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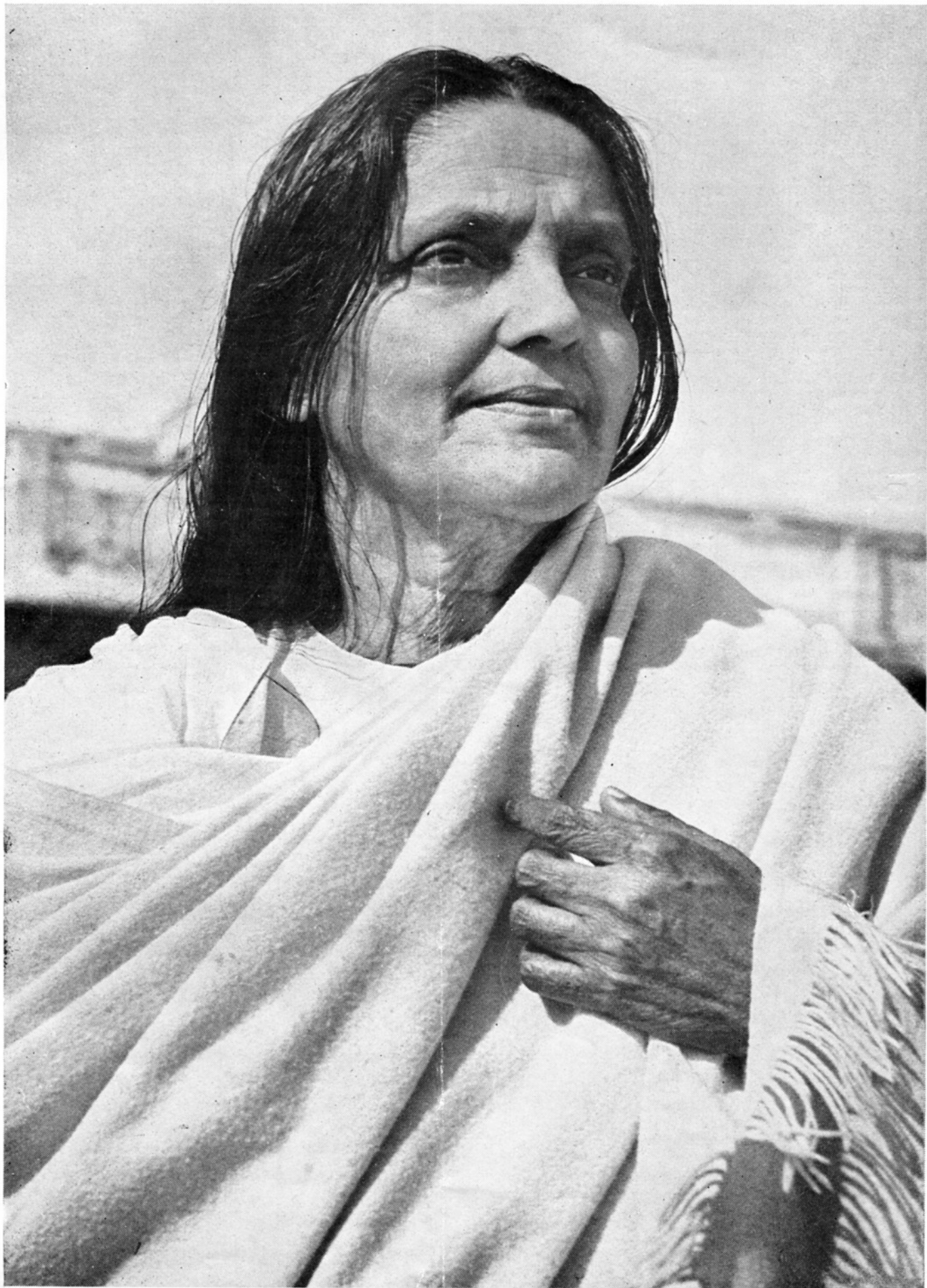
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The One who is the Eternal, the Atman,  
He Himself is the traveller on the path of Immortality.  
He is all in all, He alone is.

## MATRI VANI

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

83.

*Mataji said* : "Write to my friend\* and tell him that he must become a traveller on the path upon which peace is found. He will certainly have to undertake the pilgrimage to where no death exists and no decay, but where everything is ever present. Who is it that dies and who that appears in the guise of death ? Unless these things are known by direct perception there can be no release from this ocean of misery. Let my friend strive without ceasing to abide in the presence of Him, the remembrance of whom for ever puts an end to sorrow."

84.

While one is still guided by reason there is always the possibility of straying from the right course. So long as one has not realized that He and He alone is manifest in all modes of being, in all forms and in the formless, single-mindedness and unswerving faith are indispensable. Such one-pointed devotion must have for sole aim the revelation of the Beloved. Living among your people in a spirit of service be helpful to everybody.

85.

Keep your mind ever surrendered at the Guru's lotus feet. The quest after Truth and to be truthful is man's duty. Do your utmost to remain anchored in truth and spend much time in contemplation of the Lord in a quiet, secluded place.

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\* Mataji calls all children and unmarried people Her friends and all married people Her fathers and mothers.

## 86.

In everything and in everybody is but the One Himself. Try to be constantly aware of the fact that whatever is perceived at any time, in whatever way, are but the manifestations of the Supreme Being. How can the perceiver be excluded? Exclusion and non-exclusion are also none but He. Even the feeling of the absence of God is his manifestation—so that His Presence may be realized.

## 87.

Man may find himself in all kinds of surroundings, yet he must not allow himself to be driven hither and thither helplessly by their influences. It is his duty under all circumstances to preserve his individuality and strength of character intact. To drift with the current is easy enough, but to stand firm as a rock is difficult. He who is able to do this will keep his head without wavering even among a dozen people of different points of view and lines of approach. This surely is the attitude that befits a human being.

## 88.

When in one's heart of hearts one is seeking God—although unconsciously—it is but natural that worldly life should seem savourless and that polite, sweet sounding social conversation should jar upon one's ears. However, wait a little longer and see whether these feelings are permanent or only temporary. How can disbelief arise in one who has firm faith? The activities that invoke the presence of God such as japa, meditation or the reading and perusal of Sacred Texts will grow more and more attractive to you.

## 89.

Every moment belongs to God. Endeavour to keep your mind dedicated to His feet. God, the Ocean of Mercy, who ever blesses the world, pours out His Grace at all times. It is incumbent on man to consider everything that happens to be for the best: 'For the best' denoting what is most helpful towards the realization of the Divine, the realization of the fullness of Bliss.

90.

Twice daily when performing your morning and evening worship ( *sandhya* ) dedicate your *japa* to the Lord by the prescribed formula. At other times of the day when doing *japa* to further your spiritual progress such dedication is not necessary. But when at any time you decide to do a certain, previously fixed amount of extra *japa*, then this should be formally consecrated to Him after completion. While walking or moving about, while eating or sleeping, while doing no matter what, try to sustain in your heart the remembrance of God in the shape of your Mantra.

91.

It is the pure, undefiled flower that finds a place at the feet of the Lord and nowhere else. Take great care to spend your life in spotless purity, worthy to be dedicated in worship to the Lord. Speak about Him, meditate on His Glory, try to see Him in everyone, Him who is the Self, the breath of life, the heart of hearts. You feel lonely ? In very truth you are not alone. Does the Supreme Friend ever forsake his friends ?

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# MATAJI'S AMARA VANI

( 19 )\*

Varanasi, 25-10-48.

*Question* : What is the actual purpose of the *yajna* that is being performed here and who will reap the benefit of it ?

*Mataji* : This *yajna*—so I hear—is being performed for the love of Him who is the One beloved of men, beasts, trees, plants, flowers—in fact of every living being belonging to the universe, performed just for the love of Him who can never cause harm to anyone or any thing. Therefore who will reap the benefit of this celebration, can you tell ? There is no particular motive or set purpose behind it, surely not !

When there are clouds in the sky, what happens ? It rains. Who profits by it ? Everyone indiscriminately. The desire to perform action for the love of God may be likened to the undoing of a knot—although this also is still bondage. But this desire is of the kind that destroys all desire. Why do you meditate ? Because you seek to become established in your own true Being. So what is the object and aim of this desire ? God-realization.

Desires that are apt to entangle you still further should not be fostered—this goes without saying. To whom must you turn in order to get rid of the tendency to harbour such desires ? To God. For only by dedicating to Him all that is yours will you become fulfilled.

\* \* \* \* \*

Varanasi, 26-10-48.

To-day Mataji left for Jhusi. At the Varanasi railway station the following conversation took place :

*Question* : I have heard it said that a yogi can by the power of his yoga lengthen a man's life to the extent of one or two months at most. The average yogi's power cannot achieve more in this respect.

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\* The Bengali original appeared in Ananda Varta, Vol. IV, No. 3, p. 191.

*Mataji* : Yes, at a particular stage this is so. But the fact that human life has been lengthened even by a month or two only shows that a further increase might but be a question of greater yogic power.

One method is to increase the duration of one man's life by taking a period from another's. Then there is also a method by which the prolongation of a man's span of life can be effected without deducting the period from someone else's life. Yogis who are able to use their powers in this way do exist ; where the power to create is at the Yogi's command, it obviously is beyond natural laws.

*Question* : Does it then follow that the physical body can be immortalized ?

*Mataji* : In the state of FREEDOM everything is possible.

*The Inquirer* : Without a doubt ; if He is conceived to be omniscient and omnipotent how can anything be impossible for Him ? Nevertheless not a single example of the immortalization of a physical body is to be found in the Shastras. Hanuman and some others are said to be immortal, but we are told they also have to change their bodies from time to time with the help of their yogic powers.

*Mataji* : In the Supreme State everything is possible as well as impossible. To say 'this or that has never happened' is merely to speak from the worldly point of view. If the body has to be retained in one and the same state, this too can be done and is being done. Consider the matter now from another angle : bodies give rise to bodies, trees to trees and so forth. In one state there is being and non-being ; but where all that has just been discussed exists, is manifested and will continue to be manifested, there definition in terms of possibility or impossibility is quite out of place. Besides when you say that no example can be found in the Shastras, the reason for this is, that where Truth stands revealed, to the extent at least to which it is revealed, those things are known by direct perception.

*Question* : I have heard you say that one individual may have many bodies. If this be so a man may simultaneously practise yoga with one body and experience the pleasures and pains of life with another. For a yogi this may be practicable, but how can this happen in the case of an ordinary person who is still in ignorance ?

*Mataji* : Yes, quite so, this can be done as the result of yogic powers, for the ordinary person it seems impossible.

Look ! When you see a flower bud, you perceive the bud only, whereas actually the full blown flower, the fruit, the seed and the whole plant are contained in that little bud. Manifestation is universal and unlimited, but your vision of it is only partial, from one angle, dependent upon what at a particular time appears before your eyes. Look with an all-round, comprehensive vision and try to find out who a particular yogi, a particular individual in reality is !

Your body was first a child's, then became a young man's and later will grow aged. Childhood, youth and old age are contained within you. If it were otherwise, from where could they arise ? You hear people say that as a child your face was such and such. This proves that your face as a child is present at this moment as well, otherwise how could it be thus described ? In a similar manner your body in every one of its phases is always present : as it was in the past, is now and will be in future. This is so where past, present and future are experienced as being ever-present (although each retains its own characteristics).

Time devours ceaselessly : No sooner is childhood over than youth takes its place ; the one swallows up the other. This cannot be grasped by ordinary perception. Change is observed only to a very slight degree. Actually appearance, continuity and disappearance occur simultaneously in one place. Everything is infinite—infinity and finiteness are indeed the same. In a garland the thread is one, but there are gaps between the flowers. It is the gaps that cause want and sorrow. To fill them is to be free from want.

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Raipur, 3-12-48.

*Question* : Is Self-realization subject to the power of the Guru or does it occur independently ?

*Mataji* :—First of all it must be made clear that the action of the Guru's power virtually amounts to a functioning of will-power. This so-called will-power may be said to be derived from the power of the Guru. Therefore it is but the One Himself who manifests in both the Guru's power



and will-power. Who or what is that One Self? All that is manifest is He and no other. Why then should self-dependence, self-effort, human exertion and the like be classed separately? Of course they may be differentiated from the rest, so long as one takes into consideration that they are due to the working of the inner Guru. There are seekers after Truth who are bent upon proceeding without a Guru because along their line of approach emphasis is laid on self-dependence and reliance on one's own effort. If one goes to the root of the matter it will be seen that in the case of a person who, prompted by intense aspiration, does sadhana relying on his own strength, the Supreme Being reveals Himself in a special way through the intensity of that self-exertion. This being so, is there any justification, from any point of view, for the raising of objections against such self-reliance? All that can be said or questioned in this respect lies within the confines of human thinking. Whereas there exists a state where everything is possible.

Thus the line of approach that is through dependence on one's own strength and capacity is, like all other approaches, but a functioning of the One Power. Without doubt the very power of the Guru can operate in a special way through this self-reliance, so that there will be no need for any outer teaching. While some aspirants may depend on outer teaching, why should not others be able to receive guidance from within without the aid of the spoken word? Why should not this be possible since even the dense veil of human ignorance can be destroyed? In such cases the Guru's teaching has done its work from within.

In ordinary life when children are taught it can be noticed that with the average pupil the teacher has to repeat the same thing over and over again; yet there are those who remember and grasp whatever they have been taught once only. Moreover have you never come across certain pupils who need not even be taught all about a subject, but who in the course of their studies awaken to such an understanding of it that the whole subject becomes clear to them? Intelligent students of the kind do exist as you well know.

Similarly it sometimes occurs that a number of persons receive initiation together and they all practise sadhana. It is only very rarely that one or two initiates, realizing the Oneness of all make such outstanding spiritual progress as to advance to the status of a world-teacher. This may be

attributed to the effect of teaching they received in former lives that has come into fruition during the present one. On the other hand may it not in some instances be due simply to the action of that Great Moment which brings Illumination? How can one tell who may become enlightened and at what moment? One meets some very keen seekers after Truth. Does not the original Oneness of the individual with the All as well as his ardour to regain this union consciously derive their significance from the fact that the One will reveal Himself?

How many students attend college, but how few of them stand first although they are all taught by the same Professors. None can foretell at what particular time circumstances will co-operate so as to bring about that Great Moment for anyone. There may be failure to begin with, but it is the final success that counts. An aspirant cannot be judged by preliminary results: in the spiritual field final success means success right from the beginning.

What indeed is a *mantra*? While one is bound by the idea of the "I" and "you" and identifies oneself with the ego, the *mantra* represents the Supreme Being Himself in the guise of sound. Do you not see how beautifully certain syllables have been joined together in the *Mahavakyas*?\* How mysterious and intimate is the relation between those words and the immutable *Brahman*! Take for example the *Shabda Brahman*†: by the mere pronouncing of the *Shabda* one becomes established in one's own SELF, which is the *Brahman*. Look, the ocean is contained in the drop and the drop in the ocean. What else is the spark if not a particle of fire—of Him who is Supreme Knowledge Himself.

It is the notion of the "you" and "I" by which your mind has been held captive all along; you should understand that the combination of sounds which has the power to free you from this bondage is the one to be used. Verily, it is through sound that one penetrates into Silence, for He is manifest in all forms without exception. Indeed, everything is possible in the state which is beyond knowledge and ignorance.

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\* A *Mahavakya* is a profound utterance by the Guru expressing the Oneness between the individual self and the Universal Self.

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

So long as you are not finally established in that Supreme Knowledge you all dwell in the realm of waves and sound. There are sounds that cause the mind to turn outwards and others that draw it within. But the sounds that tend outwards are also connected with those that lead inwards. Therefore, because of their interrelation, there may, at some auspicious moment, take place that perfect Union which is followed by the Great Illumination, the revelation of WHAT IS. Why should not this be possible since He is ever Self-revealed ? Further since He reveals Himself why should there be any objection to stating that there may be instances of Enlightenment without the aid of the outer world ? In some cases there is reliance on the outer word and in others there is not. However in the world of men as they ordinarily are there usually is dependence on the outer word. Where this is not so, it will be due to instructions received in former births and to having thence acquired certain capacities and faculties ; this also may occur in the world of the average person. Yet on the other hand is it not justifiable to imagine that Enlightenment may come about without one's having in previous lives received teaching and without having developed a bent in that direction ? He being Self-effulgent how can any possibility be excluded ? Diversity is due to outer elements and everyone sees and speaks according to his own particular field of vision.

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## VIRTUE VICTORIOUS

By Swami Sivananda

Fear knocked at the door,  
 Courage opened it.  
 Lo ! fear was not there.

Ignorance knocked at the door,  
 Wisdom opened it.

Lo ! ignorance was not there.

Passion knocked at the door,  
 Discrimination opened it.  
 Lo ! passion was not there.

# FROM THE LIFE OF SRI SRI MA ANANDAMAYI

By

Dr. Bitika Mukerji, Ph. D.

In the heart of rural Bengal there is a small village called Kheora.\* In the beginning of the present century, it was just a hamlet, consisting of a few scattered little thatched cottages. Being far removed from the marketing centres, it had remained a serene haven of peace, where the noise and clamour of the busy world did not penetrate. Surrounded by spreading green fields and lotussed ponds, it quietly nestled under groves of plantains and shady mango trees. As far as the eye could see, the undulating harmony of the meadows was broken only by clusters of tall and stately palms, rising high above to sketch a picturesque skyline..

In one of the little cottages of this village, lived Sri Bipin Bihari Bhattacharya with his wife Srimati Mokshada Sundari Devi.

The cottage, though small, was neat and clean with its smoothly plastered mud walls and its well-swept courtyard. The traditional '*Tulsi*' plant in the courtyard proclaimed

that it was the house of a Hindu, and the '*Narayan-Shila*' inside the house further denoted that it was the residence of a devout Brahmin.

Sri Bhattacharya came of the distinguished Kashyap clan of Brahmins of Vidyakut. In his own village and in Kheora, he was much respected and loved for his honest, upright nature and his other-worldliness. Non-attachment was the mainspring of his character. After the birth of his first child he had left home to follow the path of renunciation. Unfortunately this child died very soon. Neighbours and well-wishers of the family, took it upon themselves to search for him. Eventually they sought him out in his place of retreat and with much difficulty persuaded him to return home.

Sri Bhattacharya came back only reluctantly after an absence of nearly three years. Although he assumed the duties and responsibilities of a householder once more, a spirit of complete detachment was clearly

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\* District Tripura, now in East Pakistan.

evident in his personality throughout his life. He sometimes wandered off with visiting 'Kirtan parties', \*and his wife hardly knew whether to expect him back or not. However, he never deserted her for very long, but it was evident that a strong sense of duty was the only tie which bound him to his hearth and home. Much of his time was occupied with devotional practices and the worship of *Narayana*, the presiding deity of his home. His favourite occupation was, however, the singing of devotional songs. As he himself was gifted with a fine and resonant musical voice, people loved to gather round him and listen to his *kirtans*† and *bhajans*.‡

Much of the unusualness of Sri Bhattacharya's character as a householder passed unnoticed because his wife§ accepted and bore everything with the calmness of a stoic. She seemed to be gentleness personified. The patience, dignity and fortitude with which she endured some of the worse hardships of life distinguished her from the ordinary woman. She had to suffer the loss of four young children and two grown up daughters,

who died at the age of 18 and 38 respectively. She, however, had neither the time nor the leisure to mourn these losses, because her waking hours were overcrowded with household duties. Besides, the family was extremely poor. Nevertheless it has been remarked that although Lakshmi\* withheld from them her material gifts, the very spirit of the Goddess of plenty seemed to reign supreme over them. There was an abiding sense of contentment, of sufficiency that can certainly not be imparted by material wealth. Neighbours, friends, or guests never found Didima to be lacking in hospitality. She never was at a loss to produce for the most unexpected of guests some sort of refreshment from her meagre, yet seemingly inexhaustible supply. Indigence had neither embittered her nor made her slovenly. Members of her household now wonderingly say that although they were poor, Didima somehow always managed in such a way that they never really felt the trials of poverty.

It might be said that, if we consider non-attachment to be the main-

\* Wondering minstrels, who sing devotional songs.

† Repetition of God's names, set to music of a particular type.

‡ Devotional songs.

§ Referred to henceforth is 'Didima', i. e. Mother's mother.

\* The Goddess of Wealth.

spring of Dadamashai's character, we must regard a calm acceptance of the vicissitudes of life as Didima's ; and perhaps, ultimately these qualities are essentially the same.

On the 19th of Vaishakh 1903 (30th April 1896 A. D.) a second child was born to this couple, a daughter, who is now known throughout the length and breadth of India as Sri Sri Ma Anandamayi or simply Mataji'.

Before and immediately after the birth of this child, Didima frequently had beautiful dreams of Gods and Goddesses. She dreamt that they were coming to her humble cottage, filling it with their radiance, and that she, overwhelmed by awe and wonder, was worshipping them. Another unusual feature attending upon the birth of this child was that the newborn baby refused to cry or utter any sound whatsoever\*. The women feeling perturbed, voiced their apprehensions that there must be something vitally wrong with the baby. Their fears, however, proved to be groundless when the child began to thrive steadily and normally.

The happy couple, looking upon

their daughter's tiny perfection, named Her Nirmala† Sundari‡ Devi.

Anxious because of the death of her first child, Didima, used to take her baby daughter to the holy *Tulsi* plant every day, and putting the child down on the ground in front of it, used to pray for Her long life. When Mataji grew a little older and was able to walk about by Herself, She was sometimes called upon to perform this rite by Herself, as Didima was generally too busy with household work to spare even the necessary few minutes. Mataji obediently prostrated Herself in front of the *Tulsi* but instead of praying for a long life, she always said, "Do as you wish".

The little child quickly became a general favourite. Even the Moham-  
medan neighbours would come waiting eagerly for the chance to take the baby into their arms. In villages the social customs of Hindus and Mohammedans are observed strictly, and although there is no animosity, there is also no social intercourse between the two communities. However an exception was made in this case. Didima would put her child down on the ground and the Moham-

\* Commenting on this much later, Mataji laughingly said :

"Why should I have cried ? I was looking at the mango tree through the chinks in the wall." (The walls of the room were of cane-work matting).

† Literally 'the immaculate'.

‡ The beautiful

medans would pick Her up from there, and then return Her to Her mother in the same manner.

As the little girl began to develop and grow up, people realized that She was an unusual child. According to Didima, She was never unhappy, unruly or angry; neither did She ever indulge in crying. So much so that people used to normal, mischievous or naughty children thought Her lacking somewhat in intelligence or even slightly stupid. She neither argued with Her elders nor called to question anything that was said to Her. Various instances are cited to illustrate this characteristic which at times could become very disconcerting.

Once Mataji was asked by Didima to fetch an agate cup. Didima saw that She was holding the cup a little negligently and wishing to draw Her attention to this, remarked, "You may as well drop it." The next moment the cup lay shattered on the ground. Mataji had dropped it.

Once again She was taken to a fair by a relative, who put Mataji down before a Shiva Temple and enjoining the little girl to sit there quietly until her return, moved away with her other companions. Unfortunately she forgot all about her charge and did not return for a long time. At last, suddenly reminded of the child, she, in great trepidation,

hastened back only to be reassured by the sight of Mataji sitting like a little statue, staring into space. Because She was told to sit quietly She hadn't moved an inch.

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

Mataji's education was quite elementary. For a short while She was a pupil of the local school. But since She helped at home with the housework and also looked after Her brothers, She could never attend school regularly. In spite of this, She was one of the star pupils and got promoted to the primary school in an inexplicably short time. Referring to Her school life Mataji once said laughingly, "Somehow or other I invariably happened to look up the very lesson the teacher would ask and consequently he always found me well prepared even after long absences. Actually my education is extremely sketchy." (To be continued)

# Shyama, Grant Me Repose at Thy Feet

By

Professor Dr. S. C. Das Gupta, B.H.U.

Even in the middle of the 20th century, when the whole world is engrossed in materialism, when humanity seems to be running madly after self-interest only, when securing riches and pleasures is considered to be the ultimate goal and summum bonum of life; when the science of the atomic age has put coloured glasses on every pair of eyes, a few in our midst may yet be seen here and there, like oases in the desert of life, who keep themselves far aloof from the madding crowd, deeply absorbed in ideas of their own, much against the current of the time. They are so firm in their powerful convictions that the terrific whirlwind all round cannot make them budge an inch. Imperceptibly they challenge the storm and unnoticed turn the tide. I shall not recall historic figures of by-gone days, but venture to point to two living, very striking personages, whom to our great amazement we have the pleasure and privilege to see working among us.

As in the Vedic age, so in our own times also, a young woman of a middle class family of East Bengal,

wholly indifferent to worldly pleasures and comforts, plunged deeply into a life of strenuous *sadhana*. Like Ramakrishna Paramahansa, She, in Her child-like simplicity, could think of God only and devoted Herself to worship heart and soul. Day after day, night after night, she prayed and prayed and wept to Her heart's content and lost herself in meditation and *samadhi*. We, in our undergraduate days at Dacca College, heard of her holy madness and, full of curiosity mixed with doubt, we peeped from the neighbourhood of the Kali Temple at Ramna. Little did she care what the world thought of her, but continued her *sadhana*, scarcely eating or drinking at all, without sleeping or even lying down to rest. A veritable fountain of real joy and delight, of peace and bliss, she was given the name of Sri Anandamayi Ma.

She hardly went to school, far less did she obtain a degree from any recognized institution, but like the great Shankaracharya she has given expression to the holy sayings of the



Vedas and Puranas, to the rich lore of our cultural heritage in her simple, sweet and fascinating words, speaking from a level which even the most erudite scholar of philosophy fails to understand. How She could attain that height is much beyond the comprehension of any worldly man. She is God-intoxicated. In her thought, speech and action she evidently knows nothing but God. As with Sri Chaitanya Deva her love and affection simply overflow and overwhelm. It is in fact difficult to say whether she is a *Jnani* or a *Bhakta*, whether she is of the Shaivite, the Shakta, or the Vaishnavite cult. Like Ramakrishna she has probably realized the God-head from every point of view. All roads lead to the same goal. Her genial, magnetic, charming and blissful personality acts like a healing balm for all maladies, physical and mental. To see her is to be attracted towards her, to meet her is to love and adore her, to get in closer touch with her is to find the solution of one's numerous queries, be they expressed or unexpressed. Many afflicted persons have found solace in her, the hungry received food, not only for the body, but also for the mind, the suffering have found real comfort and relief.

It is as difficult for me to give anything like a complete picture of

such a personage as it is to see a high edifice from close quarters. You cannot have a view of the Mount Everest by standing just at its foot, nor can you get a view of the Taj Mahal from its steps. Similarly, I am afraid, it is impossible for me to describe fully or to delineate Mata Anandamayi. From my status only a very partial view of her strikes my eyes, my imagination and comprehension—moreover, she is far greater than words can express. As a matter of fact I am informed that she has herself declared that the various kinds of *sadhana* she engaged in, were merely a 'Lila', a play, of no more significance to her than to change from one dress into another. We have seen her pass through various stages, that of a child, a carefree young girl, a housewife, a *sadhika* and so forth, but she has declared again and again that there is no change for her, she remains ever the same. *Diksha* came to her spontaneously, she herself acting as the Guru and the disciple all in one, which has so far been unknown in human history. Then followed an incredible variety of *sadhanas*, each being carried to completion within an extraordinarily short period of time. But then she says none of them were necessary for her own development, but were mere play-acting.

Through the grace of Mata

Anandamayi we look forward to the advent of a new Vivekananda and another Sister Nivedita to carry Mata Anandamayi's holy message not only to every nook and corner of our own country, but also across the seas, in order to bring real and lasting peace and sincere loving-kindness to the suffering world. Saints and philosophers of eminence of our land and from abroad have not been able to fathom the depths of the Mother. The scientists and technologists of the world have been unable to trace the source of that great light or fire. A Vivekananda is needed to carry her torch and to illumine the enveloping darkness in order to show the right way. I feel that personalities of his stature are coming. May we be ready to greet them and to cooperate with them in broadcasting Mata Anandamayi's message of love.

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I really wonder if in these days one can imagine among the cultured a person who uses soap only once a year (on Holi day\*), who has never written with a fountain-pen, has never visited a theatre or cinema, nor drunk a cup of tea, nor smoked or tasted pan (betel leaf) even once in his life. Unbelievable though it may sound, we have in our midst such a man, born in 1870 and still going strong. His early years were spent in Ahiritola—Calcutta, where he practised

gymnastics, swimming and boating in the effort of building up a good, healthy physique and of developing a pure mind. Taking to study a little later in life, he matriculated very creditably from the Calcutta University in 1890. The world may be surprised to hear that the young man of 20 prepared a blue print of his activities for his whole life and is still following the chalked out line. He took his Master's degree in Mathematics in 1896, securing the highest rank and was simultaneously offered a Professor's chair in Bareilly College. Within six months of his taking up the post he was also appointed Warden of the hostel. The wonderful influence of Pt. Ishwara Chandra Vidyasagar and of Swami Vivekananda was writ large on his face and mind. The confirmed bachelor who was devoted to study and a great worker, soon became the friend, philosopher and guide of his students. The clarion call of Dr. Annie Besant to educate the youth of the country reached his ears and giving up earning a living according to his previous plan, he joined the band of honorary workers of the Central Hindu College, which became the nucleus of the Banaras Hindu University. For love only he served in different capacities, namely as Professor of Mathematics, as Registrar (on a salary of Rs. 1/-

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\* A Hindu festival in spring.

p. m.), as Chief Warden of the hostels and as Pro-Vice-Chancellor. No work was too small or too great for him. His motto all along has been : 'Man wants but little and that little not for long. To serve man is to serve God,' Throughout his life he has been a '*Nishkam Karma Yogi*', as described in the Gita. Over and above his honorary services for twenty-one long years, he donated, on his retirement from active service, no less than eighty thousand rupees of hard-earned money, paid for the cost of the house where he lives on condition that after his death it will be University property. The above sketch is an attempt to throw light on the life of Prof. Shyama Charan De, the saint of Nagwa, so well known for his services and his sacrifice.

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The meeting of great souls is indeed remarkable in many respects. I have not had the good fortune to be present personally when Shri Rama Krishna met Sri Keshab Chandra, nor when the renowned literary figure Romain Rolland met Mahatma Gandhi, nor yet when the poet Rabindranath Tagore met Gandhiji, but it was no doubt a sight of all sights to witness Mata Anandamayee paying a visit to Dr. Shyama Charan De at his residence in the Banaras Hindu University on the 4th of January 1957. The

grand old man of nearly 88 was struggling between life and death. One of the best surgeons of India, Dr. Rangilal, Principal of the Jubbulpur Medical College, had been specially invited by the Vice-Chancellor for Dr. De's treatment. Dr. Jaiswal, Civil Surgeon, Dr. G. P. Das Gupta, Dr. M. S. Verma, Principal of the Ayurvedic College, and a host of other doctors were in attendance. In spite of their best attention nothing could be done to cure the trouble. It must be mentioned that the calm and serene face of the patient did not in the least give expression to his agony, yet the disease seemed incurable. Only for the Mother's heart was it possible to feel her child's suffering—or was it the devotee's call for Mother that made her come? The sympathetic vibration in the hearts of both brought them together so that we were able to experience for some time how earth can be made a heaven, or perhaps how heaven can come down to the solid earth. Was it Ma Yashoda affectionately gazing at her Gopal or was it the Mother appearing before the devotee Ram Prasad? The saint of Nagwa burst into tears, crying out : "Ma, Ma, so you have come!" Mother lovingly replying : "Pitaji, your child has come!" Was it a nursing daughter attending to her ailing father?

Mother's magic look fixed on the patient, her affectionate touch on his forehead, moving the invisible wand, sweetly assuring the patient, and immediately the old saint announcing his cure, all this was really much more than ears and eyes could believe. Had I not beheld the divine scene right before me, I frankly confess that I could not have deemed it possible. Mata Anandamayi had brought some flowers and fruits for the saint who in his turn most respectfully gave his offering of flowers. Thus *Jnana* and *Bhakti* joined in *Karma*, making the meeting absolutely perfect. Not many words were exchanged, but both seemed overwhelmed beyond expression each by the other's look. Very likely their hearts conversed with each other in pure joy and delight. It really appeared as if they had known one another for years and ages, although actually they had met only once before at Dehradun and that too not less than a quarter of a century ago.

Many of the University authorities were present and every soul danced for joy to see the happy meeting.

Thus Mata Anandamayi and Prof. Dr. Shyama Charan De met in the holy precincts of the Banaras Hindu University.

Believe it or not, Mata Ananda-

mayi's visit cured Prof. S. C. De of his ailment. The man of whose recovery the doctors had given up all hope, the man whom no medicine could restore to health, the man who was considered too weak to undergo an operation was quite well again, and within an hour of Mataji's visit could be seen sitting on his easy-chair basking in the sun, declaring joyfully that he was all right. Science and philosophy cannot trace the relation between cause and effect, nor can the human eye discern its working on the surface.

It is truly said : 'Much more is wrought by prayers than science and philosophy can think of.' Several events in the history of mankind in different lands at different times have established the truth of this saying, more especially in our country where people pitch their faith in religion. The lives of the Lord Buddha and Sri Chaitanya Deva reveal a number of miracles which could become possible only because of their attaining great heights in their respective spheres by virtue of their *sadhana*. Ramakrishna Paramahansa and Swami Vivekananda by dint of their realization of the Godhead worked wonders far beyond the comprehension of ordinary human beings. In our living memory we have known and

witnessed Mahatma Gandhi causing to happen in actual practical life what was considered impossible. The key to this superhuman power lies certainly in the infinite Glory of God. The source in all cases is just the same. So may we sing in chorus :

“May we realize Him—the transcendent and adorable Master of the universe—who is the supreme Lord over all the lords, the supreme God above all the gods, and the supreme Ruler over all the rulers.

“He has nothing to achieve for Himself, nor has He any organ of action. No one is seen equal or superior to Him. His great power

alone is described in the Vedas to be of various kinds, and His knowledge, strength and action are described as inherent in Him.

No one in the world is His master, nor has anybody any control over Him. There is no sign by which He can be inferred. He is the cause of all and the ruler of individual souls. He has no progenitor, nor is there any one who is His lord.

“May the Supreme Being, who spontaneously covers Himself with the products of Nature, just as a spider does with the threads drawn from its own navel, grant us absorption in Brahman.” ( Svetasvataropanisad ).

**Shri Mata Anandamayi**  
**and**  
**The Spiritual Problem of the age**

*By*

Professor Madan Gopal, M. A. (Alld), B. Litt. (Oxon)

( I. )

It is a curious paradox of our age, that whilst there is so much obvious materialism in our life and thought, there is beneath the surface a great deal of spiritual longing and a strong desire to know the higher reality behind manifestation. It is seldom that such longing, existing in the minds of people with a 'modern' mentality and a western background of thought, finds its true satisfaction ; for the few enlightened teachers that exist amongst us are people of the old light who lack the intellectual background necessary in order to understand the problems of the present age, whilst the many self-proclaimed 'yogis' and 'teachers' who profess to interpret the

wisdom of the East at the present day are often endowed with only the merest rudiments of a true understanding and spiritual experience. Our ancient literature has been freely ransacked, and much of it very ably translated and made available in a western garb, but still it fails to satisfy the truly enquiring minds because, as always, it needs the interpretation of a living tradition, and a 'personality' in whom some part at least of the ideal can be seen to live. Hence, whilst making grateful use of the labours of the orientalisists and the philosophers, the serious-minded student of Eastern wisdom will always find himself finally driven to a search

after a living 'personality'—a 'guru' in the true Eastern tradition.

Having been in the course of last several years in contact with many spiritual seekers, mostly with a western background of thought and education (whether Eastern or Western by birth), I shall try in this article to approach the fundamental problems of this spiritual quest from their point of view. Here a few preliminary considerations are necessary. *First*: in the traditional Eastern method the 'truth' is stated usually in a dogmatic form, on the authority of a sacred book, an ancient tradition, or a living Teacher, and gradually the pupil is expected to realise this 'Truth' within himself and to bring it into such relationship with other parts of knowledge and his own intellectual make-up as he is capable of doing. This has given rise to a number of independent and apparently contradictory traditions, systems, or embodiments of a authoritative knowledge (*Shastras*) which puzzle the enquirer and leave him wondering as to which one to follow. The usual Eastern assumption—very often unspoken—that all traditions and '*Shastras*' are 'true' and lead to the same goal, does not so easily convince the modern mind, and therefore a great and serious effort is needed in these times in order to draw out the underlying truth behind these various systems, and to re-state it in a form more suited to the modern intellect. Perhaps the only satisfactory line along which this could be done is that of a 'psychology' adequate to the task of explaining the various types of human character and mind that have been engaged in such a search, and which can also account for the various views that arise at different stages

and with different degrees of experience. But even before this immense and delicate task can be attempted, it would be an advantage to make a tentative psychological approach and to keep our terms precise and clear. We can, at this stage, only begin to try to reach an understanding of the facts involved in a spirit of sympathetic enquiry and interpretation.

*Secondly*, at least since mediaval times and the spread of the various 'systematic' schools, the task of spiritual culture has been conceived in a narrow and specialised sense, and it has been generally held that spiritual life and spiritual experience have to be pursued entirely for their own sake, regardless of any bearing on external and mundane affairs. Like all other specialisation this has certain advantages no doubt, but it has been carried too far, and now it tends to leave spiritual life desiccated and poor. Anyone who wishes to convince the modern mind along this line has to consider much more carefully than in the past the relation of spiritual life to life in the world; and I think that in the future we shall have to experiment more fully with 'applied spirituality' than we have ever done in the past. But even at this stage we have got to chalk out some lines of common endeavour, some ways in which spiritual knowledge can be utilised for the enrichment of the common life around us, some specific methods by which we can bring the spiritual light to bear upon the multifarious problems of the world around us in order to ennoble and fructify its general spirit and to improve its moral tone. This again is largely a task which awaits adequate attention and performance.

Thirdly, the traditional Hindu method of exposition has always been *symbolical*; and whilst most minds are now beginning to recognise that *symbolism* is an essential part of the working of the higher human faculties, it must also be remembered that a symbolism which ceases to be understood fails to serve its purpose. For readers unacquainted with modern psychology it may be briefly pointed out that now it is recognised that man's deeper mind (often called the subconscious or the unconscious) works with *symbols*, and consequently perceptions coming from the deepest layers of our consciousness tend to be loaded with symbolism, and may even become stifled under them. But such '*symbols*' are only fully expressive to the mind that creates them, and consequently they have to be interpreted, more or less adequately for other minds if they are to be of any use. For minds similar in age, experience and mental background, the symbolism of a specially creative mind may be adequate and stimulating; but as these factors change, the symbolism of a dissimilar age and mind becomes more and more obscure and 'dead'. In India the situation is a curious one. The grand symbolism of our various spiritual cultures—*vedantic*, *tantric* and *vaishnava* still continues to satisfy and inspire many minds traditionally conditioned. They feel no need for a change or re-interpretation—in fact they stoutly resist it. But even they do not understand this symbolism sufficiently to be able to interpret it satisfactorily to an enquiring modern mind. As regards the many 'moderns', whether Indian by origin, or those who come from abroad to study our spiritual heritage, they find this sym-

bolism not only dark and obscure, but in many of its features repellent and offensive. Hence, again, much sympathetic and enlightened research is necessary before the features of the Hindu spiritual tradition can become adequately recognised.

Fourthly, it must be admitted that many Indian 'teachers' tend to be narrow and parochial in outlook. In ancient days India led a life of rare intellectual independence; and perhaps this enabled her to perform her task of 'inner exploration' in a way that could never have been attempted under conditions of wider intercourse with other cultures. But in the modern world this intellectual and spiritual isolation is not only impossible but is also proving to be highly injurious to our true growth. A great task of intellectual assimilation and interchange, of a re-interpretation of our spiritual heritage in terms of modern thought and its permeation by the expanding scientific and sociological knowledge of the West, is necessary if we are to play our part in the intellectual ferment of today. It is a regrettable feature that most men with a genuine spiritual experience along Eastern lines are not only ignorant of, but unsympathetic towards, Western life and learning, and tend to look upon 'spiritual science' as a closed system. This is, as I say regrettable—though it is hardly for people like myself to criticise those in whom my own mind recognises a superior spiritual knowledge. But, at least, perhaps it is reasonable to hope that in future our spiritual heritage may be represented by people of a higher intellectual calibre and a greater understanding of the total field of modern knowledge.



Finally, it may be recognised that part of the difficulty is created by our outer environment. There is no need to dwell at length upon the poverty and barrenness of our outer life, its lack of even essential comfort and cleanliness, and the evidence everywhere of the neglect and sloth of ages. There are hardly any place, even amongst the *Ashramas* of well-known spiritual teachers, that combine beauty and dignity and quiet with an atmosphere of stimulating spirituality and an adequate intellectual culture. The spiritual teachers of modern India are apt, for the most part, to strike the unprepared outside observer as being dogmatic and vain; and they are usually surrounded with too much personal worship and empty ceremonial—the constant prostrations and humble gestures of the average Hindu devotee, the ceremonial and ritualistic observances of tradition which are tawdry and ridiculous to the modern eye, and the constant repetition of age-worn formulae which form the staple of their ‘instruction’. It is sometimes difficult for us to realise how repulsive these features appear to an outside observer, and to what an extent they prevent a wise and sympathetic approach.

If having surmounted these obstacles our candid ‘outsider’ persists, perhaps he will begin to discover slowly that beneath a formidable growth of dogma and ritual and emotionalism there lies a core of genuine spiritual aspiration: that a few people in all such societies are beginning to feel the true stirrings of a new life, and that some characters are being definitely deepened and ennobled. Whenever we enquire into the secret of such a group, we shall

find it not in a new ‘teaching’—a new and better intellectual presentment of the truths of spiritual life, nor in a body of ‘occult knowledge’ jealously guarded from the outside world and imparted to a few favoured disciples; but in a great and significant *Personality*. Whenever such a man (or occasionally a woman) arises in the East, people gather round him (or her), and seek for the vivification and enrichment of their spiritual experience. Such ‘teachers’ (or in Eastern phraseology ‘gurus’) arise from time to time, draw round themselves a group of seekers and aspirants (roughly classifiable as ‘disciples’), and if they are pure and wise, set into motion a real spiritual current. A number of people may be influenced, and certain lives definitely transformed; and if there are any intellects sufficiently virile and characters sufficiently forceful amongst such ‘disciples’, a new ‘spiritual tradition’ may come into being. But it is seldom that such a movement remains pure and influential for long; gradually the tradition of ‘direct knowledge’ dies out, and the *guru* is succeeded by formalists and dogmatists; and soon we have the wreck of one more system, left to clutter the shores of the ocean of spirituality. Fortunately few such systems have the vitality to continue to draw the attention of a wide public for long, but every Indian enquirer probably has had to work his way through several of them before he found a really inspiring ‘Teacher’.

I have discussed this problem at length because these are the difficulties that arise in the minds of most enquirers who begin the search without a specialised knowledge of Oriental spiritual methods and tradition. Many

people find it difficult to understand why they cannot be put at once into touch with a competent spiritual Teacher, just as in the West they would expect to find a specialist along any recognised line much without difficulty. Even if they come to India, they find no one to whom they can with confidence apply for information. If they hear of some genuine teacher they find their access barred by much unfamiliar ceremonial and the difficulties created by a strange and incomprehensible environment. It is only after much persistence and patience that they will probably begin to sense the inner life, and even then they may take a long time to accustom themselves to the entirely new ways of living and of thought. There is need to face the situation if we are alive to the challenge of the present day and what it means to India. It may not be possible to organise 'spiritual teaching' like any other speciality (and I am convinced that this is so), but some effort could be made to interpret our spiritual heritage and to point out where it exists—as a living reality and not as a dead exhibit', and perhaps people who are so fortunate as to be in touch with a real Teacher could make a greater effort to smoothen the path of such enquirers and bring them into an easier relationship with their group. Accommodation is needed on both sides; and just as the outsider has to learn to understand our ways of thought and feeling, so we shall widen our culture and even deepen our spiritual understanding by trying to understand his point of view. It is for promoting such mutual understanding that this article is written, and consequently I have pointed out frankly what seem to me to be the weak points of our 'system.....'

Supposing that we have discovered a Personality that seems to us to possess *prima facie*, the necessary attributes of a true teacher, how shall we approach him (or her)? It may be said at once that there are no easy and definite standards by which we can recognise a spiritual Teacher. Still certain attributes are to be looked for in any one to whom we can turn for inner enlightenment. The difficulty is not in stating these attributes but in recognising them, for it is always difficult to judge a life far above ours. However it would still be an advantage to bear some of these characteristics in mind. A true spiritual Teacher is a rare product of nature, but when such a manifestation is to be found a certain quality of life can be sensed about him (or her). These may be stated, in the most general form in the following way: (1) First of all there is *Inner Freedom*. This is often interpreted to mean asceticism but is in reality a much wider thing. It means such a complete reliance upon the Inner Self that the life is freed from entanglement with all outside supports; hence such a person will be found to be inwardly independent of all that other men value in life,—security, ease, comfort, friends or popularity. There will be no anxiety or greed in such a life, no desire for external possessions, but on the other hand a perfect *poise* which springs from the realization that all happiness is within himself. Whenever we can genuinely sense this attitude we can be sure that some 'spirituality' exists. (2) *Universality*—Such a man may speak the language of a particular age or civilisation, or may continue to follow a local or national tradition, but in his inner attitude he will be *universal*, holding no man an alien or stranger to himself. He will be able to sympathize with all

human beings in their struggles and strivings, and be able to reach the human heart in all of us *directly*. Whenever we find a limitation of sympathy, a desire to confine oneself to a limited group or tradition, we can suspect that such a man possesses only a limited spiritual vision. (3) *Peace*. Every such personality radiates peace and tranquillity—an emanation that at least temporarily frees us from our pre-occupation with our outer selves with its attendant cares and anxieties. This is one of the surest marks of a true Sage, and whenever this is strongly and unmistakably felt we have reason to rely upon his inner power. (4) *Sympathy and Compassion*—Such personalities, in their dealings with human beings often manifest a strong compassion—a reaching out to the lowliest and humblest. They do not manifest an attitude of condemnation even towards the sinner but display a willingness to help everyone to climb out of his failings. Generally they are found to possess a great understanding of human nature which goes right to the core of the personality, and gives any-one who approaches them the assurance that they are being understood and helped.

When such qualities are found we should neglect the other things be ready to condone what appear to us as crudities or eccentricities. Great men of the spirit are not always intellectually gifted or consistent in the exposition of their philosophy or experience. They are not always handsome or impressive in their physical personalities. They may betray the limitations of their origin or environment and in their physical personalities may remain subject to handicaps that seem to us so easily surmountable. They seldom possess the manners of what we

regard as good society. However, if we are observant and use our inner eyes we shall find their personalities becoming almost transformed when we are able to touch their real selves—in other words, when by our sincerity and our desire for the Truth we are able to arouse their real interest. I have noticed this capacity for transformation in every spiritual teacher I have known to a greater or a lesser degree, and often marvelled at the difference that it makes in their personalities.

Once the great Personality has been found and inwardly recognised, there should be a real effort to 'open up' and to learn. Remember that any 'spiritual teaching' can only be fruitful when we are prepared to change our minds and hearts—when we are willing to subject all our standards and judgments to a new light. No seed will sprout in a ground which has not been carefully prepared—and this preparation of the ground means a new intellectual and emotional orientation. It involves the capacity to rise above our normal selves and ultimately to see ourselves as we really are without shrinking and without inventing intellectual excuses for ourselves. This preparation is usually intensely painful, because it can only proceed by destroying our self-esteem and shaking us out of our comfortable habits. But this has to be achieved if we are to make ourselves fit for the reception of the new spiritual impulse.

Again, when the ground has been prepared some-one is needed *to cast the seed*—and this is a crucial stage. Very few indeed can reach the next stage without the help of a living human personality—a *Guru*; and his personality and influence determine much of the

aspirant's future. Many people, hearing of this truth and misjudging the facts of inner life and their own present position, rush about and get entangled with inferior and unreliable *Gurus*, thus retarding their own advance for considerable periods. It must be remembered that the inner preparation is the main thing, and this can be carried out even without the help of a *Guru*: anyhow at this stage no commitments should be made. If the inner preparation has been achieved with some thoroughness, some *Guru* or other will always arise, and be easily recognised. On the other hand many remain in contact with true and genuine '*Gurus*' without receiving any inner illumination, due to their own incapacity and lack of receptivity.

Finally, the spiritual revelation when it comes does not come as a new philosophy, or a picturesque vision of the inner worlds, or as a new power in the outer world, but as the opening of an entirely new faculty. Its essential character is that, for the first time and in a real sense hardly conceivable by one who has not had the experience, the consciousness rises above the level of the personality, and the aspirant sees with a clarity never to be forgotten that what he has so far considered his 'self' is a perishable and imperfect thing, product of the forces of nature, guided by feeble and superficial aims and incapable of reaching any true satisfaction. There arises the capacity to centre the consciousness (even though for a short time at first) in a higher and more impersonal region from which the personality itself can be surveyed calmly and in a spirit of detachment. This new faculty may be called the acquisition of *soul vision* or *psychic*

*consciousness* and without this experience there is no possibility of rising above the earthly condition of mixed sorrow and joy, of fundamental uncertainty and insecurity, of life always threatened by death.

It is exceedingly difficult to describe this realisation in terms of our normal experience; and often when this faculty is opened up, the experience is accompanied with various kinds of visions and supra-sensual experiences, which being more picturesque and seizable have received more attention. However, these divert the attention from the central fact the attainment of a new type of consciousness which enables us to survey the facts of life from an altogether new angle. This is *the germinating of the seed*, and once this has clearly taken place, the aspirant can feel that he has been set on the path that will in time lead to full self-knowledge. Once the true vision of the soul has been gained it will begin to create its own 'inner guidance' and forces will be aroused that will gradually purify and enlighten the personality. The paradox of human experience is that until the impersonal and spiritual level has been reached the problems of our personal life can never be adequately solved. It is only from the basis of this vision that the true object of life—the transmutation of our personal self into some likeness of its true 'form'—becomes possible. Hence knowingly or unknowingly we are all searching for this vision, and no other achievement, however high or glorious, can take its place. Those who have become aware of this are the true 'seekers': those who have obtained the vision and are engaged in the task of transmuting their nature are the true, yogis' and 'mystics'.

So, briefly it may be said that the kind of enquirer I have in mind has, first of all, to face various difficulties against which little provision exists at present. The task of comprehending the qualifications necessary for a true approach is not insuperable, but the help afforded by living examples is lacking : not that such living examples do not exist, but they are often disguised by their origin and training and do not easily respond to an outsider. The 'sacred books' have been adequately translated and are widely available, but again their inner meaning is difficult to teach, as they are the product of ages and of mental conditions widely separated from ours. The personal help and guidance, so important at this stage, can seldom be obtained without the risk of entangling oneself with a 'group' that may not fully satisfy the fastidious enquirer, and later on this entanglement may prove to be a severe handicap. Even if one finds a sympathetic group and an attractive central personality, it is always a difficult task to accustom oneself to unfamiliar ways of living and of thought, particularly when the difference is as great as it is likely to prove in such a case as we are considering. As the conditions are only the very earnest and patient can stay the course ; and so, in spite of widespread interest in Indian 'spirituality' not much actual exploration is really attempted.

The present writer, as one who sees the problem acutely but finds himself unable to change the situation, can only hope to offer a few useful hints. I am convinced that a few real Teachers always exist in India, and I am also convinced that contact with them is not a matter of lucky chance but of adequate

preparation and right aspiration. Unfortunately, as far as known to the writer, no 'schools' for this preliminary training exist ; and when this preparation is first attempted little outside guidance is available. There are, of course, numerous sincere and well-meaning 'guides', who having perhaps obtained a little glimpse of the inner light and being engaged in cultivating it, are found ready to offer help ; but usually such people take themselves too seriously and claim all the honours and privileges of a true *Guru* to which they are by no means entitled. Moreover they are apt to prove narrow and limited in their intellectual outlook. The more advanced Teachers have too many 'disciples' to be able to give individual attention to a beginner. The books and written teachings are undoubtedly open to everybody, but a beginner feels the need of personal guidance and interpretation. The support and encouragement of a 'school'-a group of earnest-minded and adequately equipped people pursuing a common aim is hardly available to a person with 'modern' ways of life and thought. Hence this preliminary search is so difficult and discouraging in most cases.

But if one has persistence and patience, and relies upon one's inner forces, one finds oneself being gradually led to the desired goal-often by ways largely incomprehensible to the intellect. As the search becomes intense and earnest, the inner forces of life begin to play and to guide the personal self from within. Somehow or other one finds oneself led, in time, to a personality who can satisfy the inner urge and crystallise the inner longing. A true *Guru* will also be found *when the aspirant*

is ripe, and be inwardly recognised. This is a great experience—hardly to be comprehended by anyone who has not gone through it; for, from this contact arises the true mystic knowledge—(*Adhyatma Vidya*) which shows that the path has at last been found.

A few words may at this stage be said about this 'mystic knowledge'. It is not any kind of a knowledge that can be described in words or classified with other forms of knowledge, such as various branches of science and philosophy. It is primarily *know'edge of the self* or *soul-knowledge*, and can most easily be described as being 'intuitive' in character: therefore it is fully realised only within one's own being. Its most outstanding result is freedom from the

tyranny of the petty self—that subjection to the desires, ambitions and cares of the personal life from which few human beings can free themselves. As this knowledge begins to dawn upon the consciousness the mind begins to act fully and freely in a way inconceivable before, because the man is acting from the true centre of his being and not under the impulsion of personal hopes and fears—howsoever subtly disguised. Those desires, ambitions and hankerings which have guided life so far begin to fall away—and a new peace descends upon the mind and heart, a peace that is felt to be independent of outward circumstances. The surest sign of spiritual attainment is that the waves of desire should be subsiding in the heart.

(To be continued)

# DIARY LEAVES

Atmananda

( 11 )

In May 1953 Mataji's birthday celebrations took place at Baghat House, Hardwar. A number of Mahatmas and learned men who were present for the occasion delivered talks on religion, philosophy and sadhana daily for several hours. Only half an hour every morning was reserved for 'Matri Sanga', that is to say Mataji would during that time either reply to questions or delight the audience with one of Her sweet songs. One day the following discussion took place between Mataji and a devotee of many years' standing :

*The devotee* : We listen to so much that is beautiful .....

*Mataji* : Beautiful ? As long as you make a distinction between beautiful and ugly you have not listened.

*The devotee* : .....and some we understand...

*Mataji* : "We understand"—that is useless, for he who understands and what is understood have remained separate.

*The devotee* : .....and some we forget.....

*Mataji* : Forget ? Forget the forgetting ; death must die.

*The devotee* : .....and some we remember.....

*Mataji* : Remember ? That means you keep it in your mind. Throw it

away ; lay it at His feet. What I say is : Keep Satsang. Satsang in reality means the realization of WHAT IS ( *Sat Swarup ka Prakash* ). Remain in the shade of 'trees'—trees meaning Mahatmas, seekers after Truth, those who do not call anyone, nor send anyone away. Listen to them ! Who can tell when you will learn how to 'listen' and then you will hear the *Shabda Brahman*, so that there will be no more listener and no listening. A similar thing holds good for what is called 'darshan.' People come, have 'darshan' and go away again. But real *Darshan* means that one can never be apart from the vision any more.

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*Question* : Is it possible for a human being to be reborn as an animal ?

*Mataji* : *Manush* = man means *man hosh*, which signifies being conscious of what one really is. But at present you are *be-hosh*=unconscious\*.

*Question* : Can we after death take part in meetings of this kind ?

\*These notes are incomplete, Mataji replied to the effect that it was possible to be reborn as an animal although rare and gave one or two examples from the *shastras*. The nature of one's re-birth depends on one's Karma.

*Mataji* : When you say 'we', you are speaking from the level of the 'I' and the 'many.' As long as this is so, there may or may not be meetings. In reality all are contained in you. When you have come to know this, your question cannot arise.

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After the birthday celebrations at Hardwar *Mataji* proceeded to the Ashram at Kishenpur near Dehradun. The following are notes taken there in June 1953.

*Question* : How can one develop faith ?

*Mataji* : By keeping company with those who have faith. Travel with a traveller on the Path and sit in the shade of a 'tree'. But you never sit still, your mind strays here and there, even your eyes keep on wandering.

\* \* \*

*Question* : How does the state of *ajapa*\* come ?

*Mataji* : First of all you yourself must do *japa*.

*Question* : How is it that *japa* continues during sleep ? Does this not indicate that one is in the state of '*ajapa*' ?

*Mataji* : How do you know that you are doing *japa* during sleep ? By waking up with it ? But are you ever awake ? You are asleep even now ! First put your whole "I-ness", your effort, your entire strength and capacity into practices like *japa* and *dhyana*, etc. and then the state of *ajapa*

will emerge of itself. Some people say: What is the good of such a state ? Simply to go on spontaneously doing *japa* day and night ? Oh no, not so, you will then become *japatita*, that is to say, you will transcend *japa*, go beyond it, and then the *Swarupa*, the essence of things, will be revealed.

When practising *japa* in rhythm with one's breath, the *japa*, in the case of some sadhakas mingles as it were with the breath, becomes associated with it so indissolubly that breathing without it is impossible and thus it continues throughout the 24 hours. This is called *ajapa*.

\* \* \*

*Question* : We often hear you say: 'Think of God.' But surely, God is unthinkable and formless. What can be thought of must have name and form and therefore cannot be God.

*Mataji* : Yes, without a doubt, He is beyond thought, form and description and yet I say: 'Think of him !' Why ? Since you are identified with the ego, since you think you are the doer, since you say: 'I can do this and that,' and since you get angry, greedy and so forth, therefore you have to apply your 'I-ness' to the thought of Him. True, He is formless, nameless, immutable, unfathomable. All the same He has come to you in

\* '*Ajapa* signifies a state in which *japa* goes on continuously and effortlessly in rhythm with the movement of the breath.



the form of *Shabda Brahman*\* and of *Avatara Shabda*.\* These also are He Himself and consequently, if you abide by His name and contemplate His form, the veil which is your 'I' will wear off and then He, who is beyond form and thought, will shine forth.

You think that you are engaging in *Sadhana*, but actually it is He who does everything, without Him nothing can be done. And if you imagine that you receive according to what you do, it is not correct either, for God is not a merchant, with Him there is no bargaining.

\* \* \*

In the course of Mataji's sojourn at Kishenpur in June 1953. She and Her party moved to New Forest, Dehtadun for a couple of days following the invitation of a devotee. There Mataji was accommodated in a tent in a very large garden and another big tent was erected for Satsang. One morning Mataji came to the satsang tent and distributed flowers and garlands to the few people present. She was in a joking mood and there was talk and laughter. Taking up a bougainvilia twig, She said :

"How beautiful ! Look, the leaves are *gerua* !†

"In my country all leaves become *gerua* in autumn," I remarked.

"In your country ?" said Mataji, "which is your country ?"

"Where I used to be before I came to India."

"Before ?" questioned Mataji, "what does it mean ? And before that where were you ?"

"With you !

With me ? How do you know ?

"You know !"

"How do you know that I know ?

"I don't know !"

"How do you know that you don't know ?"

"I don't know anything, I am a fool !"

"How do you know that you are a fool ?"

"Now I shall have to become silent !"

"And what will be the use of this silence ?"

"Idle talk and nonsense will remain unsaid.

"And to what good ?"

"I don't know."

*Mataji* : You don't know ? Again you repeat that you don't know ? Has one who does not know anything the right to become angry ? One who knows gets angry because this or that is not as it should be. But a fool cannot be angry since he does not know how things should be. Always remember that you are a fool and that therefore you cannot become angry. It is the 'I' that gets angry and it is the "I" that has to be dropped. Then the fool (*buddhu*) may perhaps become enlightened (*buddha*). Anyway, bear in mind that

\* Descent of God in the form of the word.

† *Gerua* is the colour worn by Sannyasis.

you know nothing and therefore there is no rhyme or reason in getting angry. Then the 'I' will go and 'Atmananda' may become revealed.

Mataji handed the bougainvilia twig to me and said : "Pluck all the petals that are gerua, dry them and keep them." The dried flowers are still with me, but they have lost their beautiful colour.

\* \* \*

In the course of a discussion about *Yoga*\* in Kishenpur, in June 1947, Mataji related the following incident :

"Once Bhaiji and this body were walking from Barlowganj to Mussoorie. In the heat of the early afternoon my mouth and my throat became parched, but I did not feel like saying that I was thirsty. Just at that time a certain devotee's wife at Rajshahi in Bengal prepared some melon sherbet and offered it to me. I found that my thirst was perfectly appeased, the feeling of dryness had left me and my mouth seemed full of juice.

"Later when Bhaiji travelled to Rajshahi he confirmed by letter that the said lady had actually prepared some melon sherbet and offered it to me at that very time. The sur-

prising thing was that she did not as a rule offer me any sherbet. Only on that day, at that particular time it occurred to her to prepare a refreshing drink and offer it to me. This is an example for *Yoga*."

\* \* \*

At *Vasant Panchmi* † (spring festival) in February 1947, Mataji was at Vrindaban. A few days earlier Manohar felt a keen desire to earn some money by manual labour. He thus worked as a coolie for a day or two and earned Rs. 3/-/-. He wished to spend the money on food for Mataji on that festive occasion. Some eatables were purchased and a dish consisting of rice, ghee and vegetables was prepared. Manohar suggested that Mataji Herself should distribute the prasad. But Sri Uriababaji said : "This is Jagannath Prasad ‡, anyone can distribute it." Much later, namely at Kishenpur in May of the same year Mataji related : "The mere hearing of what Uriababaji had said, sent a thrill like an electric current through my whole body. I put the prasad into the hands of Jagannath and then requested Uriababaji to distribute it. But both Haribabaji and

\*The actual meaning of *Yoga* is the hidden union between all so-called human souls which is re-established when perfection in the practice of *Yoga* is attained.

† Saraswati, the goddess of learning and music, is worshipped on that day.

‡ The prasad from the *Jagannath* temple at Puri is supposed to be unpolutable. Even untouchables may touch it.

Manohar begged me to give it with my own hands. So, after all, to please everyone present, I agreed. Haribabaji did not accept the prasad with his hands, but instead opened his mouth wide and I put the prasad straight into it. At that moment Haribabaji was eager to feed me also, but as his hands were not quite clean he refrained from doing so. The thought that Haribaba could not fulfil his desire to give me prasad would not leave me. After a little while everyone went away; Didi asked me to sit down for my meal and started feeding me. Even then Haribabaji's wish was alive in me and vibrated like electricity. I could not remain seated. Getting up suddenly, I went to where the vessel with the prasad was kept. I found it empty, except for one grain of its contents which had been left over. I took that grain and hurried to Haribabaji, who had just had his meal and was washing his hands and mouth. I caught hold of his hand and, putting the grain into it, said: 'Feed me!' Usually Haribabaji is a shy and hesitating person, but at that moment I was so definite when seizing his hand that he could not possibly have felt the slightest doubt or hesitation. However that may be, he put the tiny bit of prasad into

my mouth and I saw that it had been transformed into pure light and the light entered into me.—Oh yes, it must be mentioned here, that when the prasad was being distributed to everyone, Haribabaji had said: 'Not a single grain of this must be wasted, for it is *Chinmaya prasad*.' \*

\* \* \*

It was at Vindhyaachal in January 1956. Only a very few people were sitting in Mataji's room. Mataji was relating details of the serious illness of someone whom we all knew quite well. She gave a vivid description of how, after trying all sorts of medicines and treatments, he was finally restored to health quickly and easily by the skill of one of the first surgeons of the country. "I always say," continued Mataji, "if you are ill, go and consult the very best and greatest doctor. If you put yourself into the hands of the greatest you may then remain free from worry and feel: 'Whatever happens is all right, I have done my utmost' But to approach the greatest is difficult and it costs so much, one has to give, one has to give! When approaching God one has to give everything, all one possesses. But people say; 'How am I to give up my pride, my anger, my self-importance, how can I bear insult without a murmur?'

At that moment two ladies entered the room, each offering a garland of flowers to Mataji, who quickly took up two rose-garlands that were lying

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\* *Chinmayi prasad* means that the prasad is completely divine and luminous and has lost its material character.

by Her side and put them round their necks. Someone remarked; "Well, here at least one has not only to give, one gets something as well." Mataji said: "When you give everything, you get everything."

\* \* \*

The following are three parables which we have heard Mataji relate at different times.

### An Earthen Jar Tells Its Story

(Sometimes, instead of an image representing a deity, an earthen jar filled with Ganges water is used as a substitute when doing Puja. Before the actual Puja starts, the jar has through the appropriate rite and through Mantras, to be brought into living relation with the particular aspect of Divine Power, so as to become a living focus for it. This rite of vivification is called "*Prana Pratistha*").

Mataji said: "An earthen jar that had been given *Prana Pratistha* by a Mahatma, related the story of its life. 'At first,' it said, 'I was part of the earth. I was happy and at perfect peace. But one day a man came with a spade and dug me out. Oh dear, it hurt terribly! Then he carried me away and left me in a heap in a corner. "Now," I thought, "I shall have peace again. But how badly mistaken I was! Early next morning I found that he had brought a hammer to crush me into fine powder. What dreadful suffering I underwent! However, having become powder, my hopes rose high. Now I shall surely be left in peace! But no, more pain was in store for me. The next day I was mixed with water and stamped on. When this ordeal was over I expected to have found lasting peace. In vain—is there no end to misery? I was put on a potter's wheel and turned round and round in a maddening speed till I was formed into a jar. Now I felt quite certain that

thereafter I should be left alone. But again I was wrong, for a new kind of torture was to be my lot. Every day I was exposed to the scorching rays of the sun and every night stored away in the house. This went on for some time, only to end in worse luck. Oh Hari, one fine morning I was put into fire and baked. Feeling sore all over, I comforted myself: What more can they do to me? This no doubt marks the end of my tribulations and henceforth I shall enjoy undisturbed peace. Far from it! Lo and behold, I was subjected to a new kind of trial. I was taken to the market and many people came and banged on me to see whether I was without a hole. Finally someone bought me and took me home. He filled me with Ganges water, placed me on a pedestal and performed '*Prana Pratistha* and this is how I am able to speak now."

Mataji added: "When in this manner one has matured and been made perfect, one will be filled with the waters of the Ganges (of wisdom) and awakened to Divine Life. Then one will be able to speak."

### The Clever Merchant

"A rich merchant was preparing to go on a business tour. A thief, eager to rob the rich man, came to him, dressed in fine clothes and pretending to be a merchant himself, he said: 'I also have to travel the same route. It is not safe to venture forth alone when one is carrying money. Let us make the journey together!' It was agreed.

In the morning before starting from the inn the merchant would take out all his money, count it carefully

and put it back into his pocket. He did this quite openly while the thief, was watching him and planning to steal the money that very night. After a tiring day they settled down to rest till sunrise and soon the merchant was fast asleep. The thief had kept awake. He got up from bed and searched his companion's luggage, his bedding and his person. The merchant never as much as opened his eyes, but went on snoring peacefully. Try as he might, the thief failed to discover a single farthing. This went on day after day. Every morning the merchant counted his money, making the thief's mouth water, but at night no money was to be found. Finally, in his despair the thief decided to question the merchant. 'Friend, he said, 'I must make a confession. I was deceiving you. I really sought your company to get hold of your money. Every night I tried my hardest, but all my efforts to lay my hands on your treasure proved futile, although I searched very thoroughly. Do please tell me, by what magic you kept your money hidden from me' 'It is quite simple', replied the merchant, laughing heartily. 'From the beginning I suspected your evil intentions, yet I was quite free from anxiety, because I knew that you could never guess my hiding-place. Every night the money was lying safely under your own pillow. I was sure that this was the one place you

would never search and so I was able to sleep most peacefully.'

"God is within everyone," commented Mataji, "but man goes out in search of him. This is what constitutes God's Play and God's Creation."

#### The Necklace

"A precious necklace could be seen flashing from the bottom of a lake. Many dived, greedy for the beautiful ornament, but the strange thing was that when they reached the bottom, no necklace was to be found. Yet it was clearly visible for everyone from the edge of the lake, there was no mistaking. Finally a Mahatma passed by. He was consulted in the matter. 'The necklace cannot be at the bottom of the lake, it must be somewhere else,' he said. 'What you see is its reflection in the water.' He looked up and soon discovered the precious ornament hanging from a tree. A bird had picked it up from somewhere and deposited it there.

"The Eternal," concluded Mataji, "is the treasure-house of real happiness. In the objects of the senses this happiness is merely reflected. The individual, misled birth after birth by experiencing glimpses of this reflection, thinks that the real thing is to be found in the objects of sense. So long as one believes that true happiness can be had in this world without searching within, one will remain in bondage."

## MATRI LILA

( October 1956—January 1957 )

In the last issue of Ananda Varta we were able to give detailed descriptions of the celebrations at Varanasi of Jhulan and Janmastami. But due to shortage of space it was impossible to cover the period of three months in our accounts, as is usual. Our report this time therefore begins from Oct. 1st 1956.

After a stay of over two months Mataji left Varanasi on Oct. 1st proceeding to Calcutta, where Durga Puja was to be celebrated in the house of a devotee. On the way a bhakta, who works as a railway signaller at Gaya station, got into the train and it was decided that Mataji accompanied by two or three of Her people only would break journey at Gaya, while the rest of the party proceed directly to Calcutta. Mataji and Her companions went on to Buddhagaya, but as it was late at night they found the temple closed. However, they walked about in the vicinity, surveying the whole place. When they finally got back to their conveyance, it was noticed that the air was filled with a strange fragrance. When

someone remarked on it, Mataji confirmed that She had also noticed it, in fact She found that the sweet scent was emanating from Her own body. "Well", said Mataji, "we could not have Darshan at the temple, but at any rate we seem to have been blessed by His touch."

*Vishnupada Pith* was then visited and it so happened that Mataji and Her companions arrived there just in time for the midnight *Arati*.

On October 2nd Mataji reached Calcutta and went straight to Dum Dum. The owner of the house, having received no previous intimation, had gone out. But Mataji spent the night there incognito. Before proceeding to Intally for *Durga Puja*, She paid a few surprise visits at the houses of bhaktas in Calcutta. This reminds us of olden times, when many years ago Mataji would suddenly turn up at the house of some friends and collecting the inmates would take the whole party to someone else's house and so on, to the delight of every one concerned. In those days She still used to visit people's houses freely,

whereas nowadays She enters only their gardens, courtyards or similar places outside the actual house.

Durga Puja is usually a collective function of the Ashram, but this year Mataji graciously agreed to attend the celebration at Intally, Calcutta at the house of a devotee, who every year arranges for the Puja in his own home. One day She went to Shyamnagar, a place about 30 miles from Calcutta, to be present at the home of another devotee where Durga Puja was being performed.

Our readers may perhaps remember that last year also Mataji was at Calcutta for Durga Puja, the celebration was held at Ballygunge. At that time the devotee from Shyamnagar had written to Mataji, begging Her to be present at least for one day at the Durga Puja celebration in his house. He got the reply that since Mataji was already booked to attend the Puja at Ballygunge, all She could do would be to come to his house on the day before the actual ceremony started.

The devotee at Shyamnagar is a man of very modest means and his wife therefore felt greatly worried when she heard of his intention to perform the Puja in his own house. He then disclosed that in a

dream Mataji had ordered him to perform the Puja and had also described to him a peculiar, quite unusual type of image which he was to procure for the occasion. He thereupon went to Navadwip in order to get an image of the kind that had been indicated to him in his dream. The potter demanded Rs. 150/-, a sum beyond the means of the purchaser. When however the artist looked at the devotee's face he suddenly said ; "I am prepared to let you have the image for any price you are able to pay." On his way to Shyamnagar the devotee had to change over from meter gauge to the main line at Krishnagar station. He felt rather worried as to the safety of the image, as the sky was heavy with black clouds and a downpour just at that time was sure to cause damage to the sculpture. But to his great surprise the stationmaster was most obliging and had the two trains shunted alongside one another so that the transference of the image became quite easy. As soon as the image was safely stored away torrential rain started. These lucky coincidences naturally reassured the devotee and, although he had not the faintest idea from where the necessary funds should come, he felt that the Puja would somehow be accomplished successfully. When

Mataji visited his house the day before the ceremony was to start, a devotee offered Rs. 500/- for the Puja. Mataji suggested: "Let Rs. 100/- be preserved for next year's *Durga Puja*. This was done. When subsequently the devotee from Shyamnagar came to Kishenpur last July, he requested Mataji to grace the function by Her presence this year again. She replied, "Even if this body should not come, the Presence will be there." However, since Mataji was in Calcutta again this year, his request was granted.

On October 15th Mataji left Calcutta for Ranchi where *Lakshmi Puja* was performed and on the 19th She travelled to Puri for a short visit, returning to Varanasi on Oct. 22nd. She then motored to Vindhyachal where She spent two or three days.

The devotees of Ranchi had tried their best to prevail on Mataji to spend Kali Puja day at Diwali in their midst as in the previous year, when a permanent *Vigraha* of the Goddess Kali had been installed at the Ranchi Ashram. It was taken more or less for granted that Mataji would agree. However, some time last September before She left Varanasi for Calcutta, She saw the Goddess Kali standing in the new hall in the house across the lane. The house had been acquired

by the Ashram about two and a half years ago and has since then been completely rebuilt and named "*Matri Bhavan*." Kali was facing West and Mataji requested Her to turn round so as to face South. When Mataji related this incident to the Ashramites it was decided that Kali Puja should be celebrated in that very hall in Mataji's presence on Diwali night in Oct. 1956.

In this connexion we recall another strange occurrence. Last May during Mataji's 60th Jayanti celebrations one thousand *Durga Sapta Shatis* were chanted in that same hall by a number of Brahmanas. One day, when a certain devotee passed by on his way to the pandal he saw a particularly beautiful image of Kali standing where Puja was being offered in the hall—He assumed that the image must have been placed there for the celebration; but great was his amazement when he found the place empty a few hours later on his return. On inquiring he was told that no image had been put into the hall.

Another interesting feature may be noted here. *Matri Bhavan* originally belonged to a wealthy land-owner from Pakistan. Due to the partition he lost much of his possessions and after his death the Ashram acquired the house from his heirs. In his last



Will he had left definite instructions that the house should be dedicated to Kali, Tara and other deities.

When an image of Kali was purchased for the Puja at Diwali it was kept in the Chandimandap for a few days. When it was later taken to the hall to be installed for the Puja, Swami Paramanand placed the image exactly where Mataji had seen the Goddess stand in September although he did not know at all which spot it had been.

Soon after Diwali Mataji left for Hardwar where She alighted on November 9th morning. For two days She stayed at Baghat House and then moved to the *Sapta Rishi Ashram*, where the 6th Samyam Vrata was held from November 12th-18th.

A few words must be said about this quite unusual place which proved a perfectly ideal setting for a function of that type. According to an ancient legend seven Rishis did Tapasya at that very place. When the Ganges began to flow it divided itself into seven branches so as to show due respect to each one of the Rishis. Situated between Hardwar and Risikesh it is of great natural beauty. But as the road is not at all good, it is difficult to approach and therefore comparatively

few sight-seers or tourists disturb its solitude. The grounds of the Ashram are extensive. There is no large building, but a number of very charming one-roomed houses, each named after one of the Rishis, surrounded by a small garden each has been erected, to suit the requirements of mahatmas or sadhakas who wish to spend their time in meditation. There are also a few houses consisting of two or three rooms each. In the centre there is a Shiva temple and a covered well. A new hall for Satsang had just been constructed, in fact it had not yet been fully completed during the function, the roof and the flooring were improvised for the occasion. Just large enough to accommodate the participants of the Samyam Vrata and a few visitors, it proved a most congenial place for our group meditations, kirtans and lectures, with its feeling of friendliness and intimacy. A few brand new one — roomed houses dedicated to the wives of the Rishis were also put at the disposal of the Sangha, like most of the other buildings. But a large number of the Vratists lived in tents. There is a peculiar charm and a great sense of freedom from encumbrances in camp-life. Although nights were often bitterly cold and days very warm

many of the campers felt that it would have been impossible to find a more suitable setting for a function of this kind. With the Ganges nearby and far removed from the distractions and comforts of a city, we were able to devote ourselves undisturbed and with single-minded concentration to the programme of the Samyam Vrata. Our heart-felt gratitude and appreciations are due to Sri Ganesh Dutt Goswamiji, who very generously invited the Sangha to hold the function at the Sapta Rishi Ashram. Not only were the arrangements quite excellent, but also did the Goswamiji deliver a series of talks that proved of great practical value and were greatly enjoyed by everyone present. Sri Goswamiji is not only a man of spiritual depths, he has also distinguished himself by his remarkable and sustained social service to the country.

On November 19th Mataji left Hardwar for Delhi and from there went on to Vrindaban a day later. On the 23rd She reached Varanasi, only to leave for Vindhyachal on the 28th. Vindhyachal is always a charming retreat where Mataji sometimes has a comparatively quiet time. However quite a number of devotees came from Varanasi, Allahabad, Kanpur, Delhi, Calcutta for longer or shorter visits. At Vindhyachal a

new practice was started, namely "akhanda Japa" (perpetual meditation) from sunrise to sunset, which has since then been kept up wherever Mataji stays. That is to say in a room specially set apart for the purpose, one person at a time sits in meditation, people taking turns of one hour each. At certain periods this meditation was sustained not only during the day, but also throughout the night. Besides that *kashta mounam* "(keeping silence without making signs or gestures and without communication by writing) was" introduced, seven people taking a turn of twenty-four hours each once a week.

On December 21st Mataji motored to Varanasi to attend some function and was expected to return to Vindhyachal the next day. Instead the whole party was summoned to Varanasi on Dec. 24th. Mataji remained at Varanasi till January 23rd, when She went to Calcutta for a short visit returning to Varanasi on the 28th, only to leave for Bombay on January 31st.

Mataji's health had not been quite satisfactory for sometime. A few days before She was to leave Varanasi for Calcutta to attend the Durga Puja. There She suddenly got high fever. When after two days the doctor tried to persuade Her to take some medicine, She declined, saying :

“Wait for two more days.” When the two days were over the fever had promptly subsided. Later She explained: “Some time ago the *Kheyal* came to me: ‘How would it be to have fever for some days? And the fever came.’”

Just before leaving for Hardwar Mataji's health was again indifferent. Till the last moment it was uncertain whether She would be able to undertake the journey or not. In spite of this She not only went to Hardwar but attended regularly the long hours of satsang with any number of private interviews in between and till late at night. At Varanasi and Vindhyachal in December and January Mataji kept to Her room rather more than usual and saw rather fewer people. In Varanasi especially She would give Darshan mostly twice daily only and was taking a certain amount of rest, either in Her room or on the roof of the Kanyapith where She had a daily stroll.

Since in Mataji's case no Prarabdh Karma is to be worked out Her illnesses have quite a different signi-

ficance from those of ordinary mortals. There have been occasions when She obviously has taken other people illnesses on Herself. It has also been observed that on the extremely rare occasions when Mataji took medicine, the illness took a definite turn for the worse, so that now a days nobody dares to persuade Her to take any medicine. Mataji says that illnesses are beings that have definite shape, resembling those of animals or human beings. Before anyone is gripped by a disease it can thus be seen approaching its victim by those who have eyes to see and similarly it can be seen leaving its victim at the time of his cure.

When people inquire about Mataji's health She very often replies something like the following. “I am always well. Whatever happens is all right. Illness is also His manifestation.

When asked why she gets ill, She sometimes says: “I do not send away anyone who comes to me. Why should I reject illnesses? Everything is HE alone, I welcome Him in whatever shape He chooses to come.”

## NOTES AND COMMENTS

It is expected that Mataji will be present at Vrindaban during Shivaratri and Holi. The Vrindaban Ashram has recently been enlarged by two spacious and well-planned new buildings, donated by two Ranis in memory of their deceased husbands. One is a large hall for Satsang in front of the two temples. It has been called *Bhagavata Bhavan* and a *Bhagavata Saptah* on a special scale will be celebrated there from March 3rd. The reading will be done by 108 pandits simultaneously. The second building is a guest house with one room set apart for the daily reading of the Bhagavad Gita and for other similar activities. This house has been named "*Gita Bhavan*." The opening

ceremony of these new structures will be performed soon after Mataji reaches Vrindaban.

We are sorry to report that the terrace of the Varanasi Ashram overlooking the Ganges as well as the hall and the 6 living rooms beneath it had to be demolished by Government order as it was declared to be unsafe. It is hoped that the Government will take the necessary steps to protect the ghat and the Ashram and to rebuild in due course on a more stable foundation what had to be pulled down.

Mataji's birthday celebrations will take place at Ahmedabad from May 2nd—17th 1957.

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