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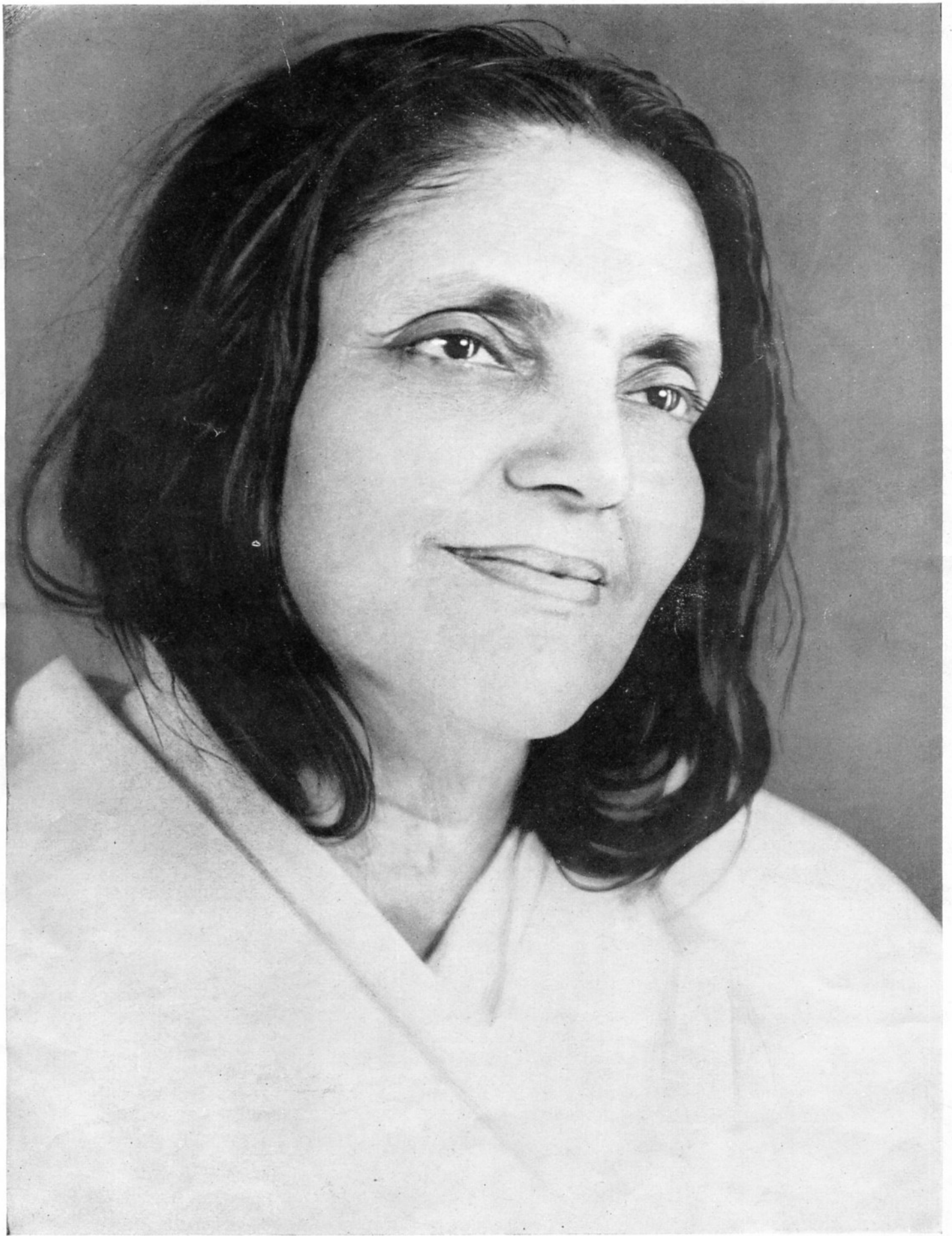
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The One who is Eternal, the Atman,
He Himself is the traveller on the path of Immortality,
He is all in all, He alone is.

MATRI VANI

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

102.

Abandon yourself to God in all matters without exception. 'May He do as He pleases with me, who am but a creature of His hands'—this should be your attitude of mind. It is personal desire that is the very cause of suffering. Why make yourself feel dejected by the anxiety that you will be dependant on others? Is it you who have created your body? The One to whom you belong is free to deal with your body according to His Will: therefore may He do as He choses. Try your utmost to stand aside and watch patiently as a spectator. When the mind is at ease one speedily recovers from ill-health. In this ever revolving world which is upheld by Him who causes it to revolve, a certain calamity has occurred, what is to be done? No matter what has happened, may His Will prevail—live in this spirit. In your present condition constantly think of Him alone.

103.

Light is gained by His Grace alone. He is the One to be held in remembrance at all times. There is nothing else that you need feel concerned about, father: contemplate only Him and Him alone.

104.

It is characteristic of human life that it cannot continuously be either full of happiness or full of misery. Just as good fortune has not been lasting, do you imagine this evil luck will never end? For the present try to gird yourself with patience and fortitude and wend your way in complete trust in God. It is the will of the Almighty that prevails. Be intent under all circumstances to let the thought of Him be your constant companion.

105.

While caught in the wheel of action and its results man is subject to adversities and hardships such as you mention. It is his duty to perform works that will aid him towards his Goal. Providence does not excuse one from the consequences of one's deeds. Your parents were religious-minded. Having left everything in the best order they have now gone from this world. In this time of affliction seek refuge in God alone.

106.

The lute of man's short life is strung with so many strings : they have to be cut asunder. There is no real substance to these many strings. It is futile to let one's thoughts be occupied with the ties by which one is bound. Why behave like a fool and return again and again to this world of illusion ? When someone understands deep down in his innermost heart that nobody is his own, why then should he bear so much pain and suffering ? However, being under the spell of delusion, it is not always possible to attain to real deep understanding. But in certain cases even bitter medicine or injections administered forcibly restore people to health.

107.

Everything in contained is everything. Where perfect Truth is, the question of illusion cannot even arise. Illusion is illusion and nothing else. HE assumes numberless shapes, it is He who appeared to you in that particular way, for in all forms is He indeed. Meditate on him alone. He is pure Spirit (*adhyatmic*)—nothing really exists but the Spirit : viewed from this angle everything is true.

108.

If one prays to God with heart and soul the prayer will be fulfilled ; for He is the Fountain of Goodness and does what is most beneficent. How can the ordinary person possibly be endowed with the extraordinary power of understanding that would enable him to grasp the working of God's all beneficial Law ? 'May His will be done !' This should be one's attitude of life at all times.

109.

If you want to become a householder and take up family life you will have to pass through all kinds of experiences. Let your mind be centred in God, then only is there a prospect of complete peace.

In order to acquire the only qualification that really matters one has to contemplate the Divine. Never cease to strive after the Knowledge which will free you from all snares and ties of this world as well as from the necessity to gain any other knowledge.

110.

Many feel the urge to create a new and better world. Rather than let your thoughts dwell on such matters you should concentrate on that by the contemplation of which there is hope of perfect peace. It is man's duty to become a seeker after God or Truth.

111.

Everything in the universe is God's creation and happens according to His divine Dispensation ; everything and everyone is His own. In the realm of cause and effect (*Karma*) things manifest as best suited to particular conditions. It is incumbent on man under all circumstances to rely on God and to sustain the remembrance of Him.

112.

Solely by turning to God is there any hope for man to gain peace. The world is as you have just experienced ; it is futile to look for peace there. When one lacks sincerity and straightness of character and is moreover unable to grasp the actual purport of religion, this kind of disturbed state of mind, where one finds it impossible to elevate oneself by any means or device, may occur quite frequently. It is imperative to depend on God, no matter what one's condition may be. Pray to Him.

113.

Even right in the midst of troubles and vexations one has to rely on God, practise japa and meditation and aspire to grow spiritually. By enjoying the pleasures and comforts of material life nobody has yet attained to the realization of God. To contemplate the One and to enthrone Him in your heart will bring you peace—therefore cultivate the remembrance of Him. So long as He does not reveal Himself in a way that will dissolve all obstacles and obstructions, until then strive to live ever in the Presence of God.

MATAJI'S AMARA VANI

(21)*

HE alone is—so there is no question of accepting or rejecting existence. Did HE ever come into being that there could be a possibility of accepting or rejecting existence? HE was never born. According to the angle from which you view it, it is true that this world does not exist, that Truth is found by eliminating name and form; on the other hand name and form are made up of the 'akshara', of that which is indestructible. Yet in essence THAT is Truth. Illusion and the destroying of illusion are both HE. But then again there is no question of clearing up illusion for there is only HE, the One Source of all. With HIM as one's goal the illusion of the illusion has to be uprooted. Talk of this kind is all just by way of helping one to understand.

The study of scriptures and similar texts—provided it does not become an aim in itself—can be an aid towards the grasping of truth. So long as what has been read has not become one's own experience, that is to say has not been assimilated into one's own being, it has not fulfilled its purpose. A seed that is merely held in the hand cannot germinate: it must develop into a plant and bear fruit in order to reveal its full possibilities. Nevertheless in the state where one can neither speak of revelation nor of concealment, there, what appears and becomes is also ever present. On a certain level there is a stage where one sees glimpses, sparks, as it were, of Reality. One cannot understand what one perceives, yet it is of Reality; for this reason one is bewildered. There are indeed states and stages without number, although Fire is wholly one—but how can there possibly be wholeness in the various glimpses and sparks that one gets? It is THAT alone which is whole, all-inclusive.

What is wanted is genuine Awakening, an awakening after which nothing remains to be attained. The perception of the world of nature is quite a different matter—although a state does exist in which there can be no question of difference.

* The Bengali original appeared in Ananda Varta, Vol. V, No. 1, P. 3.

Whatever is being done belongs to the realm of death, of ceaseless change. Nothing can be excluded : In the shape of death art Thou, in the form of desire art Thou, Thou art motion as well as stability, distinction and non-distinction—for Thou art infinite, without end.

Thou it is who roamest in the disguise of nature. From whatever standpoint an assertion may be made, I never object to it. For HE is all in all, HE alone is—the ONE with form and without form. Your divine essence cannot be revealed while you are in your present condition. When a roof is being built the law is that whatever materials are hammered into it shall remain there. No matter how much time it may require, the roof must be made solid. Likewise—(no simile is ever complete, therefore take only as much of it as is applicable)—in whatever line of work you are an expert, you identify yourself with it, thinking it is your real nature. So far so good, but where in this is the whole of yourself, your divine being? Thus you should reflect : What is it that has to be attained? You will have to become conscious of your Self in its entirety. Nay, to become fully conscious is not enough, you will have to rise beyond consciousness and unconsciousness. THAT which IS has to shine forth. You will have to go on reflecting and make a sustained effort to convince yourself of the fact that *japa*, meditation and all other spiritual exercises have for purpose your Awakening. On this pilgrimage one must never relax but keep on exerting oneself. One should try at all times to remain engrossed in this kind of endeavour—it has to be woven into one's very being, one has to become of a piece with one's Self. It is Thou that criest out helplessly in distress and it is Thou that art abroad in success ; in order that this may be revealed to you, you must use your discrimination and intelligence vigorously and unceasingly.

A tree has to be watered at its roots : man's roots are situated in his head, where his reasoning power, his intellect is constantly at work. One has to progress towards one's goal through *japa*, meditation, the perusal of scriptures and similar practices. Expressed differently one should fix one's thinking and bind oneself in this direction. Whatever ties, bondage or restraints one imposes upon oneself should have for aim the supreme Goal of life. With untrammelled energy one must forge ahead towards the discovery of one's own self.

Whether you take the path of devotion where the 'I' is lost in the 'Thou' or whether you take the path of Self-inquiry, of the search for

the true 'I' - it is HE alone who is found in either case, in the 'Thou' as well as in the 'I'.

Why should there be vision on the way? In the guise of vision is HE and in the guise of 'why' is also HE. Whatever is revealed or concealed anywhere in any way is 'Thou', is 'I'. Negation as well as confirmation are equally 'Thou'—the ONE. You will be able to grasp this fully only when you find everything within yourself, in other words in the state where there is **NOTHING BUT THE SELF**. This is why one speaks of vision on the path. Where you see limitation, even this very limitation is a manifestation of the Limitless, the Infinite. Its essential substance is none other than you yourself. So long as this fact has not been revealed, how can one speak of full realization—complete, perfect, all comprehensive—call it what you will. Then again how can in such a state of fulfilment the question still arise of perfection or imperfection, of completeness or incompleteness?

THE UNFORGETTABLE 'HOLI' DAY

By

N. Chowdhuri

Twenty-sixth of March 1937. I remember the date very distinctly. On this day I first saw the Mother. It was the day of *Holi* or *Dola-purnima*. I was then residing in New Delhi. A few days back I had only heard a little about the Mother from an elderly devout lady, who used to visit my wife occasionally. Our topic was on saintly persons. I complained that up till then all saintly persons I had come across fell short of my expectation and failed to command my unstinted admiration and spontaneous devotion. This lady said that she had seen a really holy lady at Simla a few months back, known as *Anandamayi Ma*, and if I saw her I was sure to appreciate and adore her. She further said that the Mother was expected in New Delhi very shortly. I implored the lady that she must not fail to inform me as soon as the Mother came to New Delhi. The previous evening (25th March) I got a message from her that the Mother had just arrived in New Delhi and was staying at 13 Irwin Road.

On the 26th at about 7-30 A. M., accompanied by my wife Juthica, I

left my house to walk up to 13 Irwin Road. A friend (Shri Sudhir Gupta), who had previously seen the Mother at Simla, joined us on the way. It took us hardly twenty minutes to reach our destination.

I saw the Mother seated on a carpet inside a tent pitched in the open space in front of 13 Irwin Road, a Government bungalow, occupied by Shri Panchanan Mukherjee, an old devotee of the Mother. She was clad in all white. Her face was beaming with a divine glow. I was dazed at the sight. I at once felt in the core of my heart that she was the one I had been yearning to meet for years,-nay for births without end. For two or three hours (I cannot really say for how long), I sat glued to a corner of the tent intently gazing at the Mother. I had never seen any person even remotely approaching her,-she was so graceful, so captivating, so enchanting. She was quietly sitting with her body swaying gently in rhythmic undulations to the tune of the *namakirtana* (singing of God's name in chorus) that was going on in her presence. All the time I sat, I was enraptured not so much by

the music as by the abounding effulgence of the Mother's countenance. I was in a dreamland, as it were far from the humdrum material world. I was under a spell.

My spell was broken only when the Mother got up and walked outside the inner compound of Shri Mukherjee's house evidently to give *darshan* to the ladies of the house and other ladies (including my wife), who were waiting eagerly to meet her. The male visitors were now loitering about outside the Mother's tent. My mind was full of the Mother. I was rather deeply absorbed in ruminating what I had seen. My heart yearned to see her again and be in her presence for as long as I could possibly be.

About this time, my friend (Shri Sudhir Gupta) met me and put to me the straight question, 'How did you find the Mother'? My reply came offhand. I have verily seen Ram Krishna Paramahansa Deva in her, said I; "I have often prayed to him, saying, Lord, you came into this world and went away, but unlucky wretch that I am, I could not see you' that grievance of mine is removed today".

After a while, the Mother, now my Divine Mother,—came back to the front of the house and was walking back into her tent. In those days anybody could touch her feet in salutation. Some gentlemen bowed

down to her. Then came my turn, my first golden chance of falling at her feet. She was approaching me. Her garment was covered with a profusion of coloured powder which ladies had thrown on her in observance of *Holi*, and as a mark of love and respect. When she was quite close to me, I heard for the first time the charming music of words falling from her lips. 'Baba' said she," 'may I put (coloured powder) on your body ?' I was unable to speak in reply or even to nod my head by way of assent. And she did not wait for it. She rubbed a coloured part of her garment on my left forearm, and in doing so, her right forearm momentarily touched my left forearm. I was thrilled. Like an automaton I fell at her feet. And as I did so, I spontaneously muttered within myself, 'O Mother,' I prayed to her, Why colour my external body alone? Be generous enough to colour me both externally and internally'. I rose up and followed the Mother inside the tent. I sat there until it was time for Mother to take her lunch. Accompanied by Juthica, I returned home in a light, cheerful, meditative mood. I felt like a person who had suddenly found a rich treasure that was his and which he had long lost and was eagerly looking about for.

During this particular visit the Mother lived in the same tent for six

days. That tent and the entire premises of 13 Irwin Road became a place of pilgrimage to many of the Mother's old and new devotees including myself, Juthica and our elder daughter Chhabi, then a girl of fourteen. I left my teaching work entirely in the hands of my assistants and passed as many hours of the day and night in the Mother's charming presence as I could. I would get to the place early in the morning, return home for an hour or two for a hurried lunch and rest, again go there in the afternoon return home for a short half hour at dusk to look after our children and offer evening bhog to our household deity and finally go back to Mother to return home, sometimes close upon midnight and sometimes in the small hours of the morning, only when we were asked to quit to allow Mother to have her short nightly rest, which would be only for three to four hours in those days. Like myself, Juthica, Chhabi and many others used to enjoy Mother's charming and blissful company as long as they could. But what for? The answer to this question will remain a baffling enigma and a matter for speculative thinking for all time to come.

While walking to or back from this our place of pilgrimage and in other intervals, I would hum within myself two lines of a Bengali song, which was

in effect a prayer, and which I would thus put in English, 'Make me mad, make me mad altogether, O Mother Anandamayi, give me the wine of thy love, that I may sing and dance in joy.'

During these days, I noticed that the Mother went out every evening for a drive in a motor car. One evening I felt a strong desire to go out for a drive in her company. As soon as she came out of the gate to board the car waiting on the street, I approached her and submitted, 'Mother, I want to go with you in the car today'. 'Of course you will go, if there is room', she replied instantly. Coming near the car, which was already full, she ordered some of the occupants to get down, saying, 'You go with me every day, today these other persons will go with me'. On the back seat of the car I sat in the middle. The Mother took her seat on my right. A German visitor (I cannot recall his name) sat on my left. As there was no more room, my daughter sat on my lap, while Shri Jatis Guha of Calcutta squeezed himself into the narrow space on the floor in front of Mother's feet. We had a very long drive.

The German visitor utilised me as an interpreter and put three questions to Mother, His first question was, 'Will the measures adopted by Mr. Gandhi prove beneficial to India?' I was presumptuous. I told him that

the Mother would not reply to political questions. The Mother evidently understood our conversation, which was in English. 'What is his query', she inquired, 'and what reply did you give?' I told her everything. 'Why did you reply like that?', she complained. I was amazed to find (and this experience was later confirmed through other incidents) that no problem on earth could be outside the range of her all-pervading knowledge. 'Tell him' she continued, 'whatever Gandhiji is doing, he is doing as willed by God, and must prove beneficial'. 'What is the Mother's message?' was the second question of this inquisitive German. The Mother's reply was, 'The message from this body (meaning herself) is not the same for all'. His last query was 'What is her message for me?' 'Wait and you will know' was Mother's reply. This gentlemen accompanied Mother to Bareilly and other places.

With the Mother, the car took us into the compound of the bungalow on Queen Victoria Road, in which Rai Bahadur Debendra Nath Chatterjee was residing. On a grassy lawn in the spacious front compound of the bungalow was spread a carpet on which the Mother and a part of her small retinue were seated. Around the lawn a rich harvest of bright marigold appeared to rejoice in full bloom

at the arrival of the welcome guest. The golden rays of the setting sun were still lingering on tree-tops. The hostess, Toru Didi (Mrs. Chatterjee), brought several varieties of sweets with which she wanted to treat Mother, sweets which she had prepared with her own hands. A seemingly untoward little incident, which ended well after all, happened as Toru Didi was about to feed the Mother with some *sandesh* (a well-known Bengali sweet). Mother refused to open her mouth and turned her head. Toru Didi again tried to put the morsel of *sandesh* into her mouth, but she now turned her head the other way. Thus Mother dodged Toru Didi a number of times, and all her efforts to feed the Mother proved abortive. Naturally, the hostess was afraid that some dire evil would befall her; otherwise, why should the Mother, who was always full of glee, be so cross as not to accept the sweet from her hand. She was thoroughly unnerved. I could notice drops of perspiration on her forehead. At length, Mother opened her lips and said, 'Is this how you feed a small child? Put one hand on the head, and the mouth will open' as if she was talking of some child other than herself. Toru Didi caught the hint. She at once put the palm of her left hand on the back of Mother's head (as a mother does actually in endearment when feeding a small

child). The Mother's mouth opened, as if she was a mechanical doll, operated by a lever. To her relief and joy the hostess now fed the Mother with her right hand with sweets. Finally, *prasad* was distributed among all present and accompanying Mother, we all returned to her tent at 13 Irwin Road.

Everyday we had *nama-kirtana* by the local devotees in the presence of the Mother. One afternoon a special *nama-kirtana* was held by the ladies of New Delhi at the Sikh *Gurdwara*. Another evening we had *nama-kirtana* in the central hall of the Hindu Mahasabha building on Reading Road. I had the impression that nothing propitiated the Mother more than *nama-kirtana*. It did not matter what the name was, provided it was sung with devotion.

On the 1st April 1937, the day when the Mother was to leave New Delhi, Juthica and I, by previous appointment, saw Mother privately in the morning, in her inner apartment in the tent. Juthica had prepared sweets for the Mother and had also brought a full set of wearing apparel for her including a pair of leather sandals. It was Mother's practice in those days to make a gift of the clothings she was wearing to any devotee who presented new ones for her use. The devotees would reverentially accept these gifts of the Mother, and use some

of them during prayer or worship or preserve them as valuable mementos. As Juthica helped Mother to change her clothings, she made a present of her cloth to Juthica. I was eagerly wishing to have Mother's vest, but I felt shy and could not speak out. Presently, however, I was amazed to hear her say, 'This vest I give to *Baba*,' meaning myself. Thus I got a tangible proof of the fact that the Mother always knows about our earnest prayers, however mute, and grants them provided it did not hamper our spiritual growth. This experience was confirmed later on a number of occasions.

Dressing done, Juthica started feeding Mother with the sweets she had brought. I was silently watching. But very soon I felt an irresistible urge to feed her myself. 'Mother', said I, with hesitancy, 'may I too feed you?' She gave permission. I felt myself blessed. The previous evening's experience of *Toru Didi* flashed in my mind. I approached prayerfully and sat right in front of the Mother. I placed the palm of my left hand at the back of Mother's head. My body thrilled with joy and emotion as I put a small morsel of sweet into her mouth. I was so much overwhelmed that I could not feed her any more. 'You feed on', I hurriedly said to

Juthica and withdrew. Juthica completed the feeding.

At this our first private interview with Mother, both Juthica and I put one question to the Mother, seeking a solution of the grave problem that in the midst of all the joy we had in the Mother's company, was growing graver every day, and tormenting us. I must take the reader more into confidence to explain the problem.

As I visited Mother for hours together during these days, she stole into my heart and soon started displacing from its seat the image of *Bala Gopala* (child Krishna) that I enshrined there and worshipped. Naturally I felt restive as every devotee must feel during a change of an old *Ishta* (one's favourite form of God), to whom he had been devotedly attached for years. Strangely enough, the same revolutionary experience came upon Juthica as well. She too was feeling miserable, as her old *Ishta* was struggling to linger on the threshold of her heart.

I broached the problem. 'Mother' said I, 'since we first saw you, whenever we sit down before our image and close our eyes to meditate your face comes into our mind and so much fills it that we are unable to meditate on our *Bala Gopala*. We feel extremely uneasy over it. Does it pretend any evil for us?' The Mother at once

replied, '*Baba*, don't worry; all that happens is for the best, and all is by *Bala Gopal's* Grace.' We felt relieved.

Before Mother's departure from New Delhi on this occasion, at Juthica's request, I called in a photographer to have a portrait of the Mother in a special pose. Juthica decorated Mother as *Bala Gopala*. Her long hair was made up into a tuft on the crest of her head. A wreath of marigold was curled round the tuft. Her forehead and cheeks were speckled with *chandan* (paste of sandal-wood). Garlands of flower were put round her neck. She was made to sit half kneeling after the manner of *Gopala* with her left knee placed on the carpet and right knee up. She was thus photographed. A print of the photograph was framed and kept at our house by the side of the image of *Gopala*. Juthica has since then been worshipping both the images, and I have been praying and meditating before this portrait of Mother/almost daily to this day.

During those days we would not miss any opportunity of falling at Mother's feet in salutation. Many of us could sense the delicate aroma of lotus in her feet. Indeed all her garments and even her leather sandals gave off the same aroma. I do not know—I have now for years not had the good luck of falling at her feet,—I

am unable to say, if that sweet scent is still in her feet, or if I can still sense it.

On 1st April 1937, the Mother was to depart from Delhi Junction station by a train bound for Aligarh and due to leave at about 10 P. M. A large crowd of devotees collected on the platform to see her off. Juthica, Chhabi and I came too. To put off the inevitable hour of separation from the Mother, we three planned to accompany Mother up to Ghaziabad (11 miles from Delhi). We were to return from Ghaziabad by a train which would leave Ghaziabad about ten minutes after the arrival of the train by which we were to travel with Mother. But as this train was late in leaving Delhi by about twenty minutes, the train by which we were to return from Ghaziabad had left Ghaziabad before our arrival. As there was no other train by which we could return from Ghaziabad at that hour, we decided to accompany Mother up Aligarh (84 miles from Delhi).

In the train, before Mother stretched herself for a nap, I put to her a question, which I later thought was too silly. 'Mother', I asked, 'if when free from duty, I go to you, wherever you are, will you be offended?' With her characteristic frankness she replied, 'Baba, what sort of anomalous question are you putting? You call me mother

and yet talk of my offence'! I relished the intimacy and affection couched in that sweet rebuke. I felt that she was not only the very mother that I had lost and bitterly wept over when I was in my teens, and then twenty six years ago, but she was also the Universal Mother that had brought me into being with all motherly love and care during innumerable past births and through unknown eternity.

After Mother stretched herself, for over two hours, we were entertained by Gurupriya Didi (Mother's chief devotee and personal attendant) with interesting events in Mother's life which we heard with keen avidity.

We got down at Aligarh close upon 1 A. M. on 2nd April. For about a short half hour Mother and her party waited on the platform.

At length the inevitable hour of our physical separation from Mother, which we had succeeded in warding off for a few hours did arrive. Mother and party boarded a train bound for Bareilly. As the train moved, Mother was looking on us with a sweet smile on her face. Suddenly she addressed Gurupriya Devi in haste and said, 'Khukuni, Khukuni, (that was the nickname by which Mother used to call Gurupriya Didi), give them a blanket of mine'. Hurriedly Didi took a blanket from off Mother's bedding and

threw it out at me. I caught the precious gift in the air. The train steamed off, snatching from our sight the Mother, the sovereign of the dream-land in which we had then lived for six momentous days and nights. But the memory of her sweet smiling face, aglow with divine beauty and grace, so clearly persisted in our hearts, that we felt that she was inseparable from

us and went with us wherever we were.

Since then I have met Mother many times and passed many days in her blissful company. But the first impression I had on that unforgettable Holi day of 1937 has only deepened with time and through closer association.

THE UNIVERSALITY OF CONSCIOUSNESS

By

Lama Anagarika Govinda,
Acharya, Arya Maitreya Mandala.

The fact that consciousness exists in the world proves beyond doubt that the universe possesses consciousness as a fundamental faculty, either latent or active, but always present. And the fact that consciousness becomes more intense and more far reaching in the higher forms of life, indicates that there must be much greater possibilities of conscious life than ours.

The possibility of what may be termed 'cosmic consciousness' cannot be denied, and in fact, it is easier to conceive of such a super-conscious state than to imagine the greater part of the universe to be unconscious.

When man began to realize the nature of energy by the discoveries of magnetism and electricity, etc. etc., the great problem was, how the existence of matter could be justified. Matter began to be a greater mystery than ever before; and, intuitively, thinkers arrived at the conclusion that matter was perhaps only a latent state of energy. Recent discoveries justified these ideas.

Similarly the idea of cosmic consciousness leads to the problem how non-

conscious states, or states of imperfect consciousness are possible in a universe which is endowed with the faculty of consciousness-or, as the Vijnanavadins would say, in a consciousness which is endowed with the faculty of evolving a universe.

This problem, certainly, can never be answered objectively or scientifically. But from the experience within the little sphere of our own consciousness we may find indications pointing towards a certain direction in which the truth may lie.

Thus, it seems, that consciousness has the tendency to expand continuously and to penetrate everything, and that simultaneously, the farther consciousness moves towards the periphery (this term is not to indicate any spatial limitation but merely the opposite principle of centralization) the greater is the tendency of coagulation.

In the case of an individual centre of consciousness this coagulation takes the form of thoughts, feelings, ideas, which—all the more so as they

are persistent in their recurrence—belong to the periphery of consciousness and which finally build up the physical body.

But the centre of consciousness, which builds and conditions the individual form, is perhaps itself a peripheric coagulation in a much bigger process of consciousness - expansion in which we take part as long as we meet no serious resistance.

Materialisation is the one end of this process, cosmic consciousness the other. Matter, on the other hand, has a tendency to resolve itself again into dynamic or biological forms.

Consciousness—in common with other forms of energy—is intensified by the resistance created by various states of coagulation. It needs resistance to experience itself (to be conscious of itself), just as the coagulated forms need the re-vitalizing influence of active energies.

Does not the idea of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas as realisations of cosmic consciousness, which after having crystallized out of this world, on their part again emanate helping forces which throw themselves back into the Samsara (state of coagulation) by virtue of their compassion (Karuna), and who thus redeem continually the world and fulfil their own nature which consists in radiating love and compassion?

This may be the highest form of consciousness which is conscious of its own universality and boundless relationship. Karuna and maitri, in their cosmic significance, are the dissolving, liquifying counter-forces of coagulation and egohood.

Just as the sun “descends” into matter (which formerly was part of that same sun) by way of its rays, arousing the latent forces of the soil and rising again in the manifold forms of organic life, which it has redeemed from inertia and stagnation,—so the highest form of consciousness sends out rays of love and compassion and acts as a revitalizer, without losing its centre or becoming coagulated in itself, which could only happen if the centripetal force of ego-illusion were predominant.

And as the rays of the sun do not crystallise into material forms of their own accord, but only awaken and stimulate, and to some extent join, the latent forces of organic life, thus *maitri* and *karuna* can only act in co-operation with the individual forces of the samsaric world. These forces in their higher states of development, i.e. of progressive liquification may eventually again contribute to the centre of energy (consciousness) which helped in their revitalisation.

The question may arise, how the different centres of consciousness can

influence each other, in other words, how they are related to each other.

Let us imagine each conscious being in the form of an infinite plane, which is intersected by innumeral equally infinite planes. The mutual relations of these planes are represented by their lines of intersection, which denote the common elements of the planes meeting in those lines. In so far as each plane penetrates all the others, each being is potentially present in the other. Otherwise there could be no mutual influence of communication.

This relative presence of each being within the other (without, however, being identical with it, for which reason we call this presence 'relative') makes the idea of transmigration superfluous and explains how it is possible that a being "disappears here and reappears there" in the event of death and rebirth, without moving in space and time, without 'wandering' from one place to another.

The "I" is only a point of relationship, a centre of relations. Each point of the infinite plane can become such a relative centre. The bodily form is only a process of crystallisation, in which the individual consciousness materializes and creates a formal basis according to its nature. Just as crystals "precipitate" or form themselves, as soon as there are favour-

able conditions and the necessary impulse, in the same way consciousness coagulates into a material form, which serves as a basis of action for those forces which have remained mobile.

The starting point for such a basis is that germ which has the greatest affinity with the "being" or plane of consciousness in question, and which by its material qualities or hereditary conditions offers the "least resistance" and therefore the best chances of expression.

Just as a drop of water always follows the inclination of the ground and comes to rest at its deepest point, in the same way the "inclination" of a being's plane of consciousness determines the new centre if the old one has to be given up on account of the disintegration of the material basis in the event of death.

The survival of the mind, or better, the continuity of consciousness (santana) seems, from a biological point of view, to be the very precondition of all consciousness, which otherwise would have neither a meaning nor a justification for its existence. Whatever logical reasons we may find for the survival of the mind, the mere fact of "being conscious of oneself" means a thousand times more. Because all the reasons which our mind invents to prove the reality of our existence,,

are only a by-product of this very existence and are therefore not in a position to play the role of an impartial judge or an unprejudiced observer who looks on from the outside.

Thus we can only rely on our direct experience, and if we have lost this on account of our intellectualisation, our habitual or conventional forms of thinking, then we must try to regain it by means of meditation. Meditation in this case, however, does not mean pondering over deep problems, but consist in the profound absorption and resting within oneself, in which state discursive thought or ratiocination, *Savitarka*, is replaced by synthetic vision or intuitive insight and knowledge. "Without imagining, without deliberating, without analysing, without, 'meditating' without introspecting; keeping the mind in its natural state", as Tilopa, the great master of yoga, puts it. It is a state of inner readiness, of spiritual receptivity, which has nothing to do with intellectual coercion, mental programmes and intentions, in short, it has nothing to do with all that is willed and planned.

The experience of reality is in itself far more important than the faculty to remember former existences, because these remembrances are generally very limited, and thus the problem is only shifted or postponed but not solved; for, as death and

rebirth take place within ourselves at every moment, each act of remembrance might be called a remembrance of former existences.

The objection that these existences are connected by one and the same body, and that therefore the memory is merely a material process, can be easily refuted by the fact that in the course of about seven years all particles of our body have been replaced by others, and that thus the memory is a partial effect or a secondary function of that conscious force which, according to our nature (character, etc.) gives the relative constant shape to the unceasingly changing material particles of our body.

If, however, the consciousness possesses such a body-building, constructive, matter-transforming faculty, in that case there is no reason to limit this process temporally or causally or materially. On the contrary, causation rather indicates or points towards an infinite past and towards an infinite future. Thus the problem would not be, how to ensure continuity, but rather how cessation would be possible or even thinkable.

How far consciousness is bound to the body or not, can be found out by practical observations and psychological experiments. From these it can be seen that, though consciousness depends on material centres or organs,

it is nevertheless not identical with them, i. e., its limits are not the same as those of the respective organs. Recent researches, based on purely scientific method (like those conducted by Dr. Rhine), have proved beyond doubt the telepathic faculties of consciousness, and have shown that they really occupy a much wider space than is generally supposed and that they are not at all the privilege of a few exceptional individuals. This is borne out by the fact that in Tibet, where many of the distributing factors of modern life are eliminated from human consciousness, telepathic phenomena are not unusual, and there even exist various techniques by which they can be produced, cultivated, and utilized.

All these facts show that *consciousness is not limited in space*. And this coincides with the fact that *consciousness is neither limited in time*, since it is not bound to the present moment, but extends into the past as well as into the future. The latter phenomenon has been conclusively investigated by another prominent scientist, Dr. Dunne, author of "An experiment with Time" and "The Serial Universe".

Whether this temporal and spatial non-limitation of consciousness is identical with infinity or not, cannot be decided theoretically. We can only say that infinity

is a potential quality of consciousness. For our problem it is sufficient to establish the fundamental fact that our human consciousness does not coincide with the spatial and temporal boundaries of the body, and that therefore there is nothing to prevent the continuity of consciousness through out any number of reincarnations.

The transition from one existence to the next, may be described as a dislocation or shifting of the relative centre of consciousness. As, however, each individual consciousness always penetrates and takes part in innumerable other planes of consciousness, responding to them and influencing them in return,—there is neither the necessity of a "soul-transmigration" nor of a "search after a new womb" in the moment of physical death; but within the plane which our consciousness has occupied all the time, another point becomes its centre of gravitation, according to natural affinity and the law of least resistance.

The "disappearing here and the reappearing there" is thus not connected with any spatial movement or "wandering" and can therefore neither be associated with time. The consciousness of human being might be compared to a big Banyan tree, possessing innumerable air-roots. The main trunk represents the self-consciousness of man, in which he is conscious

of himself as an individual. The, innumerable air-roots represent the relations of his consciousness (which radiate in all directions) towards other beings or potential centres of life. The main trunk ages, and when it finally decays, the next-biggest air root automatically becomes the main trunk and the centre ("I") of the tree. Thus the centre has shifted, and yet nothing has moved.

Naturally, every theoretical explanation and every simile lags far behind the facts of reality. But by approaching our problems from as many sides as possible, while being fully aware of our conceptual limitations, we shall remain alive to the experience of reality within us which is the key not only to the riddles of the universe but to our final liberation.

Sri Mata Anandamayi
and
The Spiritual Problem of the Age

By

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

(II.)

It has been my good fortune to come into contact with two Personalities in whom I have glimpsed the spiritual perfection that I have tried to describe in discussing the qualities and influence of a true 'Guru'. I have also met a number of minor 'sages' and fairly advanced 'yogis' in whom too this real *knowledge* is to be found within certain limitations. The first and most outstanding personality of this kind, within my experience, was that of *Shri Raman Maharshi* the well-known sage of Arunachala (Tiruvannamalai in South India) with whom I was in close contact for about six years, until he left the body in April 1950. The next personality that I contacted, with whom my experience has been similar and comparable, is *Shri Anandamayi Mata* whom I first met

only recently in November 1951*, but who has already created a deep and ineffaceable impression upon me. As it is for her that this article is being written. I shall now confine myself to what I have perceived of her and through her.

I had been hearing about her from various sources even during the Maharshi's life-time and had formed an idea of seeing her at some convenient opportunity, but at that time I felt no urgency about it. From the descriptions I had heard I was inclined to think that she would be a person of the '*bhakta*' (devotional and emotional) type, and I was not sure that she would understand a person of my temperament. After the Maharshi's death I made several attempts to contact her, but unsuccessfully, as she

* This article was written originally in March 52, but could not for certain reasons be utilised at that time.

was always moving about; and did not, to my knowledge, visit any place where I could easily see her. In April 1951, when I visited Benares, I was taken by an old friend (now a great and sincere devotee of Mataji's to her *ashrama* on the Gangos, where I sensed a little more of her influence; this increased my desire to contact her personally, all the more as all my friends in Benares were unanimous in their admiration of her. I tried to contact her near Rishikesh where she was reported to be staying at that time, but just missed her by a day. After that I made no other attempt to meet her till November, when I heard that she was staying in Benares. Coming down to the plains from my usual residence in the hills, I reached Benares on the 13th of November, and was taken to Mataji's *Ashrama* by the friend aforementioned on the evening of the 14th. I found a big and unfamiliar crowd, and sat down in a corner of the open terrace to wait for whatever might develop. Ultimately, as it was getting dark, Mataji came out and began pacing up and down on the terrace—her usual evening-exercise. Various people came and bowed to her and touched her feet; and ultimately, I was taken to her by my attentive friend and briefly introduc-

ed. I bowed deeply and Mataji simply said in Bengali: "later". So I again sat down and waited, until *Kirtan* (devotional singing) was started in the hall below. Along with others I also went there, and was sitting at some distance but within view of Mataji who came and sat down near a pillar. The *Kirtan* went on, and later she joined in herself, singing in her sweet and well-modulated voice—very simple but thrilling. I felt the *Kirtan* coming to life, as it were, when she began to sing; and the memory of it still lingers with me. Gradually I fell into a stage of 'contemplation', and I suppose she must have noticed this; anyhow, I made no effort to attract her attention. I suppose my friend must have told Mataji that I was seeking a private interview with her, but so far I had not spoken any word to Mataji myself. I had heard that she was not very well and did not wish to give her any special trouble. After about an hour of the *Kirtan*, a friend with whom I had arranged to go back to Rajghat (where I was staying) came and suggested that it was time to leave. So I bowed to her from where I was sitting and went out. Before I had reached the gate of the *Ashrama*, a messenger came and told me that Mataji would see me the next day at nine in the

morning, provided I arrived punctually. My friend and guide in the *Ashrama* also came up and said triumphantly. "See now, Mataji only plays at not knowing people; in reality she knows every one who comes to her. Be punctual to-morrow."

Next day, i. e. 15th November, I made ready early, and in spite of the distance reached the *Ashrama* in very good time. Soon after Mataji came out of her room and sat in a tiny pergola that is situated in front of it, and I was invited into her presence. Bowing to her I sat down, and for a time she remained silent and apparently in meditation: I also meditated. Then she opened her eyes, and with a very sweet smile asked whether I had just come to see her or wished to ask something. I told her briefly about myself and my reasons for consulting her that I wished to find someone with whom I could regularly spend a few months in the year in order to help me in my *Sadhana* (spiritual discipline) which I had obtained from the Maharshi, and whether she could recommend me to someone who might be useful in this direction. She said she found it difficult to think of anyone who would be quite suitable; and as for herself—well, she had no fixed abode and no regular programme. Then she began asking me

about details of my *Sadhana* and my experiences; and then suddenly, as if an idea had struck her, said: "look, I am making a proposition to you. Why don't you go and stay in the *Ashrama* at Vindhya-chal, and do *Sadhana* there for some time. Arrangements could be made for you." I eagerly accepted her offer, and she said she would ask *Didi* (a Bengali *Sannyasi* lady who serves as her secretary) to give me a letter. Then she gave me a little further advice with regard to my *Sadhana* and dismissed me after introducing me to *Didi*. The latter said I could have the letter in a day or two, and as I was in no particular hurry I did not press her.

After this, having programmed for a week's stay in Benares, I continued my residence at Rajghat and was coming to the *Ashrama* every evening for about 2½ hours. I made no further attempt to speak to Mataji, knowing how busy she was and also in poor health, but occasionally she herself noticed me and asked me if I had got the letter and made preparations for going to Vindhya-chal. I used to go near her room, if possible, and meditate; and nearly every time I found that I could achieve excellent meditation, in spite of the din and noise and the constant movements of the visitors. Anyhow it used to be dark, and

that was helpful, and no one questioned my presence. Then I left for Allahabad from where I had to make my arrangements to go to Vindhyaçal. Thus it was on the 27th of November 12 days after meeting Mataji, that I found myself in that small town between Allahabad and Benares.

Arriving in the afternoon, I was taken to *Bhajanalaya*, a well-constructed bungalow near the *Ashrama* proper, which I learnt later had been built by a rich Calcutta merchant as a residence for himself in his old age; and now the house has apparently been placed at the disposal of Mataji for use, but not donated to her. So when I arrived I found a Bengali gentleman and his son already established in the room intended for me, and I was surprised to learn that these people had not even heard of Mataji—much less come there on her behalf—and later on it was with me that they went to see her. Anyhow since another room was available I was put to no inconvenience, and the whole of my stay at Vindhyaçal was perfectly comfortable. Both the *Ashrama* and this bungalow are situated on the 'plateau' an eminence about 160 feet above the road-level and situated just above the tiny village of Shivapur. From above there are charming views of the river (the

Ganges) which at this place takes a broad curve, and the surrounding country for many miles, whilst Vindhyaçal proper and even Mirzapur are visible in the distance.

Next day about 11 in the morning I learnt that Mataji herself had arrived at Vindhyaçal and was staying in the *Ashrama*. When I left Banaras the possibility of her visiting Vindhyaçal had been mentioned, but it was not a certainty; anyhow her arrival and stay there made my residence in that place much more memorable for me than it might have proved to be otherwise. When I went to see her in the evening she was in her little room upstairs and there were already a few people sitting around her. She made kind enquiries about me, and I told her that I was comfortably lodged; as she appeared to be tired I soon came away. By this time I had got settled down, and during the next 12 days whilst Mataji remained at Vindhyaçal I had a very good opportunity of seeing her every day and was able to have several talks with her. In this place there were very few visitors, and usually I found myself one of a group of eight to ten persons only. I soon found out the times when she was free to receive devotees, and normally went only at those times. But a few times I managed to see her nearly alone, and

I utilised these opportunities for discussing my *Sadhana* and experiences with her. When there were only a few people present, and no talk was going on, I often meditated with excellent results. My usual test with any 'teacher' or 'yogi' is to try and meditate in his (or her) presence; and from the ease and depth of the results I am inclined to judge as to whether the personality before me is capable of inspiring me. This (test) was *always* triumphantly successful with Mataji, and I became convinced of her spiritual powers and attainments as firmly as I was in the case of my own *Guru*, the Maharshi. Some times when people began asking questions I listened to her exposition, and learnt to admire the skill with which she went direct to the heart of any difficulty. It was only twice or thrice that I asked her any questions myself, and that only when she was practically alone and I found her replies always worth pondering on. Within a very short time I began to feel perfectly at ease with her, and her kindness and informality melted away whatever natural reticence I may have felt with her in the beginning.

A few small incidents may be mentioned as revealing her character and personality. The day after she had arrived at Vindhyachal i.e. on the morning of the 29th, I went at 9 to

the *Ashrama* to make enquiries as to when Mataji would be visible. I was told by some of the people below that she was resting and could not be disturbed, and I was about to come away when Mataji herself saw me from the balcony of her room and asked me to come up. Going up, I found her quite alone, and had about an hour's talk with her during the whole of which we were undisturbed. I again discussed my *Sadhana* with Mataji and she gave me much helpful advice. She showed a perfect comprehension of my approach and inner nature; and I found that (contrary to my earlier expectations) she understood the *advaitist* point of view very well. Later I observed her giving advice to other people along different lines; and I always found that she seemed to comprehend everyone's inner nature and would advise accordingly. In many cases she said things which were very profound, and probably beyond the full comprehension of the person addressed, but she put them so simply that I think her hearers felt completely satisfied that they were understanding her. I found her ready to meet every-one on his own ground, and capable of answering the real inner needs of every enquirer. I had no opportunity of judging the reactions of her interlocutors, but to my own mind it was a wonderful

exhibition of catholicity of outlook and profundity of understanding. It was an intellectual delight and an object lesson in clarity of exposition to watch her tackling the difficulties of the various enquirers who approached her; and whenever such an opportunity arose I listened with all attention.

Some people, I find, feel puzzled with regard to her attitude towards religious ceremonies and rites, and her relation to the different schools of Hindu *Sadhana*. Some feel that a truly enlightened soul (a *Jnani*) cannot support these various forms of worship; whilst others feel (and sometimes very strongly) that a teacher who professes equal devotion to all forms of Godhead cannot be sincerely devoted to any. It is a difficult attitude to explain to sectarians and exclusivists; and on the other hand the bland assertion, so often unthinkingly made, that all forms of Godhead are one and the same Reality perceived under different forms, also tends to be unconvincing to an enquiring modern mind. If the Reality is the same, why does it manifest itself in so many different forms with contradictory attributes, and what is the common link between them? Are there no 'false' gods, and must we admit the truth of all worship, howsoever degrading? Do not these 'forms' bear palpably upon their faces the

marks of human invention? And if so many, why not more? Can we say that whilst 'gods' have been created by at human needs, vision or ingenuity, in the past, but that the process has come to a stop now? The whole question bristles with difficulties, and an intellectually satisfying answer is hardly available. But perhaps it is also possible to approach the question from another angle altogether. These worships which have got established have a certain energy of devotion and thought-force behind them, and this 'secondary life' which any 'sacred' object seems to acquire from the outpourings of its devotees, continues to be felt by and to help many people. Hence a wise teacher can accommodate oneself to such worships, thus ennobling practices which threaten to become debased and degraded, and through the purity of his own attitude draw out what is the noblest and best in them. I believe it is only in this spirit that Mataji lends herself to all sorts of Hindu rituals and observances; for a little talk with her will convince any one that she does not consider these observances necessary or helpful for everybody, and her own attitude in such matters remain exceedingly self-possessed and detached.

So her interest in these worships and rituals, and her readiness to par-

participate in them, are dictated by a wise and understanding tolerance of human nature; and she utilises all such opportunities for drawing people's attention to the higher inner principles behind these various forms. This attitude is repugnant to the rationalist and the reformer, but there is much to be said also for a wise and catholic tolerance; anyhow this is *her* way. Once I met an ardent admirer of hers in those days when I had not met her personally, and he was complaining of loud and noisy worship performed in her *Ashrama*, and of her lending herself to all kinds of ritualistic observances. When I saw her in Benares I perceived all this for myself but, in spite of all the din and noise I could always meditate effectively in her vicinity. I never discussed these matters with her, and she never expected or advised me to join any such worship; all the same I felt my highest side stimulated in her presence and therefore never worried about these manifestations going on side-by-side. I think she tries to help everyone at his or her own level, without making very great demands to *begin with*, but waiting for an opportunity to point to the highest Reality. Hence, as I have said before, it is worthy of notice that whatever be the worship or ritual that she participates in, she is always in a sense detached and self-recollected.

One of the most interesting discussions I heard from Mataji was about this very question of different 'perceptions' and 'experiences' along the mystical path. The question was put by some one else, but I happened to be present and listened to the whole exposition carefully. I do not say that it solves the whole difficulty, or that it is original, but it is significant of her attitude. Suppose, she said, different people come to Delhi by different paths—by aeroplane, by train or by car—they will see different approaches and mark different objects. If these people compare their observations they will necessarily disagree as to details. But one who has seen *all* the different approaches knows that these contradictory descriptions are all true in a sense. In the same way there might be different tracks up a mountain, and different people might use them for their particular purposes, only a person who knows the whole area can say how these differing and contradictory descriptions can be reconciled. Similarly, in spiritual experience there are different paths, and for a long time they remain distinct and irreconcilable. An aspirant experiences the 'Truth' as it is along his own particular path: only as he approaches the top he begins to realise that there are many other paths also up the mountain, paths of which

he has no *actual* knowledge. So people quarrel, partly because their knowledge of the spiritual reality is imperfect and incomplete; but the vast majority of disputants are people who have no actual knowledge of the path, who have done no travelling but who take for their guides descriptions left by others--descriptions often incomplete and misleading. Most of these controversies are carried on by people who have no *actual* knowledge of the higher reality, and whose minds have not been sobered by its very real difficulties and dangers, as happens to those who actually attempt the 'path' seriously.

It is true that this answer still leaves many difficulties unsolved, but perhaps *no complete intellectual answer* is possible. Each man must learn by his own experience the extreme difficulty of putting any of the realisations of inner life into terms of external knowledge the only kind of knowledge of which the normal man has any experience. The so-called descriptions of the path are only '*rationalisations*', in terms of the knowledge and thought of the epoch when they were formulated, of particular phases and stages of spiritual experience. Moreover these have been elaborated, recast, poeticised, often by men with only a limited vision, and the result is the vast *corpus* of the mystical literature of all times

and ages, which is admittedly often difficult and contradictory. Even so, great resemblances can be traced, and many a landmark can be located with sufficient precision. Hence, for the man *who actually wishes to travel* the mystical path is sufficiently comprehensible; and the higher up we travel the more certain do we become about its main features. But there can be no description which will satisfy the critical intellect even before an actual experience of the inner reality has been gained.

I have to spin out the few talks and discussions I have heard in order to give some sort of a mental picture of Mataji's personality. But, as with every form of genius, the real secret remains locked up in her individual being. A 'saint' or a 'sage' owes his or her power, not to any system of thought or method of exposition, but to the mysterious force of the 'personality' which makes it possible for lesser people to glimpse something of the Truth through him. No discussion however complete, no exposition however lucid, can ever convey this power; and so, ultimately, any such introduction can only be a preliminary to a contact with the "*great personality.*" It may remove some misunderstandings, may direct attention to some significant points, may make the

contact more fruitful when it comes—but can never take the place of actual contact; nor should it be thought that these ‘sages’ have a ‘system’ which being intellectually understood can then be mechanically propagated. The world is cluttered with ‘dead’ systems; and every effort to propagate the words of a Teacher becomes ultimately another dead tradition. The only way in which one can ‘propagate’ such wisdom is by acquiring it for oneself, assimilating it in one’s own experience, and only then can one do the true work of the Teacher.

Finally, a few words about our relation to any such great ‘personalities’ when once we have established contact with them, and when our heart’s response has shown us that a true relation has been established. The vast majority of people in India want merely to worship—to treat the revered personality as an *idol* for the passive and gracious reception of their love and adoration. But we must remember that such worship does no good to its object, and on the other hand imposes a constant strain. Valuable as contact with such a personality can be, we must realise that there are limits to what we can learn passively. The constant company and physical pre-

sence of the idolised figure only creates a state of ‘saturation’ beyond which no progress is made. The people who achieve most are generally those who, making wise use of what they can gain and absorb during periods of physical nearness to the Teacher, seek to assimilate and purify their experiences in periods of solitude and inner striving. If we remember this, we shall perhaps be less greedy of the company of the idolised figure—a fault too common amongst devotees.

Then there should be no jealousy, ill-will or intolerance. Round any such personality we shall find many people whose ways and modes of thought are unfamiliar and even repulsive to us. Therefore such opportunities should be used for learning tolerance and comprehension: at least showing good-will and good manners even where we cannot identify ourselves with their ways. But above all we should not be *jealous*. We should not feel upset because someone else receives the attention or kindness that we covet for ourselves. Let us rely upon the perception and the inner grace of the Teacher; and if we are not clamorous and forever making personal demands, we shall probably receive the inner grace more abundantly. Even apparent neglect on the

part of the Teacher may be wise and useful, and may be designed to test discrimination and sincerity as to whether we can differentiate between outward attention and inward 'grace'. When-ever jealousy, resentment or anger comes into our hearts in any relation connected with the Teacher, we must examine our attitude ruthlessly, and try to discover what our real motives are.

It is a great privilege to come into contact with a true Teacher of the Inner Path, but great as the privilege is, it imposes corresponding obligations. It is a *Karmic* opportunity, and neglect or misuse of it will bring spiritual retardation and suffering. So when such an opportunity comes, let us make use of it wisely, discriminatingly, and above all with unselfishness and true humility. A real Teacher will always notice and respond to the inner attitude of the would-be pupil: there is no need in this relationship to use the methods of pushfulness and noisy supplication with which we are so familiar in the outer world. If our attitude is pure, our mind alert and active, and our inner longing real, the influence of the Teacher will steal into our hearts in moments when we are least self-conscious, and make that experience possible which assure the

pupil that he has really been 'set upon the path'. This is the true significance and purpose of our contact with any real Teacher; and the other experiences, such as the feeling of joy in the Teacher's presence and the emotional linkage with him or her, are only of subsidiary importance. Hence when *Karma* throws such an opportunity in our way, we have to learn to use it wisely and to the best purpose.

As I have tried to indicate, I feel assured that Mataji is one of the few such Teachers to be seen in the world, and great is the opportunity of those who come into contact with her. I have tried in this article to give some hints as to how this opportunity may be availed of to the best purpose, and have also tried to point out the right method and spirit in which an aspirant can approach such a *Personality*—of course from my own point of view and with my own experience as the back-ground. The earnest aspirant will know how to mould these hints to suit his own particular case. I can only end by fervently praying that more and more such earnest aspirants may be drawn into contact with Mataji, and derive from her to the fullest extent that inspiration and guidance which I am sure she can give.

From The Life of Sri Sri Ma Anandamayi

(3)

The care-free days of Mataji's childhood were drawing to a close. In accordance with the ancient custom of rural India, Mataji's parents began to look for a suitable bridegroom for Her as soon as She was a little more than a child. Friends and neighbours also, took a hand in this search and as everyone spoke well of the family of Sri Jagatbandhu Chakravarti of Atpara, his third son was approved of as a suitable match for Mataji.

Accordingly, at the age of eleven years and ten months, Mataji was given in marriage to Sri Ramani Mohan Chakravarti, who later on, came to be widely known as Bholanath or simply 'Pitaji'.

Didima, tearfully bidding farewell to her daughter, gave Her the following advice on future deportment; "Now you must look upon your husband as your guardian, and obey and respect him, just as you respected us, your own parents."

It may be imagined, that Mataji followed this advice, implicitly and completely, as was Her wont with all instructions received from elders.

Throughout the lifetime of Pitaji She never did anything without his consent and permission.

Recalling this incident in later life, Mataji said; "At the time of my marriage they told that I should respect and obey Bholanath. Consequently, I gave him the respect and obedience due to my father. Bholanath himself also behaved just like a father to me. From the very beginning, he seemed to have absolute faith in me. He appeared to be convinced that whatever I might do could not be anything but right".

This implicit faith, a quality aspired for by sadhakas of all ages and realms, proves Bholanath's worth as nothing else can ever do. We must remember that he was a simple villager, not possessing anything beyond the usual and elementary knowledge of religious life and the ways of sadhana. At the time of his marriage, he naturally could not foresee the extraordinary events that would change radically the tenor of his life. Yet Pitaji was not found wanting when confronted with the unusual consequences of his marriage.

The members of Bholanath's family however did not take matters as calmly as he did. In the course of time and with the gradual unfolding of Mataji's personality, it became clear to them that it would never be possible for Bholanath to lead a conventional home life with Her. Although Mataji had endeared Herself to Her husband's family, they naturally enough had his interests at heart also. Consequently they thought it to be their duty, to urge Bholanath to marry again. This Bholanath absolutely refused to think of even, declaring that he was quite satisfied with the existing state of affairs.

Not only did Bholanath lightly and easily relinquish his claim to a regular home life, but he also bore without perturbation the first impact of the revelations of Mataji's Divine personality.

Among all Mataji's close companions he occupied the most anomalous position. On the one hand he looked upon Her as his Guru and spiritual preceptor, and on the other he received from Her the untiring and selfless service of a devotedly dutiful wife. How he reconciled these two positions we do not know. That he was able to do so perhaps shows that he was pre-ordained to occupy this unique position.

However all this came much later, when Mataji went to keep house for him at Ashtagram, Bajitpura and Dacca.

Immediately after Her marriage She was taken to live with the family of Bholanath's eldest brother, Sri Revati Mohan Chakravarti. He was a station-Master in the service of the Railway Department. At the time of his marriage Bholanath was working in the Police Department. Some time after his marriage he lost this job and failed to secure another for a few years. At about this time Mataji's parents left Kheora and went back to live in Vidyakut.

Mataji lived with Sri Revati Babu's family for four years after Her marriage. From the very beginning Mataji took upon Herself the duties of the entire household. Her work included fetching water from the pond, cooking for the whole family, looking after the children and running errands for Her somewhat exacting sister-in-law.

Those that have seen Mother work around the house, have all testified to the quickness and neatness of Her movements. She seemed to get a lot of things accomplished within the least possible time. What was more wonderful was, that with all this heavy work, She never appeared to be tired or overworked.

Revati Babu's children were devoted to Her; the eldest child, Ashu would not have anybody but his *Kakima** do anything for him. One day Mataji was getting him ready for school. All of a sudden he started creating a great fuss, shouting that he would not eat from his *Kakima*'s hands any more. As his mother knew that he liked nothing better, she came to investigate and found that Mataji's hands were in a deplorable condition. Continuous washing and cleaning had corroded the skin and there were deep wounds around the bases of Her fingers. Everyone was appalled and demanded to know why She had not said anything about it before. As a matter of fact, Mataji's tranquil demeanour and uncomplaining nature had prevented them from gauging the real amount of work that She had to do.

Inspite of this heavy household routine, Mataji found time to learn various arts and crafts. During Her hard-earned spare time, She would visit the houses of neighbours. Her sweet disposition made Her welcome in every home. Although She was shy and retiring, as befitted a newly married girl, She had a pleasant word and smile for everyone. Girls of Her own age claimed Her as a friend and

equal while older women treated Her affectionately like a daughter. During these pleasant sojourns in neighbouring houses amidst friendly talks, Mataji learnt needlework, canework, the spinning of fine thread and other handicrafts. Mataji could spin thread so fine that She could put a whole length of the sacred thread (near-about 10 yards) inside the empty shell of a cardamom. She used to present these sacred threads, packed in this manner to various members of Her family. A few specimen of Her handiwork are being preserved by Didi in the Varanasi Ashram. There was one beautiful piece of embroidery, the portrait of Lord Krishna, which Didi inadvertantly had framed and hung up on a wall. The day Mataji noticed it, She took it down, and before anyone could realize what She was about, threw it into the Ganges. She does not appreciate hoarding of any kind, and since then has threatened Didi that, the day it is Her kheyal, She will clear off the whole store of souvenirs. Consequently Didi has removed them out of sight and keeps them all well hidden.

It has already been mentioned that the states of samadhi which became such a regular feature of some later period in Mataji's life were not

* A variant of the term 'Mother' meaning uncle's wife.

of sudden origin. They had occurred in Her childhood and also during the time She was with Revati Babu's family. Sometimes these states would happen when there was no one to see Her ; but sometimes She would lie crumpled up on the kitchen floor and the smell of burning food would attract the family. After being roused She would appear ashamed and quickly set about preparing another meal. At a loss to account for these phenomena they thought that Mataji was sometimes overcome by fits of drowsiness.

Revati Babu and his wife came to love Mataji as their own daughter. A few years ago, Mataji went to Calcutta to grace with Her presence a big function organized by the devotees of the town. Ashu's mother came to see Her there. We do not know but we can guess that the old lady must have felt bewildered and lost amidst the great concourse of devotees. Mother also had a very crowded programme and was nearly always unapproachable.

One night, after the visitors had all departed and the Ashram had settled down for the night, Mataji, came out of Her room quietly. As it was long after midnight, only a few close companions were awake, and they followed Her to the bedside of Ashu's

mother. Mataji woke her up gently, and sitting down close beside her, clasped her hands within Her own and then gaily started conversing with her in the purest of dialects. She forthwith plunged into a sea of reminiscences, talking of old friends, familiar places and reminding her of old stories and incidents. Although taken a little aback at first, Ashu's mother quickly regained confidence and looked happy. She was particularly pleased to see how well Mataji remembered the old days. She seemed to be able to recognize in Mataji the wellbeloved girl who had served her so well in the past. She did not seem to be an awe-inspiring personality or at all unapproachable. By this time everyone had joined in the conversation and Mataji was making them all laugh by Her funny stories of village life and Her rendering of the village dialects. The hilarious laughter of the company woke up other people also, and by the end of the hour the room became quite crowded. Once Mataji jokingly asked Ashu's mother : "Look mother, all these housewives think that they are great experts in household work. Tell them if I also, did not look after your house satisfactorily ?" Ashu's mother considered the question and then quite seriously gave the following reply : "You all cannot really imagine how sweet and

good She was. She not only did my entire work but I must also acknowledge that She did not give me a moment's trouble throughout the years that She was with me. Truly, that sort of a spirit of service (*seva-bhava*) is rare now-a-days."

To the onlookers, what appeared to be more wonderful than this ungrudging testimonial, was Mother's look of gratification, as if She were pleased to have Her services appreciated !

To continue with the events in chronological order, Revati Babu passed away about four years after Mataji's marriage. After his death Mataji with his widow and family came to live in Atpara. She remained with them for about six months and then went to visit Her parents in Vidyakut. While She was in Atpara, Bholanath had got a job in the employ of the Nawab of Dacca, in Ashtagram. Mataji was in Vidyakut for another six months and then came to Ashtagram to keep house for Bholanath.

Bholanath was the tenant of Sri Jaishankar Sen, whose wife from the very beginning took upon herself the duty of looking after the comforts of the new household. Mataji had the quality of endearing Herself to all those who came into contact with Her. Charmed by Mataji's pleasant

demeanour, Srimati Sen named Her 'Khushir ma'.

At this time Srimati Sen had her brother Sri Harakumar Rai staying with her. Although well educated and well employed, he sometimes would be carried away by religious fervour and during these times it would be impossible for him to behave or work normally.

From the very first day that he saw Mataji, he prostrated himself before Her and addressed Her as 'Mother'. He looked for opportunities to help Her, but this was difficult as Mataji according to custom did not speak to him. He, however would do Her shopping and would worry if the wood for cooking was damp and smoky. Somehow or other, he would procure dry wood for Her. As may be imagined, all these unsolicited attentions were not approved of by the neighbours. Sri Harakumar, however did not care, and defying the customs and traditions of village life, visited Her every day to do '*pranam*' and ask for '*prasad*'. But Mataji did not break traditions and with Her veil drawn well over her face, She would stand at a distance, quiet and unresponsive. She could not prevent him from doing *pranam*, but She certainly would not give him *prasad*. When he could not move Her, in

despair he appealed to Bholanath, saying that his entreaties which left Mataji quite indifferent, would have melted the heart of a statue. Bholanath, impressed by his sincerity and devotion, asked Mataji to give Harakumar Her *prasad*. Mataji always

tried to obey Bholanath as implicitly as She had obeyed Her parents, and Harakumar had his wish fulfilled. He used to say : "Now it is only I who call you 'Mother'. Some day the world will recognize you and call you so".

(To be continued)

SIXTY-SECOND BIRTHDAY OF SHRI MA ANANDAMAYI

CELEBRATED AT AHMEDABAD

From 2-5-57 to 18-5-57

(A philosophic view by Swami Madhav Tirtha)

The celebrations took place from 2nd to 10th May at the house of Mukundbhai Thakore. They consisted of a Bhagavata Saptah, Bhajans, Kirtans and Meditation (from 8-45 p. m. to 9 p. m.) and talks with Mother etc.

Further from 2nd May to 18th May at Kantibhai Munshaw's house. There was Rasalila, Kirtan, Katha, Bhajan, Meditation and talks with the Mother. In fact, except for a few hours of sleep, the whole period was spent in Divine work which created an unusually Divine atmosphere.

A devotee asked Mother :—

“What is the meaning of your birthday ? According to the Vedanta Shastra nobody is born and nobody dies.”

Mother : This body says that it was not born. Shri Krishna had no birth, yet people are celebrating his *Janmastami*. By celebrating such occasions, there is an increase of devotion, true knowledge and Satsang among the devotees and therefore I do not object to these

activities. I enjoy them as others enjoy them. It is a similar function as on *Ramnavami* day. On such occasions saints and devotees gather together, have discussions and many questions are solved. Therefore, the level from which the birth-day celebrations are viewed must be taken into consideration.

Question : If those who believe in the absolute oneness of the spirit, celebrate such occasions in which divided talks and observations occur will not their unitary (*Advaita*) knowledge disappear ?

Mother :— If a man who has passed his B. A. examination talks to little children and takes interest in their play, will his knowledge of B. A. disappear ? In the same way, a man who has firm spiritual knowledge of absolute unity will not lose his knowledge, if he takes part in such festivals. Spiritual knowledge is self-sufficient and perfect. It does not admit divisions. It is not subject to Maya and it knows no disturbance of peace. Pitaji will give further explanations.

I said : Birthday celebrations can be considered from the following three points of view :—

1. *Adhytamic* : From the absolute point of view no one is born and no one dies.

2. *Adhidaivic* : From the point of view of the universal spirit, *Saguna* spirit; birth and actions are divine and everything is possible. God can take birth as an Avatar also.

3. *Adhibhautik* : From the material point of view, birth and death do appear. This is the angle of vision of the ordinary man.

Mataji : There is no difference between *Saguna* and *Nirguna*. If differences appear, they are like the difference between water and ice. The Spirit is one. As the nature of fire is to burn, the nature of the Divine is to give light. Therefore all means are good. There is no division and every possibility is contained in everything.

On the 2nd May, Ma Anandamayi was to be worshipped and Mukundbhai had made good preparations. But Ma did not want to be worshipped. She desired that God should be worshipped. She found a remedy. There was a book in her hand on the cover of which was a picture of Shri Krishna. She said this should be worshipped. But the devotees wanted to worship the living God in the form of the Mother. Yet, Ma did not like it. She found a way out. She wanted to demonstrate that God is in all. Therefore, she got down from her seat, moved round the devo-

tees, threw flowers amongst them and prostrated before them thus worshipping God in them all. In her view, God was collectivity and collectivity was God. The whole atmosphere was changed. There was a new day and a new divine space created by the Mother. It appeared as if we were celebrating God's birthday.

Then she took her seat and allowed the Puja to be performed.

As it was the first day of the Bhagavata Saptah, the evening talk with the Mother commenced with a question from a devotee as to the real meaning of the Bhagavata. Ma wanted me to reply. I said that in the Bhagavata, equal stress is laid on Bhakti, Jnana (knowledge) and Vairagya (renunciation). I defined these three on the authority of the Bhagavata as follows :—

I. BHAKTI.

Kapil Bhagawan says to Mata Devahuti as follows :—

मद्गुणं श्रुति मात्रेण मयि सर्वं गुहाशये ।
मनोगति रविच्छिन्ना यथा गङ्गाम्भसोऽम्बुधौ

३-२८-११

i. e. if only by hearing of my (God's) divine qualities, a devotee's mind incessantly flows towards me who reside in the hearts of all, like Ganges water incessantly flowing into the sea, that is the sign of true devotion.

2. TRUE KNOWLEDGE.

वदन्ति तत् तत्त्वविद् स्वत्वं यज्ज्ञानमद्वयम् ।
ब्रहेति परमात्मेति भगवानिति शब्दवत्ते
१-२-११

The wise say that unitary knowledge which knows no divisions is called *Brahman*, *Paramatma* or God.

3. VAIRAGYA (Renunciation)

न ताक पृष्ठं न च पारमेष्ठ्यं
न सार्वभौमं न रसाधस्तम्
न योग सिद्धी रपुनर्मेचंवा
ससजस त्वा विरह्य काङ्क्षे
६-११-२५

A real devotee does not want heaven, or the state of *Brahman* or the Kingdom of the world, or the lower worlds or yogic powers or even salvation. In other words, a devotee wants God only and nothing else.

This, I said, was the brief purport of the *Bhagavata*. Mataji was pleased with this short summary, but Mukundbhai Thakore wanted more explanations from Mataji. Mataji said: "Pitaji has given a beautiful summary and nothing further remains to be said."

Then Shyam Sunder, a devotee from Vrindaban requested Mataji to sing the Kirtan of "*Hari Bol*". Mataji commenced but could not get into the right mood. She said: "If you all sing with me, Hari will come and a good Kirtan will follow." Then all began the Kirtan of "*Hari Bol*" to-

gether and this collective singing changed the atmosphere so much that the presence of Hari was distinctly felt by me. I also learnt from the Mother the method of invoking God. It is to see Him in all simultaneously. If we see that other persons are sitting in the pandal, God is not there. God will come when there is no otherness. Mataji said that God was collectivity in which nothing could be separated.

I wanted to remain for only three days but Mataji requested me to stay till the end of the celebrations. Therefore, I cancelled my other programme up to the 18th of May, so that I could continuously bathe in the divine atmosphere created by Mataji's presence. During that period, Shri Hari Babaji was also giving inspired *Kathas*, selecting some useful chapters from the *Bhagavata* like *Veda Stuti* and *Bhishma Stuti* etc. This was an additional advantage and helped very much in creating a divine atmosphere.

On the 3rd May, in the Raslila, Radhaji requested Shri Krishna to describe her divine form. Shri Krishna compared her to the moon or sandal wood. But Radha was not satisfied. She took the form of Krishna and said that the whole of Vrindaban belonged to her. Then a quarrel ensued between the two. The Sakhis (maids) intervened and it was finally decided that there was no difference between Radha

and Krishna and that Vrindaban belonged to them jointly. In the same way the world belongs to the divinely inspired individual as much as to God.

4th May.

Mukundbhai said that although several Avatars of God had come to the world, people were still living in ignorance. He asked Mataji what was the reason for this? When would he obtain the grace of God?

Mataji: God's grace is already acting and the Bhagavata Saptah is the fruit of this. Besides, you are eternally living in God and God is using you in His eternal Lila.

5th May.

Question: When the dissolution of the world takes place, do the karmas of the individuals remain to be worked out?

Mataji: Yes.

Question: Why does God allow such a world to exist in which there are so many contradictions?

Mataji: It is His joy and His play.

Question: Why does He play in this way?

Mataji: This question will not arise when He is known fully. He is in the world and also beyond the world.

6th May.

Question: What is the meaning of *Dhi* (intelligence) in the Gayatri?

Mataji: Pitaji will reply.

I said: *Dhi* means *Prajna* i. e., to know everything in its true form or essence.

At the close of the talk, Mataji got up and began to move out of the pandal. I did the usual Namaskar. At that time, she rubbed her forehead against my forehead saying that this meant unity. I experienced a new kind of meditation for five minutes and realised that I was in the presence of God.

7th May.

Question: What is the meaning of *Medha*, *Pratibha* and *Prajna*?

Mataji: Pitaji will reply.

I said: *Medha* means purified intelligence, *Pratibha* intuitive knowledge such as is often found in Mataji, like hearing talks or knowing events from a distance etc. *Prajna* means right knowledge or intuitive knowledge.

Question: If ordinary Mantras remove the poison of scorpions and snakes, why does not the mantra of Ramnam bring about such results?

Mataji: *Rama-mantra* removes all kinds of desires; those other Mantras produce only limited results.

A devotee: What is the experience of *Sat-Chit-Anand*?

Mataji: It is a matter of realisation. It cannot be expressed by speech.

Question: What is the cause of ignorance?

Mataji : God is a field of every possibility—knowledge, ignorance and many other things. One seed contains the power of creating many seeds ; each of them has equal capacity to create many more seeds. As our hands are not separate from ourselves, so the whole universe is not separate from God.

Ignorance may be considered to be part of God's eternal Lila.

As the father is born as the son, God has come as the world. As one man becomes a father, son, uncle, nephew etc. God assumes various relations. When He is known, there is no fear and no ignorance.

Or ignorance may be taken to be a kind of *Viraha* or wilful separation. I requested *Mataji* to explain the nature of *Viraha* further.

Mataji : Even in *Viraha* (separation) there is true knowledge and Ananda. Separation from whom ? There is no *Viraha* without first getting union with God. Then separation takes the form of longing to be united with God and this gives great joy.

8-5-57.

Question : Why does God give pain to men ?

Mataji : This can be explained by a short story which I have heard :-

When Hanuman was building the bridge to Lanka by throwing stones into the sea a squirrel was hurt. It complained about Hanuman to Rama. Ram asked what punishment should be given to Hanuman. The squirrel said : "Hanuman should be trodden on by you." Rama did accordingly and asked Hanuman not to commit such mistakes again. Hanuman said : "I will very often commit such faults so that I may repeatedly feel the pressure of your feet." There is also a good side to the pains sent by God.

After this, *Mataji* started a Kirtan of Radha and in a short time, the whole pandal seemed changed into Vrindaban. There is a peculiar charm in her Kirtan. It is not like the Kirtan of ordinary men. At these moments, she creates God, as it were, and those who have the capacity to feel, feel the presence of God. Sometimes tears flow from her eyes. They are probably the overflow of joy.

One devotee sang a Bhajan, in which it was stated that Krishna does not leave Vrindaban at any time. *Mataji* turned to me and said : "God never leaves the Vrindaban of the heart."

9-5-1957.

Question : Is the help of a Guru necessary ?

Mataji : Yes, a Mantra given by a Guru has very great power.

Question : How can the Mantra be immediately effective ?

Mataji : Pitaji will reply.

I said ; If *Mantra-sadhana* is done with the knowledge of the meaning of the Mantra, it will produce good results, as stated in the Yoga—sutra

Mataji : Sometimes, without knowing the meaning but by the force of faith a mantra gives good results.

I asked : If a Guru asks his disciple to do ten malas daily and one day after doing five malas, God gives Darshan, should the disciple ask God to wait till he completes his 10 malas according to his Guru's order ?

Mataji : No, on that day the five malas have created the effect of ten malas.

I then asked Mataji : It is stated in the Bhagavata and other scriptures that only sins are destroyed by Japa, but *Punya* remains. The fruits of *Punya* or good deeds are removed by Self-Knowledge. Ajamil also went to Haridwar and there obtained Self-Knowledge.

Mataji : Knowledge is necessary to burn both *Punya* and *Pap*. Often a little grace obtained through *Japa* becomes the means for obtaining further grace. A little light will create greater light.

I told Mataji : My Guru gave me a *mantra* for *Japa* and at the same time began to teach me Vedanta. After some years, he gave me the

experience of Vedanta and took away my *Mala*, saying that it was not necessary for me any more.

Mataji : Yes, that is possible.

A devotee : Dream vanishes at once but the waking state continues for a longer time.

Mataji : The waking state is also a dream.

Question : Yesterday's world appears today.

Mataji : What is the meaning of yesterday ? There was illusion yesterday and there is illusion today. Really speaking you have got what you want to realise. You have only to remove the veil.

Question : The Guru should remove the veil of ignorance.

Mataji : The Guru will show the way. If the disciple does not listen, the Guru will shake him and improve him. Enjoyment of the objects of sense is a slow poison ; being a slow poison, it does not appear to be poison.

Question . Is a man free to choose his life or is his life pre-determined ? Is *prarabdha* greater or *purushartha* ?

Mataji : Pitaji will reply.

I said that in the field of *Maya* man is not free ; but in the field of the Spirit he is free.

Mataji : Man is free, only he has to change his aim of life. The path of श्रेय, spiritual progress, and the path

देव, material enjoyment are quite different. Even in material enjoyment man has some freedom. This means that he will also succeed in the spiritual field.

Question : Does a man return from *Brahmaloka* ?

Mataji : Sometimes, he returns, sometimes he advances further directly from that state.

10-5-57

A devotee asked : What does God do ? Where does He reside and what Does He eat ?

Mataji told a short story, the substance of which was as follows :—

1. The question should be "Where does God not reside ?" He is everywhere.

2. He makes a poor man a king and a king a poor man.

3. He eats the ego of the individual (जीव).

4. He laughs when he finds that a man before birth decides to become a devotee and afterwards forgets God.

11-5-57

Question : Have you seen the form of Krishna ? What is it like ?

Mataji : Don't ask about the experiences of this body. The real form of the spirit is indescribable.

Question : If there is one self in all, how to realise it ? What is the method ?

Mataji : Proceed with faith. The Self has the power to reveal Itself. Just as fire has an eternal capacity to burn, the Self has the power to illumine Itself. The mind that turns towards the Self or Spirit gets the bliss of the Self. If the mind turns towards worldly or sensual pleasures, the man will be drawn towards a circle of repeated births. *Sadhana* must be done by man himself. If another person eats for him, it will not satisfy his hunger. Therefore, he who does the *sadhana* will reap the fruit.

In the case of hunger, if a man feels that he is existing and eating in other bodies his hunger will be satisfied. But in the spiritual field one has to do the work oneself.

A devotee : Will Rama nama give liberation.

Mataji : Yes, it has the power to create a spiritual atmosphere and to give liberation.

The devotee asked the Mother to chant that kind of 'Rama Nama' herself so that all may bathe in that atmosphere.

Mataji began with Rama Nama-Kirtan, and asked the harmonium player to accompany the singing. Then gradually all began to sing with her and in a short time the whole atmosphere was spiritualised. *Mataji*

did not stop but continued as if to bring Ram there. I felt that Ram had actually come into the Pandal and I asked the devotee (who was sitting by my side) to tell the Mother that Ram had come and she should stop, but he had not the courage to do so. I looked at Mataji and said that Ram had come. Then she stopped. My experience is that by her Kirtan, Mataji does effect the presence of God.

12-5-57

In the afternoon, at the *Katha* time, I was asked to speak for half an hour. I commenced with the *Bhagavata* which is my special subject. It is stated in the beginning of the *Mahatmya* that the *Bhagavata* is meant to enable the devotee to conquer time :-

काल-व्याल मुखद्रासत्रास निर्णेश हेतवे ।

श्रीमद् भागवतं शास्त्रं कलौ करिण्य भाषितम् ॥

i. e, in order to remove the fear of becoming a morsel in the mouth of the serpent of Time, the *Bhagavata* was recited by Shuka before King Parikshit.

Kansa was also called कालनेमि cycle of time and when he was killed by Shri Krishna, Vyasa has given the stanza (श्लोक) of दृष्टिसृष्टिवाद viz., मल्लानामशनि etc. In other words, time can be transcended if a man learns that there is no creation before

observation. This principle also agrees with the latest discovery of the science of relativity. The Gopis in the Gopi-Gita say that चुटिर्गुणावते त्वामपश्यताम् i. e. when God is not seen, a moment seems as long as a *yuga* and when He is seen the *yuga* appears a mere moment. In the first three skandhas, there is a description of creation and at the same time, it is stated that creation has not taken place (vide stanzas 1-3-31, 2-10-35, 3-7-10).

At night a devotee asked Mataji, "By what means can we get self-realisation ?

Mataji : It is not something to be obtained but you have to realise what you have already got, therefore all means are good but renunciation of pleasures is the chief pre-requisite.

Question : How can we get rid of worldly misery and unhappiness ?

Mataji : By true knowledge and renunciation.

A Devotee : Is it possible to go straight to the formless God without devotion for the God with form ?

Mataji : The *Sakara* and the *Nirakara* are not different. Vaishnavites want to remain with the *Sakara*, but also there is no द्वंद्व i. e, no duality. Every possibility is contained in the spirit.

Question : In the Upanishads, in some places it is stated that God has created the Universe and in other places it is stated that

there has been no creation, everything is *maya* or illusion. Which is true ?

Mataji : Where creation is seen, there is a thought of creation and its Creator. Where creation cannot be seen, there is no question of creation.

I said that the following appears six times in the Bhagavata and, therefore, that must be the real meaning of Bhagavata :—

अर्थेह्यविद्यमानेऽपि संसृतिर्न निवर्तते ।

ध्यायतो विप्रयानस्य स्वप्नेऽनर्थागमो यथा ॥

११-२२-५५

i. e. although the worldly objects do not really exist, the world will not disappear if one thinks about those objects. As in dream, so in the waking condition, and a man will experience misery although there is no misery. As in dream, so in the waking condition.

Question : It is stated in the Ramayana that one can get liberation by worshipping only Shiva and it is stated in the Gita : "Whoever worships me (i. e. Krishna) will get liberation. Which is true ?

Mataji : By every kind of devotion the devotee merges in the Bhagavan and becomes like Him. Everything depends on the goal. Where the ego or 'I' stands, God will not be seen.

135-57.

Question : Those who follow the path

of knowledge, begin by separating spirit and matter. Is it possible for them to obtain *Siddhis* or do they see *Vibhutis* ?

Mataji : Sometimes they do, sometimes they do not. Some stop at the *Siddhis*, some go beyond them. The *Siddhis* come when a particular state is acquired but one should not stop at that stage.

Question : When one thought is over and before another thought begins, there is a vacant period and some spiritual experience comes. Is it real experience ?

Mataji : When real experience occurs, no question will arise, because then there is nothing except Spirit.

Question : How can we find a real Guru and who can be the Guru ?

Mataji : God is the real Guru, God will do the work through the Guru already accepted and show the true way to the disciple. The real Guru is one's own *Atma* (Self).

Question : Will that *Atma* give the Mantra ?

Mataji : Certainly.

Question : Is there more bliss in meeting the Divine or in separation ?

Mataji : There is more joy in separation (*Viraha*) after the experience of union.

Question : How ?

Mataji : The separation that is experienced after meeting God is of a

different kind. From whom do we separate? If there is no union first, how can there be separation? In the separation after union, we experience God in a special new way and this gives more happiness.

Question : Is it possible for a devotee to fall by eating impure food or by bad company? If saints can remove the fault of others by their knowledge and *Japa*, can they not purify impure food and bad company?

Mataji : It is a question of power (*Shakti*). Those saints who have great power are not affected by impure food or bad company.

Question : Bhishma ate the food given by Duryodhana and took the side of the Kauravas, although he was a devotee of Shri Krishna.

Mataji : There were many causes for that. It is a different matter, which cannot be discussed now.

The Ras Mandali was performing new dramas every day. On some days, the *lilas* of Shri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu were staged and on other days, the *lila* of Radha and Krishna, in which Lord Krishna sometimes appeared as a thief. But it appeared to all that he was really stealing or removing the vices of his devotees. On two occasions Mataji herself got up and placed butter in the mouth of Shri Krishna in the Ras Lila.

On one occasion, the Gopis wanted to go from one bank of the river

Jamuna to the opposite bank and Shri Krishna was shown as a boatman. He asked for his dues from the Gopis. As they had not sold their milk and butter on that day, they had no money. Shri Krishna asked for whatever they had. The Gopis gave him milk and butter and Shri Krishna took them to the other side. The whole of the drama was well acted and the audience enjoyed it very much as they had a good psychological meaning as follows :—Every devotee wants to cross the river of *Samsara* (worldly life) and if God helps, the journey becomes very easy. But we must be prepared to give what actually belongs to God.

The Director of the Ras Mandali Hari Govind Swami deserves the deep gratitude of the devotees who had the good fortune of seeing the Ras which is rare in Ahmedabad.

14-5-57

Question : What is the difference between *Jiva* (individual soul) and God?

Mataji : God alone exists.

Question : Why then are divisions created?

Mataji : They are the imaginations of the Pandits.

Question : Then who is doing the *Japa*?

Mataji : From the point of view of the *Japa* or means, he who is in bondage is called *Jiva*, that which

moves called *Jagat* (world) and He who is beyond bondage and motion is called God. Where can God go ? He is everywhere.

Question : In the *Vishistadwaita Jiva* and *Jagat* are believed to be the body of God ?

Mataji : That also is true. God can be seen from various angles.

Question : You are explaining by Shan-
karacharya's method.

Mataji : That also is true.

15-5-1957

Question : How can a man who with great difficulty maintain his family and is short of food, clothing etc. worship God with one-pointed devotion ?

Mataji : For real devotee the question of food and clothes etc. is negligible. God looks after his devotees' requirements.

Question : We cannot maintain such faith, we are burning with many anxieties.

Then Mataji told the following story—

“There were two friends. Both liked Satsang and devotion. One holiday they went to a solitary place and sat in meditation. One had great faith in God, the other had very little. The latter became hungry after some time and told the former that he could not go on meditating without taking some food. The former said : “Bear the hunger for some time and have

faith in God, he will send something for us to eat.” But his friend became more hungry and said : “I cannot meditate with an empty stomach. I will go to the town, get some food and then come back and do meditation ” The first friend continued his meditation with full faith in God. The second took his meal in the town and then thought that his friend was meditating in the jungle and feeling hungry and that he should take something from the town for him to eat. Therefore, he procured some food for his friend, returned to him and told him : “Your faith is useless, see you have not yet got any food. I felt compassion for you and have brought some for you, take it.” The first friend replied, “By the power of my faith, God inspired you to bring some food for me which I got here without being disturbed in my meditation. God takes care of his devotees.” His friend said : “I will have more faith from today.”

Question : People say that some are going to Swarga (heaven) and some to Narak (hell). Is this a fact ?

Mataji : These are not real places. A devotee merges in God because there is nothing beside Him.

Question : Is a good atmosphere necessary for concentration ?

Mataji : Yes.

Question : Should Japa be done alone or collectively ?

Mataji :— Some persons like to do Japa alone. Some become *Tamasic* by doing Japa alone. For such persons Japa or Kirtan in a Mandali is useful. In reality, to do Japa alone is better, yet remembrance of God should not be lost even amidst the noise of a crowd.

Question : Why does the mind wander while doing Japa ?

Mataji : The mind is like a child, it wanders in search of true happiness. If you give it the food of Satsang, it will not wander, therefore keep Satsang.

Question : Which is more powerful—*Prarabdha* प्रारब्ध or पुद्गलार्थ Self-effort ?

Mataji : This question can be considered from various points of view as follows :

1. From the point of view of the Self (आत्म) : There is neither *Prarabdha* nor *Purushartha*, because it is inactive.

2. From the point of view of a devotee, *Prarabdha* and *Purushartha* have no meaning, because for him God alone exists.

3. From the point of view of Karma : Karma is जड़ (mechanical) and there can be no *Purushartha* or *Prarabdha* in material things.

4. From the point of view of an individual, whatever work he does for the sake of self-realisation is *Purushartha*.

5. From the point of view of *Prarabdha* even *Prarabdha* has value and some force.

But remember that the *Purusha* is one. He is the real power. Others are *Abala* powerless. How can *Abala* do any *Purushartha* ?

Therefore, you will get the answer according to the view-point you select.

16 5-57.

Question : How has the first *Jiva* (individual) created ?

Mataji : What do you understand by first or beginning ?

Devotee : It is said in the *Shashtra* that an individual appears from *Anadi* it has no beginning.

Mataji : Therefore your question is wrong.

Question : Should we purify ourselves before entering a place of worship ?

Mataji : Yes, purification is necessary, partly by bathing and fundamentally by self-knowledge. From the point of view of devotion, if a man has been sitting in the room of his worship for the whole night, he can begin his morning worship without bathing, because he is not polluted by outside atmosphere. He has not to enter the room of worship. He is already there. Purification is necessary after being subjected to outer influences.

In the evening the following few questions were raised by the devotees :

Question : Why does God make some unhappy ?

Mataji : That is His सौज, His will.

Question : Please tell us some method for our spiritual progress ?

Mataji : One good method is to sit in meditation daily at your home between 8 45 and 9 p.m. At that time all the devotees' energies will be concentrated on the One Divine, and some good result will surely follow*.

17-5-57.

In the early morning, at 3 a.m. the birth-time of the Mother was celebrated. Mother was sleeping or appeared to be sleeping on a cot, and devotees were offering their prayers and namaskars. Mother gave the appearance as if she were taking birth at that moment, neither moving nor speaking. I went to garland her in that condition but to my surprise, I did not find her body but only a new kind of light.

One devotee remarked that shastras do not allow this kind of birthday celebrations in a sleeping state. I replied : "Mataji's life is beyond the shastras and yet not against the shastras."

In the evening, at the question time, the following questions were raised by the devotees :—

Question : It is said in the shastras that even for Jnanis (i.e. those who have realised their Self, a small portion of ignorance remains to enable them to do some worldly work.

Mataji : From one point of view, this is correct, but really, if such a large amount of ignorance is dissolved by true knowledge, why should a little ignorance remain ?

Question : How can this birth-day celebration be reconciled with *Advaita Bhava* which means absolute unity ?

Mataji : The answer will be simple if you turn your attention from the objects seen to the method of observation.

Question : How many desires are there in the human life ?

Mataji—Many, but you may summarise them in the following three classes :—

(1) पुत्रैषणा i. e. the desire for children

(2) वित्तैषणा i.e. the desire for money.

(3) लोकैषणा i. e. the desire in for name and position.

Question : How can these desires be removed ?

* I have already started this practice in my Ashram. This is the time when there is meditation daily in all Mataji's Ashrams and wherever else Mataji happens to be.

Mataji : By the grace of God, by the grace of the Guru.

Question : What are the true qualities of a real saint ?

Mataji : Pitaji will reply.

I said these have been given in the second chapter of 11th Skandha of Shri Bhagavata.

Question : How to practise ?

Mataji : The mind that flows towards the objects of sense should be turned towards God.

Question : You have got immense power and we have got very little power. Therefore, why not use your power to remove our defects ?

Mataji :—Whatever little power you have, if you change its direction towards God, you will get more power. It has got the power to illumine the path more and more.

As a last item of the programme a cinema film was shown in which the birthday celebrations of the mother's 60th birthday that took place at Banaras last year were exhibited. For this purpose we had to be in darkness and I asked the following question :—

If darkness is necessary so that objects may be seen on a screen, ignorance may be necessary for God's lila that we see as the world.

Mataji : Yes, that is so. Therefore nothing can be avoided.

I said : If darkness is removed, nobody can see anything on the screen.

Mataji : Yes, in darkness and in light, the power of the original light is working.

SOME INCIDENTS DURING THE BIRTHDAY CELEBRATION AT AHMEDABAD

By
Vijaiananda (Dr. A. J. Weintrob)

Mother's Puja

Early morning at 3 a. m. on May 3rd the first Puja of Mother was celebrated. The huge crowd gathered gradually during the following days and therefore only a few people, perhaps about 50, were present at that ceremony. Mother, as usual on these occasions, was lying absolutely still, apparently far from our manifested world. Some outsiders utter on such occasions: 'Mother is sleeping,' which is of course a notion we need not discuss, as it may be dismissed straight away.

Some learned people say Mataji is then in the state of '*Nirvikalpa-Samadhi*'. No doubt She may be in that state. But it seems to me that She does not have to go into any particular state, however exalted, as Her natural and continuous state is one which is beyond all states as She Herself has clearly declared on many occasions, as far as I can understand. Besides in the state of '*Nirvikalpa-Samadhi*' the phenomenal world ceases to exist—and there is then no mother and no children craving for Her blessings. It is Mataji's *Mahakaruna* that makes Her remain with us rather than resting in the Supreme Bliss of *Nirvana*.

Needless to say I do not venture to infer about Mataji's state on those occasions: that is far beyond our

power of grasping. A man who was born blind might just as well discuss colours. But I wish to draw the attention of the reader to a small detail I noticed on that blessed night.

During the whole time while lying down Mataji's hands were folded in a most graceful manner in a beautiful *mudra*. My description can give only a faint idea of the beauty of Her gesture. Her hands were folded in a way so as to form a cup open above. The *mudra* seemed to express giving with full hands.

The reader who is familiar with psychology or Yoga to some extent at least will know the deep significance of gestures or *mudras*. In man's thought processes they occupy a deeper level than mere conversation in words. Moreover in Mataji's case the full awareness in which a *mudra* is done and the direct relation of this action to the Primal Source imparts to the gesture profound meaning and efficacy.

Therefore (this is of course but my personal and necessarily limited opinion) during the Holy Night it occurred to me that Mataji was embodying the power showering blessings and spiritual strength on us, indeed it is not enough to say that She was

giving with full hands—nay, She was identified with the power of giving.

Mother's Songs.

One night a Mahatma who had come especially from Vrindaban, after delivering a lecture, requested Mataji to sing a song. He asked especially for "Radhe, Radhe". Mataji began to sing: "*Radhe, Radhe, Pritama Radhe*". There was something almost masculine in the quality of Her voice that conveyed extreme sweetness and love. Her face changed as She sang. Her features were as noble and calm as they always are, but different. Her hair seemed to fall over Her shoulders not in the usual way, but reminded me of the pictures representing Lord Krishna. I got the impression of Lord Krishna Himself calling out to his beloved Radha.

Almost everyone who has come in contact with Mataji has been struck by Her unique way of singing Kirtan and other religious songs. I have heard many kinds of singers in many places. Almost all of them have one particular kind of voice with a register more or less large depending on the capacity of the singer. Some are able to use their voice in two different ways—head voice and normal. But with Mataji it is quite different. Her voice seems to change completely according to the subject of the song. It is as if it were not the same person that is singing the various songs. One wonders how for example the sweet and delicate, almost child like voice singing "*Hridayadwara aji*" can come from the same mouth as the sonorous tune vibrating with intense spiritual emotion with which She repeats "Hari bol, Hari bol". But then Mataji is not a person and one cannot

really say that She is singing. I feel that it is the *Shabda Brahman* that manifests Itself in this way.

Mataji's Prasad

Western people do not know anything about neither do they believe in what is called in India "*Ashraya-Gune*" of food. Whoever prepares or touches food communicates to it some of his qualities, be they good or bad, usually both good as well as bad. The three aspects of manifestation *anna* (matter), *prana* (energy) and *manas* (mind) are in fact one and the same substance—just as ice, water and vapour are not essentially different from one another. The mental and emotional wave of the person while cooking will pervade the food and in the digestion of the food a mental and emotional wave of the same quality will again tend to make its appearance.

Whatever food is to be given to Mataji is prepared with the observance of the greatest possible purity by pure people; and when Mataji has partaken of some food or even touched it, it becomes *Prasad*. The pure and intense *Sattwa* emanating from Mataji's body is imparted to the food by Her contact and will burn away any impurity that might be there. Mataji's *Prasad* increases the *Sattwic Vrittis*. No harm can come from eating Mataji's *Prasad* even if it happens to be a kind of food that does not otherwise agree with one physically. I should like to recount an experience to this effect I had at Ahmedabad.

One day a friend of mine came from Bombay for Mataji's Darshan and we had our meal together. I asked for Mataji's *Prasad* which was brought to us most generously in abundance by our host. The next day, my friend

having left, I again cooked my own food as I usually do. At about 1 p.m. some fruit and sweets were brought to me, probably the Prashad of some Puja. Since I was keeping silence that day I could not make any enquiries about it. The lady who had handed the Prasad to me said, she would return at about 2 p. m. and I thought it was in order to take away the empty plate. I finished my meal as well as eating all the Prasad I had been given and then felt that I had perhaps slightly overeaten. But at 2 0' clock the lady came back with a plate full of Mataji's Prasad, which in itself would have been sufficient for a full meal. I was much moved by the delicate attention of our host, who having noticed that I was eager for Mataji's Prasad, had sent plenty of it once again.

I must mention here that my digestion is very delicate and gets upset by the least overeating. I could not say anything as I was keeping silence, neither could I throw Mataji's Prasad away or keep it for the next day in the broiling heat of May. Mataji's Prasad is sacred and not one grain of it must be wasted. So I ate up bravely the contents of the plate including even a chilly which it contained. I was prepared (although I had full faith in the virtue of the Prasad) to fast on liquid diet the next day and probably on rice and curds the two following days. But to my utter amazement I did not at all feel that I had overeaten after finishing the Prasad. On the contrary I felt light and very harmonious and peaceful throughout the afternoon and, as I found out afterwards, having eaten such a large quantity of Prasad on a full stomach in a hot climate had

no adverse effect whatsoever on my health.

The Invisible Power

In such a huge gathering round Mataji one can hardly imagine what a lot of arrangements have to be made: Providing accommodation and food, receiving the guests and cars, endless small and big things that have to be seen to when a crowd has gathered. The strange thing that many people have noticed is that there is apparently no organization, no manager to give orders and no staff to carry them out. Yet everyone is co-operating, not following orders but under the banner of love, as in a huge family. What is still more strange is that everything works out smoothly. Never once did I hear that anyone of the numerous visitors could not get food or had to leave for lack of lodging facilities. Suppose someone is coming from a cool place and feeling rather afraid of the long journey in the heat. But the day he is travelling it happens to rain and so the temperature is pleasant. The train one has to take is reputed for being always overcrowded. But by some special good luck one is able to secure sleeping accommodation for the whole night. Having reached one's destination, one does not know in which locality Mataji is putting up. Lo and behold a stranger comes along and gives one detailed information. At last one has got the right address, but it is very late at night. How and whom is one to ask for quarters? But one finds Swamiji standing at the gate and he at once assigns a room to the newcomer and provides for a good dinner. But Oh, what a pity at this time of night Mataji's Darshan is of course impossible, because She

must be resting and one shall have to wait till the next morning. But no: Mataji has just come out of Her room for a stroll! The next day one has to go to town to make purchases, but does not know the way. A devotee whom one has never met before, who is returning home, offers one a lift in his car. And so on and on. This cannot be written down or explained, one has to experience it. How circumstances dovetail perfectly, just at the psychological moment can be understood only by him to whom this happens.

It is as if some Invisible Power were moving from within all those who are present at the gathering: a Power of love and harmony, not only concerned with the spiritual uplift of every one, but also with the smallest details of their welfare.

There are other articles in this issue of Ananda Varta giving details about the functions of Ahmedabad. Let us hope that Mataji will bless us with many, many more celebrations of this kind.

NOTE

By

Vijaiananda.

In the last issue of 'Ananda Varta' we published a letter by Sri Sri Swami Ramdas of Kanhangad to Vijaiananda. Due to shortage of space we were obliged to omit the commentary which the letter deserved.

* * *

Vijaiananda had been asked by the editor to write to the great sage and to humbly request him to contribute an article or at least a few words for the Birthday Number of 'Ananda Varta'. Sri Sri Swami Ramdas responded by sending the letter which was included in the last issue, teaching

us how humility and spiritual greatness go ever side by side.

* * *

Sri Sri Swami Ramdas met Mataji at Trivandrum in 1952 when She was touring the South of India. The writer of this note was not present but heard a report of the meeting. Mataji, as She usually does, addressed the sage as 'Pitaji', calling Herself his little daughter and Sri Swamiji protested, saying that it was he who was Her little child and She the Divine Mother.

NOTES AND COMMENTS.

We have to apologise to our readers for being unable, due to unforeseeable circumstances, to include "Matri Lila" in the current issue. There are however articles in this issue giving details of the birthday celebrations at Ahmedabad.

Mataji left Ahmedabad on May 18th for Bombay. On May 23rd She proceeded to Poona where She stayed fairly quietly until June 21st, when She returned to Bombay. On June 24th She left for Delhi where She arrived on the 25th evening. After a visit to Hardwar of a few hours She alighted in Kishenpur, Dehradun by car on the 28th evening. From 8th to 12th July She was at Hardwar

where Gurupurnima was observed on the 11th. From Hardwar She returned to Kishenpur, where She is expected to remain until after Janmastami.

A Bhagavata Saptah will be celebrated in the Ashram at Varanasi from Sept. 1st. It is hoped that Mataji will grace the function with Her presence. Durga Puja is also to be celebrated at Varanasi this time, from Sept. 30th to Oct. 3rd.

The Samyam Vrata is expected to be held at the New Delhi Ashram in Chandraloka near Kalkaji colony from November 22nd to 28th. Programme of Samyam Vrata however may be subject to change and in such case this will be notified in due course.