain)? If there is only the One without a second how can there be words and speech?

*Mataji*: Dwell only in Him, abide only in Him! He cannot be left aside: although you may exclude Him He is still there and if you acknowledge Him He is also there — on the plane where talk and discussion still exist.

At this point some gurgling sounds could be heard from among the audience. They were being uttered by a European gentleman who fell back unconscious, with his eyes turned upwards, his face becoming bluish and foam forming on his lips, as it happens with epileptics. Everyone's attention was instantly diverted to him. Mataji said: "This old gentleman has been practising meditation for the last 30 years. His practice was based upon instructions received from books and not directly from a competent teacher. What is happening to him is the natural consequence of this. Whenever he sits down

for meditation, he falls into a trance-like condition. It is not true meditation for his mind, not being purified in a proper way, cannot contact Eternal Peace within the heart and attain to stability. Failing this it strays away along different channels and this leads to unhappy consequences which point clearly to the necessity of direct guidance by an efficient master. The prescription and direction of Masters are in strict consonance with the actual needs and capacities of the disciple, as a result of which he will be free from the troubles which follow from wrong direction. There is one thing more. He who has no yearning in his heart for realization of the Divine, but merely practises breath control mechanically may have to face unhappy results, such as you are witnessing here.

\* \* \*

26th March 1949.

Someone was reading out a poem of his own creation. It began with a conversation between Shiva and Parvati. Parvati wanted to know whether all people who died at Kashi would be liberated then and there. "No," was Shankara's† reply, "not all, only bhaktas who possess firm, unflinching faith." Now the

\* This means that sincere yearning, real prayer of the heart, can never remain unfulfilled

† Shankara is one of Shiva's names.

question arose as to what was the criterion for firm, unflinching faith. For it is by no means always possible to judge of the depths of a person's faith by outward appearances. In order to test people's faith Shiva and Parvati in disguise went to Manikarnika Ghat.\* Parvati sat down on the steps with her dead husband lying across her lap. In pitiful words she begged every passer-by to bring her some firewood for her husband's cremation. Many people, deeply moved by the sight of the poor widow and her dead husband, were only too eager to comply with her request. "But," said Parvati, "there is one condition. Before my husband passed away, he voiced the express wish that the firewood should be supplied only by men entirely free from sin. I am therefore in duty bound to ask this great kindness only from those of you who are not guilty of even a minor sin. "On hearing this not a single person was prepared to fetch the firewood, for none could deem himself completely free from sin. Just then a man, who had come to bathe in the Ganges, approached. He was not only a drunkard, but he indulged in other vices as well. As soon as he came to know of Parvati's request, he exclaimed: "What is there so difficult about it? Just wait a mo-

ment till I have had my bath in the Ganges." He dived into the sacred waters and speedily returned to the poor widow with the firewood in his arms. "Are you quite sure that you are entirely free from sin?" questioned Parvati. "How dare you doubt it," replied the drunkard. "Have you not with your own eyes seen me immersed in the purifying waters! At that very instant all my sins were washed away. This is Shankara's own promise.—Here, take the wood and go ahead with the cremation!"

Someone who had listened to the story did not feel convinced: "The story sounds good enough. Nevertheless, is it really possible for a man of such unshakable faith to live in sin?"

Someone else explained; "From a man's outer behaviour one cannot guess what stage of spiritual development he may have reached. He may be highly advanced and yet have to work out a little bad Karma that has been left over. Through the force of his *Prarabdha* he may have been obliged to misconduct himself for a time in the manner mentioned in the story. In this way his unusually strong faith becomes understandable." Another person put in: "Both statements are the truth."

\* The main burning ghat of Banaras.

*Mataji* : Truth is one. How can there be two truths ?

*The same person as before* : Whatever anyone perceives from his own standpoint is for him the truth.

*Mataji* : Where there is no question of standpoints and opinions, where the food, he who eats and the action of eating are one — there Truth is one and nothing exists beside the One Truth. But where 'something' is, it is due to the veil of ignorance. At the very instant of Enlightenment this veil will be rent and all ignorance and sin, however grave or manifold, be burnt up. In such a state wrong action cannot occur. But there is another thing to be said : a man may have accumulated a great deal of merit and yet have to work out a tiny little bit of Karma.

\* \* \* \*

15th Nov. 1950.

*Mataji* was speaking about *Pranam* (doing obeisance). She said : "Whenever obeisance is being done there is, without fail, a give and take of power. The qualities of the person to whom one does *Pranam*—be they good or bad—are transmitted to the one who bows, regardless of whether he offers salutation from his heart or merely as an outward gesture. Therefore whenever you bow down before

one spiritually advanced, irrespective of whether you do so with real faith and reverence or not, by virtue of the very act of saluting him, something will flow out from him to you. When one does *Pranam* to one's parents it is the expression of genuine love and respect. To bow down to them is therefore beneficial."

*Someone asked* : "Suppose one does obeisance to one who apparently is a great saint but in reality a wicked person, it therefore will have an adverse influence on one's character. How is one to save oneself from this ?"

*Mataji* : By regarding whomever one salutes as the Supreme Being. Everyone, be he good or bad, is but a manifestation of Him : if you remember this and do *Pranam* to the ONE alone in whatever guise, no harm can come to you.

*Question* : So then, how can the evil consequences of bowing to a wicked person be averted ?

*Mataji* : By bowing to the Supreme Being alone : *Pranam* must always be done with this attitude of mind.

\* \* \* \*

On another occasion, namely on the 18th February, 1955, *Mataji* was asked about the meaning and the right way of doing *Pranam*. From what She said I noted down the following : "To do *Pranam* means to put one's head where it should be—at the feet of God. His lotus feet are

everywhere and therefore one may do *Namaskar* everywhere, remembering the feet of God. To do *Pranam* means to open oneself to the Divine Power, which is always streaming down on everyone. Only one usually shuts oneself away from it. To do *Pranam* means to give one's mind, one's I to him, to surrender oneself to the ONE, so that there should be only HE and not you. Dedicate yourself to Him without reserve, with all that you possess, your virtues as well as your short-comings and vices.

While doing *Pranam* one receives His Power into oneself with the in-taking of breath and when exhaling one should feel that one is breathing out one's 'I-ness' and remain as long as possible in '*Kumbhaka*'.\* When doing *Pranam* to a living person or to a *lingraha* one should always look at the object of one's reverence first, so as to receive the *adhikara* (the right and capacity as it were) to do obeisance.

When this body was playing the play of *Sadhana* the hand that offered the food became one with the oblation and with the act of offering and hence this body would remain lying motionless for hours and hours. Lots of large red ants would collect and eat the offered food, crawl all over this body and get entangled in its

hair, but never a single ant bite it. When this body got up again it felt that God had come in the guise of ants to partake of the offerings, that it was He who was crawling, running jumping and playing all over this body, that this body had become the Kingdom of God. This is what it felt, not disgust that the little insects had come and eaten the *Prasad*."

\* \* \* \*

19th July, 1951.

Question: When you yourself are present why should people worship your picture?

*Mataji*: When this body was engaged in the play of *Sadhana*, at times if any person approached it in a spirit of deep faith, this body would feel as if suffocated. If someone came and touched my feet, I would in return touch his. One day when *Bhaiji* did *Pranam* to me, I also did *Pranam* to him. Needless to say he bolted away, but where could he go? As quick as lightning I followed him and catching hold of him did *Pranam*. See the play of the Divine Power, he was unable to escape. Yet later again, whether anyone touched my head or my feet, it made no difference at all. Once the feet of this body became sore as a result of being touched by so many people. It also happened that when I was walking someone would catch hold of me and stop me

\* Suspension of breath.



by force in order to do *Pranam*. Then again at the time of playing the role of a *Sadhaka* it occurred that when people offered *Pushpanjali*\* or placed a garland round my neck, this body would become as if paralyzed. At other times if a bhakta put my feet on his head this body would feel an electric shock. Once it was as if this whole body were burning. Then also when someone as much as put his hand on my foot it became difficult for this body to breathe; yet on other occasions, people could touch my feet or seize my hands and it did not matter in the least. Someone would bow down to the ground before this body and it would remain seated quite comfortably, feeling nothing — so much so that someone remarked: "Look how grandly She is sitting, just like a *Mahant*! †" It happens that people do *Puja* and *Arati* to this body and someone observes: "Do you see how She accepts worship and adoration!"

There is only ONE—so then, what wrong is there in letting people do as they wish? When one is in duality and does not perceive the ONE in

everything, then to allow people to worship one is wrong.

\* \* \*

The same day later

Mataji said: Under God's dispensation now and again man has to suffer violent blows. Do you know that these blows are God's Grace. Without them it would be impossible for the person concerned to experience a change of heart at this particular stage.

At Dacca a young girl of good family once related the following to this body: "A man of whom people said that he was just like Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu† visited our house. He said to me: 'When I came to earth last time I left my home, forsaking Vishnupriya. Now I have returned to fulfil her ardent desire for me. You are Vishnupriya reborn.'

When people came to know of this they beat him up mercilessly. But this was very wholesome for him. Indeed it was the Supreme Mother who caused the beating to happen."

\* \* \*

25th July, 1951.

A letter arrived from a devotee stating that while sitting in his

\* Ceremonial offering of flowers in worship.

† Head of a religious sect.

‡ Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, also called Lord Gauranga lived in Bengal in the 16th century and is regarded as an *Avatara*. Vishnupriya was the name of his wife.

village home he suddenly had a vision of Mataji. After a short talk with Her, She vanished.

*Someone asked* : Did you go there with this body of yours ?

*Mataji* : One's body can be in all places at once and also it may appear in a particular place. This will be understood through the knowledge of Brahman.

Once at Simla there was a man called Lakshman and this body saw him standing before it in twelve bodies. Lakshman himself did surely not see this. If he could have seen it would have meant that he had attained to union with the Supreme. Within God's Creation there is indeed an endless variety of possibilities.

*Question* : In God's Creation no two things

are alike. How then could it be as you just described ?

*Mataji* : In His Creation, although no two leaves are alike, yet can they become exactly alike through the vision of a yogi. For God everything is possible. Just consider : so many people worship Gopal. Nevertheless they have visions of Gopal in the particular form in which they worship Him—depending on each one's conditioning (*samskara*).

The other day Sri Haribabaji's devotees were performing a play in which a yogi assumed the form of a merchant and appeared to his wife who was unable to detect the deception. But he who knows can discriminate between what is genuine and what is only an imitation.

## MATRI LILA

( August-October 1956. )

Since we last reported the incidents of Matri Lila for our readers, Banaras devotees have had one of those comparatively rare opportunities of having Mother's inspiring companionship for longer periods.

This time Banaras became the scene for a long—we should say longer—intermission in the usual protracted but spontaneous itinerary of Mother. Recalling as we often do the rigorous routine of travel and the life of little rest that She has so faultlessly sustained for many years, the kaleidoscopic changes of conditions and environment, the inexhaustible variety of modes and tempos of the animating life around Her, we cannot help but marvel at the unmarred serenity and self-composure with which She has borne it all. "Borne" is not the proper word either, for she effortlessly responds to every heart-felt prayer, the yearning and expectations that contribute, in their fulfilment, to the general good of those who come to Her. Just as we might observe the symphony of movement in the soft undulation of a silk banner floating

in clear response to every whisp of breeze passing over it, so do we see in Mother's serene features the changes that correspond to our inner states, our aspirations, our needs.

How well do so many remember moments of unforgettable depth and sweetness when She has suddenly appeared in order to reclaim them from some besetting error, disease, or difficulty. These moments, although we cannot share them in the true sense with even our nearest friends, all go to make up a rich repository of awareness of our perfect relationship with the Divine, unmistakable evidence of the supremacy of the path that She has beckoned us to follow.

If we feel remorse for the demands that we frequently make on Her endurance and wish to make amends and amenities by fixing rules that restrict Her unhindered play, among us and with us, we also find it useless. One might as well try to control the ocean that in its dynamic thundering action raises ceaseless, undulating swells of surf as far as the eye can see, that tosses huge liners like match-

boxes on its bosom, whose uncharted depths are hinted at by man but, nevertheless remain a mystery. And so to resume our account of the surface play of Matri Lila.

For about two months after Guru Purnima, on the 22nd of July, with the exception of a brief stay at Vindhya-chal Ashram in between Mother in Her delightfully unpredictable way, remained at the Banaras Ashram. Apparently Her protracted stay was the opportunity that many had waited for. She soon became the focus, as in previous years, for many a charming gathering in Her presence. Besides the regular familiar Ashram attendance, many devotees living throughout the city came, sometimes bringing with them foreign visitors for whom these meetings were new experiences.

These Satsangs in the presence of Mother, whenever She has occasion to stay continuously for some time in Banaras, we have noticed, a characteristic quality, a special appeal which seems to be lacking elsewhere.

There on the balcony verandah of the Annapurna Mandir overlooking the holy Ganga, a place usually chosen for Satsang, the very atmosphere seems to breathe a fragrance of the sanctifying prayers of countless

souls, earnest seekers by the thousands who have wended their ways down nearby lanes and by-paths to the river, down the ages to Truth and abiding rest.

“The atmosphere of Kashi is pure gold”, Mother sometimes remarks of the enigmatic spiritual force at work in the city.

Particularly in Banaras do scholars, philosophers and highly qualified sadhakas frequently gather round Mother for elucidating discussions and answers from Her, on involved or very subtle fine points relating to spiritual practices.

On such occasions we find Mother listening attentively to the discussion of Sri Mahamahopadhyaya Gopinath Kaviraj with visiting scholars and sadhakas and often Herself entering into these learned discussions when questioned.

At opportune moments, we are fortunate indeed to hear such lucid answers and comments from Mother as cause one and all alike to cherish and look forward to these gatherings. Besides, these discussions, for all their informative depth and philosophical subtlety, do not lack a prominent note of wholesome humour and naturalness. It is not uncommon to hear rolling gales of laughter of the

entire group in response to Mother's keen wit.

Sometimes deeply engrossed in discussion, at moments a beatific vision of abstraction, again singing in sweet child-like tones some devotional Kirtan, Mother nevertheless remains as She is; the lovely smile of wholeness never fades from Her features and yet Her true identity remains hidden as does that of the dramatist who changes the play-scenes behind a velvet curtain.

Referring to the questions which are put to Her, Mother has often been heard to remark, "as you beat the drum, thus exactly do you hear the sound". The Questioner, the question, the act of inquiry and the response are all one and the same to Her.

And so the time slipped away like quick-silver at those sunny, open-air gatherings with Mother leaving behind legacies of sustaining thought, rich remembrance of the underlying Truth of Being, the true nourishment for the journey ahead. But then, is that not the very nature of all time spent with Mother? We are always the gainer, far more than we fully realize. She takes from us only a few mom-

ents but gives in their stead, Eternity. But we must, with all the means at our disposal abide by Her words of instruction and counsel and by the hints She gives from time to time, for a word, once uttered, seldom is repeated nor does opportunity to act, once passed, return again.

In a blissful mood of reverie, we noted with a start that August was about half spent. The second half of August with Mother in the Banaras Ashram heralded the return of those festive religious dramas, presentations of the children of Shree Shree Ma Anandamayee Kanyapeeth,\* during the seven Jhulan nights which commenced this year on the 16th and culminated in Jhulan Purnima on the 22nd. Since Mother was at Vrindaban Ashram last year for a memorable Jhulan festival† in the enchanting country-side of Vraja where those classical Divine love scenes from the RASA-LILA of Radha-Krishna and their adoring Divine playmates, the Gopies (celestial milkmaids of Vrindaban), actually transpired, the girls of the Kanyapith and their teachers necessarily had to forego the joyousness of these performances in Mother's presence. This year, however, they made up for it and, as

\* (See Ananda Varta, Vol. II, No. 3, p. 282)

† (See Ananda Varta, Vol. III, No. 3, p. 288)

nothing good is ever really lost, perhaps their talents, whetted by the natural delight of having Mother back in their midst again, were all the more aptly used in portraying those old beloved scenes, scenes ever old and yet ever new.

As in times past during Jhulan week, every night when the satsang was over at 9 p. m., Mother went upstairs to the girls' hall to be the very special guest of Her youthful following, these young girls, (about 20 in number), of the Ashram's residential school who are receiving through the tireless, painstaking efforts of their teachers training which is, perhaps, unique in the modern annals of child education.\*

Night after night there in the girls' hall, moving scenes from the age old stories of Divine Love and Truth unfolded before the eyes of a spell-bound audience, the women folk visitors of the community young and old, mothers, grandmothers, some holding in their laps tiny children who had been brought to witness this holy pageantry.

Mother, reclining on the Jhula, the festively decorated swing commemorative of the RASA-LILA, seemed to mirror every movement, every breath that found its outlet in the swift

moving life of the scenes before us; She was at once witness, actor, dramatist and audience. Her very presence seemed to function as the prime-mover of everything, catching up the divergent life and activity focussed in the external, the tumult and restlessness, and sweeping all along in deft, loving care to the conclusion of the play. With arrested breaths, we felt her presence and saw Her mirrored both within and without. Mother's keen appreciation, Her lively comments and bubbling laughter that sets everyone freely at ease, Her loving care and attention to every detail, not to mention Her saving grace that seemed to mend even the gaps of forgotten lines, grace that with words of encouragement—comes to the rescue of the confused—these are the little things that leave their indelible impress on the heart ..... little things that spell out Her greatness.

During the nightly performances, we experienced in moving tableau the simple, unadorned sweetness of the love of the milk-maidens and herdsmen of Vraja for Divine fascinating Gopal. Shri Radhika of celestial beauty and peerless character spoke of Prema. Sri Krishna in an impenetrable guise of a Yogi expounded

\* See Ananda Varta, Vol. II No. 3, PP 282, 283).

once more the ancient Truth beyond Yoga, the attainment of JNANA and MUKTI. Scene after scene of the Divine RASA again sprang to life before our eyes, while Mother looked on. Her mere presence unfolded in young hearts the inner significance of the play scenes, heightened the tone of the entire performance from that of stagecraft where lines were spoken and acted out to that of direct experience where actors and audience, in one accord, saw not only the surface play but into the heart of things, themselves experienced the modes of consciousness symbolized by the imagery of each theme, those landmarks in the progressive steps of the individual soul towards Truth.

Each night's performance continued until midnight and sometimes later without visible fatigue to the young performers who blossomed forth with surprising capabilities under Mother's watchful care and inspiration.

To Mother, before whom veteran actors have performed in all their artistry, the natural talents of these young girls are equally significant. But Mother enters most freely into the spirit of play with children as the door to a child's heart is often open: Mother Herself being the Eternal

Babe, the immaculate One which exists in each and all, finds free access to those who open themselves to Her as does a child.

Each night we found womenfolk, young and old, girls and infants crowded around the Jhula watching the and play happy above all to be with Mother.

One night when all were settled for the performance, the curtain rose on the dismal parting scene of Nachiketa\* as the young boy took leave of father and kingdom to fulfil his father's covenant with Yama, the Lord of Death. But the sudden appearance on the scene of a wildly gesticulating "Lord of Death" of very portly bearing played havoc with all pre-conceived ideas of how Yama should be.

Mother initiated the laughter and merriment that his very presence aroused and all joined in, young and old alike, with rollicking gales of laughter, music of the soul that lightens every burden. Mother's laughing, radiant face was a sight to behold. So perfectly, so wholeheartedly did She give Herself to the light-hearted, carefree spirit of the occasion that all were refreshed and gladdened by Her very presence. Just one glance at Mother on such occasions

\* The hero of the Kathopanishad.



was enough to void all the axioms that link spirituality with a saddened countenance. She frequently joined in leading kirtan during the intervals between plays but, towards the end of the performances, those who had been expecting Mother to appear in some role of one of the many became eager to see Her take a more active part.

Mother who, during latter performances, was usually in the dressing room helping the girls with their costumes and lines, readily turned the opportunity to telling effect in Her incomparable playful way. One of the women devotees was quickly disguised in such a way that no one could guess her identity when she appeared on the stage. Mother laughingly told one of the girls to ask the audience to do pranam to her. As a result, the audience was bewildered ; some bowed in respect while others confusedly hesitated, "Is it Mother or isn't it"? At the very moment when the long flowing veil was lifted revealing the devotee's identity, Mother's clear laughter could be heard ringing from the dressing room. Everyone laughed at themselves and with each other, all were captivated by the charm of these playful ways of Mother.

The remaining performances that

alternated in dialogue from Hindi to Bengali and from musical programmes to Sanskrit recitations and religious dramas bore ample evidence of the talents, the insight and versatility of these young girls who with considerable depth of feeling and perspective enacted scenes from well known religious scriptures, mythology and philosophy.

Towards the end of the week-programme, many were again expecting Mother's appearance in the cast of players. The curtain suddenly rose revealing, to the delight of the audience, seven beautifully adorned and thickly veiled ladies seated on the stage before them. The similarity in appearance of the forms seated there on the stage readily recalled to mind old mythological tales of the gods who descended on earth in identical forms much to the confusion and distraction of the people. The audience rocked with laughter and tried to guess who the seven were and whether Mother was among them. Finally the veils were raised and all identities disclosed while Mother looked on from Her usual place in the dressing room.

Jhulan once again drew to a close to the regret of all who had been blessed by Mother's close companion-

ship during the many hours of play acting and satsang in the girls' hall.

Janmastami, the birth of the child Krishna and Nandotsav, the pastoral festival following the wondrous event, were commemorated this year by Mother's participation in the festivals in an atmosphere of striking realism and indescribable charm.

A young University student, who came with his mother's father, Dr. Panna Lal, to witness the Janmastami celebrations, wrote an account of the event in a letter to his Mother. To convey to our readers something of the uniqueness of the experience, we publish that letter with his permission.

Shree Shree Ma Anandamayee  
Ashram, Banaras 30-8-56.

"I am still here, though the Varsity opened to-day. Nana kept me to attend the Janmastami celebrations. He says that it has been to him an experience not to be forgotten. He brought me here to see an ordinary Janmastami, but Mother gave us a treat quite out of the ordinary. You know Her Gopal, whose temple is on the first floor. Ma says it was His wish to be taken out, so She took Him in a right royal procession, in a palanquin, to the house opposite, where a huge pedestal, about 6 feet high, had been erected. There He was placed with

other deities flanking Him on right and left and decorated. Mother Herself was seen going about arranging with loving care, here, a flower garland, there, a necklace and in another place, a silk covering.

In front of the pedestal a barrier had been erected and we all sat on the far side, and were not allowed to stand up even for 'Arati', so there was no confusion. A beautiful, all metal weighing balance had been set up by a Bhakta from Rajpipla. It had been made for Mother's own Tula at her Jayanti last May but was not used then, because of the Shastric injunction that such balances should be made of wood. Mother said that She did not object then because Her Jayanti was our 'Utsav'—our business. So She decided to use it for Her Gopal converting His birthday into a royal 'Jayanti'.

First Gopal was placed on the lowest platform and all were allowed to touch Him. You know He is crawling on His knees like a baby. He was bathed in water, panchamrita, dahi etc. in succession, and sandal paste and perfumed oils were then applied. He was dressed and decorated with jewellery and placed in one of the scales of the balance and weighed against Tulsi leaves, fruit, panchamrit and several other things.

Mahamahopadhyaya Gopinath Kaviraj himself held the image of Gopal and served as an assurance that everything was strictly according to Shastric injunctions.

How can I describe it all! There was a regular rain of bliss upto midnight and even until more than an hour later. The last flower offering, (pushpanjali) was given by all who had observed a *nirjal* fast. It ended with the distribution of prasad from Mother's own gracious hands. How true is the saying of Mother in one of Nana's books :

"Worship is not a ritual : it is an attitude ; it is an experience".

Simultaneously, a 24 hours, Nam Kirtan was held in the Ashram, the formula being the Mahamantra (Hare, Krishna, etc. ) from sunrise on the 29th to sunrise on the 30th. It ended this morning with the usual 'Dadh-kand'—Dahi coloured with turmeric brought in an earthen jar which was dashed on the floor, Dahi which we afterwards sprinkled on one another (Ma included). How She plays with us and causes us to forget ourselves!

Today 30th August, Mother played the *Nanda Utsav* with the girl inmates of the Ashram. It is touching to see how fond they are of Mother, how they treasure every moment they get from their rigid discipline to play

with Her and devise hundreds of ways to amuse Her. Nanda\*, happy beyond words at the birth of Krishna, observed the festive occasion in the traditional custom of the cow herds, playing with the Gopis with dahi, putting it into their mouths, smearing their faces with it. For quite a while Mother played in the same manner with the girls, laughing and singing, while the women joined in. We men kept looking on from a distance, with envious eyes. Mother realising what was in our hearts walked towards us. Instantly, there was a rush towards Her; young and old vied with one another to get to Her first; old men in gerwa coloured cloth with long beards and matted hair received their due attention from Mother. One of the songs She sang was the old Bengali folk-song in which the Lords Nityananda and Gauranga call upon one and all to come to them and be drowned in the ocean of their love. The refrain is still ringing in my ears :

"Nitai dake, aiye, aiye,  
Gaur dake aiye."

To me a newcomer, this was also a never-to-be-forgotten experience.

Friday, 31st August, 1956—Everyone is still engrossed in the happenings of the previous two days. At the *satsangs* the conversation turned again and again to the various aspects of

\* Sri Krishna's father.

the ceremonies, especially the details of the weighing for though the birthday of Krishna has been observed all over India with pomp and ceremony for an untold number of years, this is perhaps the first occasion when His image has been weighed in this manner.

Mother explained that it was Her idea to weigh Gopal against nine articles, namely: (1) Tulsi leaves, including one Tulsi leaf made of gold, (2) Panchamrit, (3) Large white *batashas* (a kind of sweet made of sugar), (4) Fruit, (5) Ashtadhatu, or eight metals, gold, silver, copper etc. (6) Basmati Rice, (7) Til, (8) Ghi, (9) White cloth. It would have been easy to weigh the image beforehand and provide the necessary quantity of each article; but Mother would not have Gopal weighed in order to determine his weight. It would be too matter of fact, prosaic and unfeeling. So approximations of more than the needed quantities of each article were provided.

In the first eight weighings, there was no trouble; the balance dipped low to show that the articles were more than sufficient. In the ninth weighing however, strangely enough, the cloth provided did not weigh down the scale. What had happened, none could understand. Surprised glances met one another. Then Mother sent

to the Ashram for more cloth. "This was a trick of Gopal, His habit of old," Mother said, "of stealing clothes." So more cloth had to be added to lower the scale.

Then the Khoyal came to Mother that she would make this ninth weighing absolutely exact. This would not be possible without cutting a *than* of cloth into two, which was not permissible; She thought of taking off one or two pieces and substituting *Ghi* which was also white in colour and could be weighed to balance Gopal exactly. Fortunately there was in the Ashram the best quality of *Ghi* which a Bhakta of Shillong had sent for Mother's own use. At once Mother gave orders for it to be brought, and at the first trial the needle at the top of the beam stood vertical, pointing to exact weight. When asked, "Why exact weight, what would be the harm in giving overweight," Mother said, a mother sometimes does not like to give her child too much to eat lest there should be indigestion. We said that was a nurse's idea, not a mother's. She replied, 'A mother has to be a nurse as well'.

This remark afforded a clue in Mother's conduct throughout the ceremony. Mother who usually sits serenely giving directions only by signs or a few spoken words, but on this occasion She was moving from place to place

ing things with Her own hands, busy as a mother would be with her own child's ceremonies.

We questioned Mother what was Her idea in utilizing Gopi Babu in the operation of weighing. She said the Kheyal had come to Her suddenly that Narayan Swami would be busy putting articles in the weighing scale and there might be jerky movements of the beam, so some one had to hold Gopal lest He should suffer any discomfort. Gopi Babu was present there in ordinary clothes and, as such, could not touch the VIGRAHA. So Mother gave him a new silk dhoti and upper cloth and asked him to change his clothes and stand by Gopal and hold him. 'Who except a Gopi can hold Gopal,' added Mother with a twinkle in Her eye. The question next arose about the Shakti ( the power ) to hold Gopal. Whence would he have so much shakti? At first Mother said 'Gopal would give the shakti'. But Gopi Babu demurred saying "Hardly, that. The shakti can only come from the primaeval source of all power, the Maha Shakti." Mother agreed saying 'It was in deference to the feelings of many Krishna devotees present that She had said Gopal.'

At another sitting Mother described the story of how Gopal came to Her. (See Ananda Varta Vol. II, No. 3, pp. 283-284 ). He was the family

deity of a big Bengali zamindar of East Pakistan who had endowed the income from several villages for Gopal's bhoga. After the partition, this income was lost and the zaminder entrusted the VIGRAHA to the care of his priest in Banaras. Having fallen into hard circumstances, he could not provide funds to the priest for bhoga. The priest, in turn, tried to provide it from his own resources.

Just then Mother heard of Gopal and it was thought that he might be installed the newly built Ashram at Vrindaban. The priest agreed to give the VIGRAHA provided he was paid his arrears of maintenance allowance for the few past years. Naturally the Ashram could not agree to such a business bargain and the proposal was dropped.

Gopal then appeared in a dream to the present descendant of the zamindar and complained that he was not being fed and cared for properly, but also added that he did not want to leave Banaras.

Finally the priest agreed to hand over the image to Mother unconditionally. From the very first day of Gopal's arrival in the Ashram, Mother's maternal bhava towards this new (?) child of Hers was apparent to all. This explained also Her unusual activity during the Janmastami festival, and

at the end when She posed for a photograph standing with Her arm round Gopal She looked the image of Yasoda.\*

Mother says Gopal is a *Jagrat image*. When asked what were the characteristics of a *Jagrat image*, She said it

was difficult to define them fully so as to make others understand, but She gave instances of how this Gopal had appeared to many in dreams and had extended his hand in the attitude of asking for food or jewellery or other things. "This", said Mother, "would be one sign of a *Jagrat Murti*."

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\* Sri Krishna's Mother





*Mother standing with Her armed round Gopal*