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MATAJI'S AMARA VANI

(22)*

Mataji : Give in charity, engage yourself in service, bow down before God ("do *Pranam*")† and you will yourself come to understand in what spirit such acts are being performed by you. Feel convinced that in whatever state or condition you may be, out of that very state Enlightenment will occur. Never harbour the idea that you are involved in sin and evil deeds and can therefore never get anywhere. At all times and under all circumstances you must keep yourself in readiness to tread the path to God. Who can tell at what moment your giving, serving and bowing to God will become genuine ; for everything is possible.

Concerning *Diksha* (initiation) : He from whom you have received initiation will be able to bring you in touch with the level he himself has reached. Just as when you listen to a religious discourse the speaker will communicate to you as much as lies in his power. In this there are two factors. The effect inherent in spiritual discourses and the power of the speaker. Both are received and if the recipient has outstanding capacity, Supreme Knowledge will dawn on him at the very instant he receives the instruction.

There are various kinds of initiation : by Mantra, by touch, by a glance, by instruction. Contact with a Superman does bear fruit. Everyone will benefit in proportion to the degree of his own receptivity. There is also such a thing as special Grace by which unusual power to progress will be gained. On the other hand there are cases when even after actual contact no infusion of Grace has followed ; one who commands power is able to control it—giving and taking depend on His Will. When instruction frees a man from the knots that constitute the ego this is called initiation by instruction. On this case the instruction has fulfilled its purpose instantaneously.

* The Bengali original appeared in 'Ananda Varta', Vol. V/2, p. 84.

† See A. V. Vol. II/3, P. 281 where Mataji says : ".....To do *Pranam* means to pour oneself out at His Feet to become closely bound to them and thereby united to Him, to become His who alone is."

When *Mantra Diksha* is given the Mantra is whispered into the initiate's ear and the initiator will confer as much power as he himself wields. If he is all-powerful he will by his very touch or glance take the disciple to his final goal. But if he is not endowed with such supreme power, he can transmit to the initiate only whatever power he himself commands and guide him as far as he himself has reached ; it is obvious that the Guru can pass on only as much wealth as he possesses. If the person who has given the *Mantra* has not reached the final goal and hence is still on the way, the disciple cannot progress any further unless the Guru does. This is why the disciple has to wait on the path so long as the Guru does not advance. Anyone aspiring to the Realization of God who starts giving initiation while he is still on the way will remain stationary at the stage at which he has arrived.

However the possibility of the disciple surpassing the Guru exists : namely when someone initiated in the conventional way has been able through personal exertion to increase his inner strength to such an extent that he may go beyond the achievement of his Guru. Here the initiate needed only just the amount of power conferred by the *diksha* to take him to his goal. If a disciple has to rely entirely on the resources of his particular Guru he will have to move side by side with him. Furthermore in the state in which one realizes that one's Guru is the World-teacher and the World-teacher one's Guru (world meaning movement, while the individual is that which is bound—the Guru delivers from individuality as well as from the relation with the world) one comes to know oneself as His servant, or as His very own self or as part of Him, either of these, depending on one's line of approach.

How is it that my Guru may be said to be the World-teacher ? For the simple reason that this is the status of a Guru. Who for instance is a cook ? The word "cook" does not denote anyone's name, it means one who can prepare food. Likewise when the status of a Guru becomes revealed to one, one understands that it has nothing to do with any person ; the Guru is none else but the World-teacher. If the power of the Guru can become effective, there will be the realization of "Who am I ?" He who is able to bestow that power is indeed the World-teacher. Guru is the name for him who out of deep darkness can reveal the hidden Truth. My Guru exists in many forms as the Guru of each and everyone and everyone else's Guru is in fact my Guru : now you see how the Guru has become one.

A person who performs rites and spiritual exercises of any kind is still on the path and not established in the Self, for he is still making effort. How can he be a Guru, since he has not transcended action? One speaks of brothers in the spirit: the Lord who is adored by the whole world is my Lord and my Lord is the Lord of the world. A Guru is not an ordinary preceptor—a Guru is he who has the capacity to deliver man from the sea of becoming (*Bhava-sagar*). Suppose an aspirant has been initiated by someone who does not command supreme power: he can progress only up to the Guru's stage and then will have to wait. Yet by some favourable conjunction, be it through his own overwhelming desire for Self-realization, or through faculties developed in former lives or even without these or similar causes, simply through the intervention of Divine Grace, he may by instruction, contact, a glance or a *Mantra* receive an influx of power that will enable him to proceed further. In the event of a flood it does not distinguish "this tree will have to be saved and that one uprooted", but carries away with it everything indiscriminately. Likewise there is no such thing as choice in the realm of the spirit, for here the Self reposes within Itself.

Then again there is yet another possibility: without instruction, without a glance, touch or *Mantra*, power may be conferred, whether the recipient be aware of it at the very moment it occurs or only very much later. The one who has bestowed the power carries along with him everything, just as the flood does. It is his very nature to bring round within himself everything, therefore it will not do to say in a particular case that initiation has been received from someone else and not from this source, for everything is His own, is verily He Himself. So then just as the flood carries everything along in complete equality, so that superman quite naturally and spontaneously makes His own what was wrongly believed to be alien. Here 'mine' and 'thine' do not exist—only the Self, Self-luminous, He and He alone. A mother does not keep accounts of what she does for her children—for are they not her own? Likewise here also there is no accounting of how much power has been communicated.

A certain person took initiation from some Guru. Later that person met another Mahatma and began to seek his company frequently, since he felt benefited by his contact. On hearing about this, the Guru became irri-

tated, saying: "I have cultivated the garden and you are giving its fruits away to someone else." The disciple replied: "Not so, my contact with the Mahatma has strengthened my faith in my Guru." But the Guru was unable to understand this. For the said Mahatma the world and what is beyond was all the same. For him there was complete equality, since he saw only the all-pervading Self. Whether one goes near such an one or not, He will carry along with Him everyone alike. Therefore it was said: It is not that the man had another Guru, for the conferring of power happens on the level where all are one; moreover it cannot either be said that to so and so much power was communicated, just as burning fire does not discriminate and dry up one object while leaving another wet. Spontaneously occur the instruction, touch, glance or *mantra* that constitute the *diksha*. Here there is no distinction between 'mine' and 'thine'. There are two ways: the power can either be controlled so that there will be unequal distribution of it; or else the distribution of power is universal. Which of the two methods He adopts depends on His Will.

(23)

Question: Are there as many names of God as there are creeds or is there in reality only one creed and one Name?

Mataji: What is your own line of approach, father?

Someone else: Every line represents a particular path, but as a matter of fact all roads lead to one and the same goal.

Mataji: Discussion and controversy belong to the path, but actually everyone is in his own home. The same path is not for everyone. Brothers of the same family will each have his different inclinations and likings. Vedanta may appeal to some, Vaishnavism to others and the cult of Shakti to yet others. Therefore it cannot be said that there is only one path. In fact seekers after truth are made each in a particular way, different from others as well as from one another, but in any case they will have to pass through the gate of Truth.

Question: Well then, are the creeds really different from one another?

Mataji: You can see for yourself that there is only one Guru who has any number of disciples. You are trying to convert everyone to the

same creed; in spite of that, what a lot of sects have not been founded, although many people have abandoned their own. What you said, father, is very true indeed—but where? In that which emerges when everything is given up. What then emerges? **HE HIMSELF—THAT.**

The Questioner : My opinion is a borrowed one, what I have heard various people say.

Mataji : Why have you adopted this particular point of view? This body presents the matter from the standpoint of the Rishis and Munis, from the line of approach which they chose. Countless opinions and schools of thought exist in the world, but those will not serve the purpose of a seeker. Everyone has to accept the method indicated by his Guru : by following that current he will be carried towards the ocean.

Question : Will all finally have to merge in that ocean? But then how can it be that those whose aims are so entirely different as for instance the Vaishnavites with their 'Salokya', 'Samipya' etc. and on the other hand the Vedantists with their 'Self-poised State' should end up by merging in the one ocean?

A voice : Puffed rice and 'murmura' are names for one and the same thing!

Mataji : If puffed rice and *murmura* are the same, why should they be called by two different names? There must be some element of variation in the two—although essentially both are just rice. The sense of 'mine' and 'thine' has remained, what do you say, father? (Laughter). When discussing creeds and paths one has to remember that it is only while on the way that one speaks of various paths.

Question : When one has reached beyond the level where every creed represents a different line of approach, there is no more talk and controversy.

Mataji : In "there is not" the "there is" is also implied—for without it how could the "is not" have arisen at all? Take for instance the case of people who claim to belong to a particular creed. But in cases where there is no question of any doctrine, nor of delivering discourses, there is HE at the root—HE who is present in all these innumerable guises. When one speaks of the many and of the One, it is a matter of outlook. One seed is sown and a tree grows with countless flowers and leaves, displaying infinite ways of movement and an infinite number of stages of stability—yet essentially it is one.

Every creed, every school of thought has its particular method of approach. So long as you advance along one special path there is, for that period of time, only one path for you. Very well, let us leave this point now. You asked, did you not, father, how those who aim at entirely different goals can end up by merging in the one ocean? When you speak of an end this is within the limits of time and where time is there is something beyond it too. But where the question of 'end' or 'time' can no more arise, there everyone will be united.

Question : So long as one speaks about these things, does it mean that some sort of imperfection still persists?

Mataji : Yes; he who is still within the domain of speech, that is to say of worldly speech, is in the boundary of time. But 'there', (beyond time) the question of speech does not exist. In spite of this, one cannot place a real World-teacher into this category. He who is a World-teacher belongs to a category distinct from those of the world.

Question : Please explain the nature of worldly and divine happiness.

Mataji : Divine Happiness, that which you call *Parama Sukhadham* (=Supreme Happiness) is just pure, unalloyed happiness—happiness in its own right.

Question : But surely, there is happiness in the world too!

Mataji : Why then do you make this remark?

Question : Why do people run after material happiness?

Mataji : You know this happiness from experience and hence your question. But God is gracious and makes you see that this so-called happiness is not happiness. He kindles discontent and anguish in you which is due to the want of communion with the Divine. Worldly happiness is derived from the countless manifestations of God. People talk and marvel about those who have renounced, but in actual fact it is you yourself who have renounced everything. What is this 'everything'? God! Leaving Him aside everyone is literally practising supreme renunciation. (Laughter). It is only natural that the sense of want should awaken. Even in the midst of comforts and

pleasures one feels homesick in a foreign land. There is distress even in happiness, one's possessions are not really one's own—this is what He causes you to feel. It is said, is it not, that when being hit one recovers one's senses, one learns by receiving blows.

When He manifests Himself as worldly happiness one does not feel contented, for along with it He appears as the sense of want. But Divine Happiness, even the tiniest particle of a grain of it, never leaves one again; and when one attains to the Essence of Things one finds one's Self; This is Supreme Happiness—when it is found, nothing else remains to be found, the sense of want will not awaken anymore and the heart's torment be stilled for ever. Do not be satisfied with fragmentary happiness which is invariably interrupted by shocks and blows of fate, but become complete and, having attained to perfection, be **YOURSELF**.

The Relativity of Perfection

By

Lama Anagarika Govinda,

Acharya, Arya Maitreya Mandala.

Light incessantly moves through the universe, but it becomes visible only when it meets resistance. In the same way consciousness becomes aware of itself only when there is resistance. If this resistance is impenetrable or unsurmountable, it is felt as suffering, if it can be mastered, it is felt as joy.

Joy means the overcoming of resistance. This is why people climb mountains, endure self-imposed hardships, engage in all kinds of adventure and sports. Life becomes unbearable and worthless if either there is no resistance or if the obstacles cannot be mastered.

But, we may ask, what about aesthetic pleasure, the happiness of solitude or that of *samadhi*? There is no resistance apparently. However, these pleasures cannot be attained without overcoming hindrances or without mastering our instruments of perception and knowledge.

This is why we cannot dwell inde-

finitely in the bliss of *samadhi* or in the enjoyment of beauty. As soon as the effort ceases and we get accustomed to a certain condition, joy ceases.

It is only in the movement towards perfection that perfection can be experienced. Only in the movement towards the infinite, infinity can be experienced. Infinity which is attained is no more infinity. In order to enjoy the blissful state of *samadhi*, we have to develop it again and again. In order to enjoy beauty, we have to create it within ourselves.

Thus there cannot even be aesthetic pleasure without creative effort: and as there is more creative effort in the artist than in the person who beholds a work of art, the former one's joy is more intense and more lasting.

The way to *samadhi* is a continuous process of spiritual renunciation, a continuous giving up. To give up a thing means to be free from it, to

be master of oneself and one's decisions.

Freedom exists in the act of renunciation. In other words : it is the faculty of renunciation that gives us the power over ourselves and the things of the world around us. Not the things that we renounce but the act of renunciation is what matters. Therefore even *samadhi* has temporarily to be renounced, if we do not want to lose that faculty. Because a faculty, which is not constantly re-acquired, loses its power.

If renunciation is genuine, then things can no more enslave us, but we have become their masters and can use them without danger. Then we can fearlessly go from the unity of *samadhi* into the diversity of the world. After we have convinced ourselves that we can do without things, we have now to prove that we have no more reason to fear them, that we can accept and even create them without losing our independence, our inner freedom.

It is the Way of the Enlightened Ones: starting with the renunciation of the world, culminating in the realization of enlightenment, and leading back into the world through compassion. It is like the three fold process of breathing : the inward movement of

inhalation, the moment of stopping or motionlessness, and the outward movement of exhalation.

Both sides of this process are repeated in Tantric meditation, as practised in Tibet ; only that here first the objects are produced from a state of "perfect emptiness" (*sunyata*), and that afterwards they are again dissolved into "emptiness". Here the state of Buddhahood or Enlightenment, which lies between the two movements, has been chosen as starting-point.

But how can such a starting-point be chosen, if the state of Buddhahood has not yet been attained actually ? Through the practice of *sadhana*, in which, after an intricate process of inner purification and perfect identification with the spiritual image or symbol of Buddhahood, a temporary state of equilibrium, a flashlike vision of reality is produced ; because it is only in the movement towards perfection that perfection can be experienced.

Perfection is not an absolute value or a static condition, but the harmony of forces that can be established in every moment in which their movement is co-ordinated by the direction towards a common aim. In such a moment these forces form a "universal" group (the word "universal" taken in

its literal sense : directed towards one point), a universe in miniature.

But the ideal point towards which these forces move, must lie in the infinite and never be reached by them, otherwise they would clash and merge into each other ; *i.e.*, their ideal differentiation, which is balanced by their common direction, would be destroyed, and their movement, without which life is impossible, would be stopped. But harmony needs differentiation as much as it needs unity. One tone alone can not make music.

Thus we can say that perfection is possible at each stage of development, in each form of life. A human being who has properly developed all his or her human qualities can be called perfect, though there may be other beings surpassing humans in many respects. And in the same way we can say that an animal, which possesses all the qualities of its kind, is perfect ; and similarly a plant, or a crystal, which expresses the characteristics of its nature perfectly.

Thus, perfection neither exists as an end at the top of a scale, nor as an absolute or fixed measurement, but as an infinitesimal moment of harmony in movement.

In self-conscious beings this har-

mony is generally disturbed by exaggerated ego-centricity and a destructive type of intellectualism. "The ego is by its nature a smallness of being ; it brings contraction of the consciousness and with the contraction limitation of knowledge, disabling ignorance, confinement and a diminution of power and by that diminution incapacity and weakness—scission of oneness and by that scission disharmony and failure of sympathy and love and understanding,—inhibition or fragmentation of delight of being and by that fragmentation pain and sorrow. To recover what is lost we must break out of the worlds of ego."*

Only one who has completely overcome the illusion of egohood and its concomitant evils, *i.e.*, one who has attained enlightenment, is able to dwell permanently in a state of harmony, which ordinarily we are able to experience only for short moments.

While harmony establishes itself more or less permanently by an organic or subconscious process of continuous re-adjustment in such forms of life, in which the balance has not yet been upset by the hypertrophic growth of "ego-consciousness", a similar continuous re-adjustment takes place in those individuals who

*"The Synthesis of Yoga". p. 408.

have conquered their ego and regained their spiritual balance.

The difference between the perfection of a flower (or that of an animal) and that of an Enlightened One, is that the former is unconscious, while the latter is conscious of the harmony which he has established by a creative effort and in which he continues to dwell by virtue of his wisdom, which makes a relapse into the unbalanced state impossible.

Then the rhythm of life is fulfilled and the threefold process of breathing becomes a revelation, as expressed in the following lines, in which I

have tried to compress the experience of *pranayama*, and which may serve as a simple and yet effective subject of meditation.

**Threefold is the rhythm of life—
taking.**

giving,

self-transcending :

Inhaling, I take the world within me.

Exhaling, I give myself to the world,

Emptied, I live within myself,

live

without self

embracing the All.

Inhaling, I take the world within me,

Exhaling, I give myself to the world,

Emptied, I experience abundance,

Formless, I fulfil the form.

RUBRIC FOR WESTERNERS

Our relationship with the Indian surroundings.

By Vijayananda (Dr. A. J. Weintrob)

A great number of Westerners have already come in contact with Sri Sri Ma Anandamayi, and more and more are most probably still to come. Almost all are deeply impressed; many are eager to keep up the contact with Her—some even venerate Her as their *Guru*. A few have devoted their life to Her and live under Her guidance. But most of them find it more or less difficult to adapt themselves to Indian surroundings—some complain of lack of understanding. A few are obviously unadapted and even in conflict with their surroundings. The reason is, it seems to me, a confusion of different levels of thinking. This confusion is quite common, for the whole illusion of the mind is built on mistaking one thing for another.

But Westerners coming to India in quest of spirituality are not quite common people, and we may expect that they will behave accordingly. Those who, for the sake of the Supreme, have left their family, their country, a comfortable life in a suitable

climate to stay in environments where all details of what is a natural and comfortable daily life for others, require a painful effort of adjustment, are surely not ordinary people.

Let us then examine where this confusion of planes of thinking lies. Our relationship with our human surroundings can be said to be simultaneously on four levels:—(1) The *Atmic Sambandha*—the relationship of oneness in the Universal Self, (2) The *Paramarthic Sambandha* which unites two seekers on the spiritual path, (3) The *Dharma Sambandha* the link between the devotees of the same religion, or the worshippers of the same deity, (4) The *Jati Sambandha* or blood relationship. These planes are of course not completely separate and interpenetrate one another. But what is true on one level, may be false on the other.

All men are one in the *Atmic Sambandha*, the relationship in the Universal Self. This can hardly be called a plane of thinking. It is the final goal of all true spiritual seekers.

From the absolute point of view, there is only One Consciousness which abides in all beings. The obvious differences of name and form have only a transitory reality, or even as some say are quite unreal and illusory. Of course when one has realised this Supreme Truth, no conflict or opposition can arise with regard to anybody or anything.

This exalted consciousness is the one in which Sri Sri Ma Anandamayi lives, speaks, acts under all conditions, without any break, by day and by night since the very moment She has assumed a physical frame. For Her there are no differences of race or nation, caste or creed. In Her eyes all are the manifestations of the same Divine Consciousness, nay Her very own Self, as She has Herself stated on many occasions and in many ways. If it appears to us sometimes that She behaves differently with different people, it may be due to two reasons. First it may appear to us so from our limited angle of vision. As one advances on the spiritual path, one can understand progressively how the intellect of which we are so proud, and in which we have put all our faith, makes mistakes and deludes us continually. The second reason is that Mataji is not only a great realised

Being but also a great Guru among the greatest and what she does aim at awakening us to our true Nature. As regards Her attitude towards social customs and so on, it may be due to the above noted reasons. Furthermore a realised Being is not a reformer, nor a founder of a new religion. He wants only to remind us of the Eternal Truth, "THOU ART THAT". Concerning social customs and so on He may take things as they are and use them as a lever to lead us to the recognition of the source of all suffering which is unawareness of our own real nature. To change the details without having penetrated to the root will not bring any real relief. But for us who have not realised our true nature it is not possible to live in this elevated state of consciousness. Let us then consider the *Paramarthic* which is nearer at hand.

There is a deep kinship, a mystic brotherhood between all true spiritual seekers in the world, which can be felt at the first contact. By "a true spiritual seeker", I mean: not those who have come for name and fame, nor those aiming at the development of psychic powers which will only increase their bondage; nor even the worshippers of deities who expect a reward here or hereafter; but those who have dedicated themselves

to the Supreme, the Eternal Self abiding in all beings. It is of this relationship that we think when we call one another "Brother"—it is in this spirit that we have come to India in order to claim our right of inheritance to this immense treasure of wisdom, the *Atma Vidya* transmitted since the days of yore by the great Rishis, the great saints, the great sages of India among whom Sri Sri Anandamayi is one of the greatest among the great.

Nobody in the world has ever expressed the highest Truth in such clear and sublime language as the Seers of India. No land has ever been blessed by so many Great Beings succeeding one another probably without any break for thousands and thousands of years.

The flame of this Wisdom has ever been kept burning brightly notwithstanding the invaders or the calamities in the country—much more, every saint, every seer, every sage has enriched this Divine Treasure by his own personal touch.

Our brothers of India generously open for us all the store-houses of the treasure. Every facility is given to Westerners coming to study the Wisdom of India. Indeed I have been moved to see how much interest

and kindness our brothers of India show to Westerners who have even a slight interest in spiritual matters. What then to say of the great sages who are much more eager than we ourselves are to bring us on the path leading to the knowledge of our real divine Nature.

It is with the Great Sages and above all, with the *GURU* that the *Paramarthic Sambandha* finds its culmination. The *Guru* is not only a teacher. No one who has not experienced it himself can possibly imagine the deep relationship that unites *Guru* and disciple. The tender love of the most affectionate mother, the deep and manly affection of a father to his son, the faithfulness of the dearest friend all these are contained in, and transcended by the love of the *Guru* for the disciple. Nothing and nobody on earth or in heaven can ever break this relationship. It is stronger even than death. It finds its end only in the Eternal *Atman* where *Guru* and *Shishya* merge into one.

Although Mataji does not give *Mantra-Diksha*, formal initiation, a great number of people venerate Her as their *Guru*. Such a great Being has no need to go through the ceremonial of a formal initiation. The *Shakti-dana*, the transmission of Power, which is in fact the real initiation, can be

given in many ways, as for example by touch *Sparsha Diksha*, by mere sight *Dristi-Diksha* and even from a distance. The *Paramarthic Sambandha* which unites the spiritual seekers, the *Guru* and the disciple, and the disciples of the same *Guru* (*Guru-Bhai*) is the deepest relationship one can ever have on earth—much more so than blood relationship which pertains only to the physical body.

The *Paramarthic Sambandha* is frequently mistaken for the *Dharmic Sambandha*, the religious relationship. And it is there that lies the knot of the misunderstanding. Although these relationships frequently go side by side, they signify two quite different things. By *Dharmic Sambandha* I mean here the relationship between the members of the same religion ; Catholics, Protestants, Jews, or the relationship between the worshippers of the same deity as for example in India, the *Saivites*, the *Shaktas*, the *Vaishnavites* etc.

In the West we think that man can change his religion, become a convert of another one if he so desires. But in India it is quite different. To every average cultured Indian it is self-evident that the religion in which we are born, is a part of our nature, as much as our race, caste etc. The question of changing over to another religion does not arise. We are born

in one or another religion according to "*Samskaras*" the impressions left by our previous lives.

Some Westerners coming to India with the idea of becoming converts of Hinduism are rapidly disappointed; this becomes an important point of friction with their surroundings and many misunderstandings may thus arise. Due to different habits of thinking deeply rooted in the subconscious mind, it is very difficult to grasp the point of view of another. Religion or in other words the approach to the Supreme through the personal aspect by the medium of name and form, can be a great help to spiritual realisation. But this name or form, must be deeply rooted in the subconscious mind.

Some exceptional Westerners, who in reality are Indians, born in the West only for a temporary sojourn, are able to adjust themselves to the worship of an Indian deity. But this can be effective only after advice by the *Guru*.

However, what is wanted is not to change one's religion, but to find the common ground where all religions have their source : the Eternal One residing in the hearts of all.

It happens frequently that Westerners get offended when not allowed

to take part in a *Puja* (worship festival) or to enter a Hindu temple. Orthodox Hindus are not 'idol worshippers' in the sense we give to this term in the West. All images and names are for them merely different aspects of the "One". A particular form or name is used only to provide a focus for their devotion. This is not only the view of a few philosophers, but every average cultured Indian knows this as a fact.

Ever since I have come in contact with Indian culture I have been struck with admiration, seeing how profound and elaborate the science of worship is in India. It is not merely as one might think an outpouring of devotion, or religious emotion. Every detail of the image worshipped has its significance. The expression of the face, the colour of the skin, the attitude, the gestures of the hands, the ornaments, all have a definite symbolical meaning. The worship is done by a qualified Brahmin. The words he uses in the worship are mostly *mantras* that have to be modulated with mindfulness in a certain way aiming at establishing a communion between him and the Divine Power. His movements are *Mudras*, ritual gestures. The whole process of the *Puja* (worship) is to the minutest detail arranged in such a way as to

invoke one's inner response to the Divine Power.

In some temples this has been done without any break for generations and generations and has created a very powerful religio-spiritual atmosphere in those places.

The Hindu devotees coming to visit such a temple vibrate in harmony with this atmosphere, for the whole texture of the sub-conscious Indian mind has for thousands of generations been in the habit of responding to it.

Whereas our sub-conscious mind, although we may be very sympathetic to Indian culture and religion, responds in quite a different way. The sub-conscious impressions one has acquired through early childhood education cannot be wiped out. The mental vibrations we would bring to such a place would not be in harmony with the atmosphere. It is just as if a non-musician sat in a symphony orchestra and played in his own rhythm and tune. Almost all religions have a code of regulations regarding the purity of food. The Hindu religion is one of them and much stress is given to the idea that pure food produces as its consequence a pure mind.

The defects in food can be of three kinds :

1. *Jati-dosha*—due to the unwholesome nature of the food itself (liquors, meat etc).

2. *Nimitta Dosha*—due to uncleanness (insects, hair, dirt etc.)

3. *Ashraya-Dosha*—In Hindu religion it is believed that whoever cooks or touches cooked food transmits to it a part of his qualities—good or bad. For this reason orthodox Hindus are allowed to eat only the food prepared or touched by Hindus, in some cases only by members of their caste or a higher one. There are many deep reasons why these rules have been established, and they are the result of generations of experiences. In any case these rules and the caste system which is related to them are a part of the Hindu religion. A religion is like a big temple, where every stone, every pillar has its part to play. If one pillar is removed, the whole building may be in danger to collapse.

It is under the shelter of this huge banyan tree of Hinduism that so many Rishis, Sages and Saints could grow up : it is the support of the spiritual culture. If this tree were to perish it would be a great loss to humanity.

The blood relationship, the *Jati Sambandha* (family, nation, race etc.) can hardly provide a field for misun-

derstanding. It is evident to every thoughtful mind.

But there are two more differences between the Western conception of blood relationship and the one recognised by the East. The first is that the Eastern sages think that it is not by mere chance that we have been born in surroundings of a particular kind, but as a consequence of our actions and desires in previous lives. The second is that in the East, specially in India, race and religion are not separate as in the West, but are almost one and the same thing.

The blood relationship is transient and does not last beyond the physical body.

It is through Divine grace that the Western *sadhakas* in India have been up-rooted from their natural soil. The manifold ties of blood relationship and the so subtle fetters of formal religion and ritualism which bind fast so many aspirants, have by the Lord's grace been cut off all at once for them. Only the way of the spiritual relationship leading to the Oneness in Universal Consciousness has been left open.

Let them be grateful for this to the Divine Guide residing in the hearts of all.

From the Life of Sri Sri Ma Anandamayi

(4)

While Sri Hara Kumar was at Ashtagram he arranged for various Kirtan parties to come and sing near Mataji's house. Twice during those Kirtans the states of "Bhava" were seen to manifest on Her body. Although She took no active part in the singing, the strains of devotional music sufficed to bring on these states. The few people who at that time were Her companions witnessed those "bhavas." A steadily increasing number of friends and neighbours began to collect daily round Mataji.

However, She did not remain at Ashtagram for very long. After having spent one year and four months there, She fell ill and went to Her parents' home at Vidyakut for a rest. Her illness was fortunately not a serious one and She regained Her health quite easily, but did not leave Vidyakut for another couple of years, while Bholanath continued at Ashtagram. After this period he was transferred to Bajitpur where Mataji came to join him once again.

While at Vidyakut Mataji had a quiet and restful time. Referring to Her life there, She has said : "At that

time there was not much house-work to be done, as the children were big enough and my mother did not require my help in anything. So I had plenty of leisure on my hands which I spent calling on friends and neighbours or just strolling around by myself. In the dark I sometimes perceived a strange effulgence enveloping my body and that light seemed to move about with me."

In Her parents' village Mataji could dispense with Her heavy veils and mix freely with friends and neighbours. Didima relates that Hindus and Mussalmans alike loved to have Her visit their homes and talk to them.

One day an acquaintance came to see Mataji and borrowed Her silver anklets on the pretext that she wanted to show them to her relatives, as she wished to have a similar pair made for herself. When after a few days Mataji asked for the anklets, the girl hotly denied any knowledge of them. But when Mataji was taken to task about the loss of her ornaments, She smilingly refused to disclose the name of the thief.

Didima narrates that at that time Mataji's demeanour was very much like that of a young married woman on a visit to her parents' home. She would even enter into the spirit of teasing young married couples which is a custom in India. The bridegroom has to be very wary of his sisters and cousins-in-law, because ragging is an unwritten law of the marriage ceremonies. Amusing stories are told of how Mataji successfully duped the most cautious of bridegrooms.

As Mataji has said at various times, a particular situation draws forth a particular response from Her. She never strives to achieve an end. Her response is perfectly spontaneous, changing according to the needs of time and place and of the persons concerned. The truth of this statement is quite self-evident to all who have come in close contact with Mataji. But it is such an unusual feature that it is equally difficult to explain to those who have not had first-hand experience of Her unique ways.

From the following incidents it may be seen that although She seemed to join freely and naturally in the work and play of the village girls of Her age, She was yet fundamentally and strikingly different from them all.

Once the village girls had gathered at the house of a newly married friend to put sweets into the bride's mouth

according to the custom. One of the young men present said to Mataji in rather a flippant manner: "You are also newly married, let me give you sweets too." With his hands outstretched he came forward and as Mataji backed away he followed. Mataji raising Her eyes, looked straight into his. He at once recoiled as if whipped and dared not trouble Her again.

On another occasion a young man followed Her about, passing remarks and whispering to his friends. After a while Mataji turned round and looked him full in the face. Her look sufficed to put an effective stop to his frivolous behaviour then and there.

It is strange to note that in both cases the young men fell ill soon after and one of them even succumbed to his illness and passed away. Whether there was any connexion between their unseemly behaviour and the sad fate with which they met, is of course impossible to tell. When questioned on these and other similar occurrences, Mataji has been heard to say: "This body never takes offence or wills that anyone should be punished. But that every action must bear its fruit is a law of nature. People become victims of their own evil thoughts and actions."

It seems fitting to relate here

another incident of a very different quality, in contrast to the two incidents cited above. It represents another example of the extraordinary power of Mataji's glance even when She was very young and at the same time shows what beneficial effects Her look may bring about, if the person concerned repents for his shortcoming and opens himself to Her healing and transforming influence.

When Mataji stayed at Dacca She was still very reserved and strictly observed the custom of young married women, remaining veiled and not speaking to men with the exception of certain members of Her family and very close friends. Notwithstanding men and women belonging to different classes and strata of society had started collecting round Her in fairly large numbers. One day, in the presence of many people, She suddenly raised Her veil and looking full into the face of a man who was standing in the crowd, said to him: "When you come here you must not look at any of the women who are gathered around me. They are gentlewomen, who normally would never expose themselves to the gaze of strangers, but they come here for my sake. If you must look, you may look at me only."

Nobody understood the reason for this sudden and unusual conduct on Mataji's part. However as it

was the time of taking "prasad", people were busy and nobody took much notice of the gentleman in question. When everyone had sat down for the meal and Mataji and Didi were preparing to serve the food, he was seen standing apart, not heeding repeated requests to join the others. He said: "I cannot eat, Mataji is angry with me." Mataji happened to be near at hand serving food. She remarked clearly and distinctly: "Mataji is never angry with anyone." The gentleman heard Her words and was thereupon persuaded to sit down with the others. But he was unable to eat anything and left early.

After this, although he continued to come often, he always sat with his eyes averted and never looked at anyone. Later he confessed that he had until then never been able to look at a woman without feeling passion. Mataji's darshan had completely cured him of this weakness and his attitude towards life underwent a thorough transformation.

In this connexion another incident may be recounted although it took place much later, when Mataji was on a tour to the sacred places of Rajasthan. In one of the towns She and a few other women companions got separated from Bholanath and the other male members of the

party, while riding in a *tonga* (horse-carriage). They asked the driver to take them to the *Dharmasala* (rest-house for pilgrims) where they were to put up. But instead of taking them to their destination he began to speed up his horse and raced out of the town into the deserted country. Mataji, as befitting a young married woman, was then wearing a lot of heavy ornaments. At a lonely spot the driver stopped the carriage and getting down, advanced towards Mataji, with a sly look on his face. Mataji gazed back at him steadily and he withdrew. She then quite calmly asked him to take Her and Her companions to the *dharmasala*. Without a murmur he obediently did as he was bidden.

The fact that Mataji is free from anger under all circumstances has been borne out so many times that it is taken for granted by all who are close to Her. Nevertheless when She so pleases, Mataji can assume such an awe-inspiring appearance that the hardest heart quails in the face of it.

The following incident may perhaps appear trifling and unimportant. But to Mataji the smallest detail may be as important and She may give it as much attention as to what seems to us a very big occasion of great

importance. The onlooker is very often unable to judge how much the person concerned may gain from what Mataji does.

Once a member of the Ashram in an outburst of anger refused to eat and would neither listen to reason nor to entreaties. Informed of this, Mataji sent for a plate of food and asked the person to sit down and eat in front of Her. But overcome by a fit of obstinacy, the person remained sitting in front of the food in a stony silence, refusing to obey Mataji's request. Didi exclaimed: "How dare you behave like this with Mataji? Just because She is easily accessible to you, you seem to forget who She is. My heart trembles at your audacity." The people who happened to be present had begun to share Didi's feelings, as by that time Mataji's face had taken on a terrifying expression. Those who had never seen Her other than smiling, now felt awed and apprehensive. When the tension was at the highest pitch, Mataji suddenly looked up from the person sitting in front of Her with bowed head, and smiled broadly at the other people in the room. Everyone sighed in relief and the tension relaxed perceptibly. Sensing a change in the atmosphere, the offender quickly ventured to look at Mataji. But during this split second She had reassumed Her terri-

fying look, and one glance at that countenance was sufficient to bring the obstinate one to his senses and everything came to a satisfactory end.

Thus we see that Mataji's behaviour is in strict correspondence with the people She is dealing with and whatever She may do, be it agreeable or disagreeable to the person concerned, is invariably for the best of everyone and never a personal reaction.

To come back to the chronological order of events :

We have already mentioned that Mataji left Vidyakut in order to join Bholanath as soon as he was transferred to Bajitpur. This happened in 1918. Bholanath was then working under Bhudev Babu, whose wife became one of Mataji's closest friends.

Bajitpur has acquired a special significance for us as the place where Mataji played the role of a Sadhaka. It has already been pointed out that Kirtan and the reading of scriptures had from Her early childhood had the effect of inducing states of *bhava* or *samadhi* in Her. Sometimes no outer stimulus could be traced as the immediate cause for those states. Nevertheless up till 1918 such occasions had been rare and far apart and could be explained away somehow or other ; whereas from now on Mataji's ways and activities became un-

compromisingly those of a Sadhaka. As everything in Her life, these practices, whether *kriyas*, *asanas*, *mudras*, etc. etc. came to Her spontaneously. She watched Her body performing those actions, just as She had watched Herself performing household work and other duties.

Our knowledge of Mataji's play of Sadhana is based upon what little She Herself has disclosed and on the testimony of Bholanath and various other persons who were fortunate enough to witness those practices. Only recently we heard Mataji relate a little incident that is highly significant for the way in which the 'sadhana' came about. "At Bajitpur," Mataji narrated, "I one day went to bathe in a pond near the house where we lived. While I was pouring water over my body, the *Kheyal* suddenly came to me : 'How would it be to play the role of a sadhaka ?' And so the play began. As a rule there is a veil that separates man from his own Self. This veil has then to be worn off by practising *sadhana*. But here there was no veil, it was drawn only in order to be removed again. Therefore — what else should this be called, but play ?" This period lasted for six short years during which Mataji in very quick succession, went not only through the variegated Sadhanas indi-

cated in the Hindu Scriptures, but also through those of other faiths.

It has already been pointed out that Mataji received a bare minimum of education. In the early days after Her marriage Bholanath had bought one or two books for Her. But this did not come to anything, for Mataji had never had the *Kheyal* to acquire fluency in reading. Mataji Herself relates that one day Bholanath gave Her a book and asked Her to read aloud to him. After She had with difficulty tackled one or two paragraphs, he asked Her to stop, mutter-

ing under his breath : "Lower Primary indeed."

Thus beyond listening to Kirtans and visiting temples and shrines, Mataji had had no training in religious practices. In Her childhood Her father had taught Her to repeat the names of Hari. Although no clear line of demarcation can be drawn between one period of Her life and another, we may say that She entered into the Lila of Sadhana by repeating the names of Hari as She had learnt to do in Her childhood.

—(To be continued).

A DIVINE CALL

By

Krishnanand Pant Shastri, M.A., M.O.L.

Sahityacharya, Professor & Head of the Hindi Dept., Meerut College, Meerut

Having come from an orthodox Brahmin family of Kumaon, I was brought up in the old traditions enjoined by the Shastras my father in the beginning of the present century migrated to Hardwar where he was instrumental in founding the institution named, "*RISHIKUL Brahmacharya Ashram.*" Being well versed in the Shastras and an eminent advocate of Sanatana Dharma, he insisted on my being initiated into that cult.

After I had completed the course prescribed for higher studies in Oriental learning and passed the matriculation examination, my father was persuaded to make arrangements for my studies in one of the Indian Universities. Accordingly I was sent to the Banaras Hindu University for further studies according to the Western System of education.

I was thus educated in two different systems and imbibed influences of two different cultures. Under the glamour of the West, I began to drift away from the East and imbibed whatever was poured in from the West. The tussle

was of course long and bitter, but the West with its glittering materialism got the better of the spirituality of the East. I became a confirmed materialist after a time and advocated the glory of the West with its materialism, agnosticism and other isms, in season and out of season to the exclusion of the East and its spiritual beauty.

In fact I held and was declaring to the world around me at the top of my voice that the religions of the world were fake, make-believe and designed to drug the masses and all those who came under their vicious influence. The philosophical, emotional and other aspects of the religions of the East were a matter of ridicule for me. I was not only intolerant of but even vehemently opposed to whatever the religions taught.

My mind, nurtured as it was in the desert of scholastic pursuits, was lost in the deep sea of Western argument. I had become a complete stranger to the East.

* * *

During the summer vacation of 1931, I paid a visit to Mussoorie. I chanced to hear that Shri Anandamayi Ma was there, but since I was not interested in spiritual things, I only casually went and saw Her. My mind did not react. I was callously indifferent to what She represented.

Again in the years 1933 and 1938 I happened to be in Hardwar. Shri Anandamayi Ma was there and I made it a point to see her, but with no result. I was on the other hand vehement in my expressions in regard to Her, consistent with the influence that Western thought had exercised on my mind.

* * *

The tension caused by the influence of the West was at its height when in response to an invitation of the Raja Sahib of Solon (Simla) I went to Solon in October 1946. I was invited on his behalf to attend the Durga Puja celebrations of his state, which were expected to be graced by Sri Ma's presence.

I reached Solon in time for the celebrations. A Sat-Sanga was being held in honour of Sri MA and I was taken there by a friend of mine. The Sat-Sanga was about to break up when we arrived. At the conclusion of it, however, my friend suddenly suggested that I should speak on any subject. As I was not prepared for

this eventuality, I expressed hesitation. I was, however, requested to deliver a speech by Sri Ma Herself. I found myself lacking in courage to decline and therefore obeyed.

My mind was a void and I did not know how to start. But as soon as I began to speak, I unconsciously waxed eloquent on the subtleties of certain ideas and also illuminated their hidden meanings. I learnt later from my friend that I had kept the audience spell-bound. But I do not know anything about this. Some mysterious force was at the back of it.

Again, on Saptami (the 2nd day of of the Puja) I was asked to recite the Devi Bhagavata. The time was very short and the reading had to be accomplished in three days' time. I therefore hesitated to undertake the task in the first instance. Since Shri Ma seemed interested in it, I nevertheless agreed to it with some hesitancy. My difficulty lay in the fact that I was not used to sit for more than two hours at a stretch, and the work entailed long sittings and the strain of reciting. But to my own amazement I was able to carry out the allotted duty with the same grace and facility as I had delivered the speech on the previous day. Yet I was not aware of it. The entire function came to a successful conclusion without my knowing how this had happened.

After the Puja celebrations were over I, along with others, took my departure. The miracle of Sri Ma's subtle touch had already reacted on my mind. I was simply transported to a super-natural world, entirely forgetful of my earthly surroundings. I felt that there was a fountain of eternal Bliss in Sri Anandamayi Ma which constantly overflows through Her and restores one to a calm serenity and cheerfulness, for the time being at least.

The change in me was radical and revealing. From cold cynicism I was carried away to the warmth of being. Vistas of infinity appeared to open out before me and I was transported to regions which are normally beyond one's comprehension. The ecstasy, though short-lived, was none-the-less suggestive and indicative of a Reality behind the fleeting scenes of our immediate surroundings.

But as soon as I came back to my normal self, I was subjected to an emotional outburst. It was so intense that there was an unceasing stream of tears accompanied by painful *hiccups*. This continued in the train also on my way back home the next day. I even went to the extent of hiding my face lest it might excite curiosity in some of the fellow-passengers and cause embarrassment to myself.

On arriving at home, I was still subject to those fits. A stream of tears would run down my cheeks without my being able to control it. I was in a fix.

Shri Ma had in the meantime arrived at Delhi. I therefore seriously began to think of paying a visit to Her there and have a talk with Her again. I had already hinted to Her at the appearance of tears etc. while I was still at Solon.

I proceeded to Delhi and on arriving at Sri Ma's residence was greeted with a blissful smile. I had a talk with Sri Ma and the emotional upheaval came to a standstill thereafter.

A note-worthy incident came to my notice in the course of that visit. While a Sat-Sanga was going on at Dr. Sen's residence at New-Delhi, a lady came. She had brought a dhoti which she placed over Shri Ma's shoulders. I thought that the dhoti was more suitable for a man rather than for a woman and a desire to possess it flashed across my mind. Those were the days of great scarcity and dhotis were not easily procurable. This dearth might have excited that wish in my mind. But it only floated into my mind and passed off again immediately.

Later in the day, when I was about to leave, one of Sri Ma's atten-

dants came to me and asked me to see Her before leaving the place. I did so and to my utter surprise beheld that the same dhoti on which I had cast my longing gaze a little while back, was lying before her to be presented to me as Ma's Prasad.

Let me end up by relating one more episode. In the later part of the year 1948 a friend of mine from Delhi paid a visit to me. He had brought his own car. On his return journey he suggested that I should accompany him in his car, which was brand new, just to enjoy a drive and spend the night with him at Delhi. As I had leisure enough I readily jumped at the idea.

The car was gliding smoothly and we were engrossed in conversation to the exclusion of everything else. We were roused from the reverie, as it were by violent jerks and bumps and before we could take stock of the situation, we had been thrown out of the car unconscious of what had happened.

Later when I was recuperating from my injuries, I came to know that a Colonel who was driving in his car behind us had got down at the place of the accident and seeing the condition of our car (it was a lump of steel

smashed to pieces) expected that the occupants of the car would have been minced into small pieces. He started investigations and found to his utter but delightful surprise that both of us had miraculously escaped death. Only the driver had sustained grave injuries on one leg.

After I had fully recovered from the shock and the injuries, an intense desire to have a "Darshan" of Ma surged up in my heart and I hastened to pay my homage to Her at Dehradun. This desire was further intensified by a strange incident which had occurred at my home. Sri Ma's photo which was hanging on the wall of my bed-room fell down horizontally with a crash and the glass was smashed to pieces, but the photo remained standing against the wall. This, as I found upon enquiry, had happened at the time of the accident in which I had been involved.

Sri Ma greeted me with her usual smile at Dehradun and indicated that she was aware of the accident and that I had been occupying her mind at the time of its occurrence. Sri Ma's being and Her powers are far beyond our understanding. May She grant us to know Her and through Her, our own Selves.

DIARY LEAVES

By Atmananda

(13)

In the course of Mataji's stay at Vrindaban in February-March, 1957, two European ladies, both Jungian psychologists came to see Mataji. The following conversation ensued :

Question : Psychologists cure patients by talking to them. With you it seems that your emanation cures people even without words.

It is our endeavour to help people— What is the most essential thing we should do for them ?

Mataji : Who can be said to be normal in this world ? Everyone appears to be mad after one thing or another : some after money, some after beauty, some after music, others after their children and so forth— nobody is really quite balanced.

Question : What then is the remedy ?

Mataji : Just as one does not water the leaves of a tree but its roots, so also one has to grapple with man's disease at its root. Man's root lies in the brain. Therefore the remedy for all ills is to still the mind. When man's mind has been stilled, all will be well with him, both physically and psychologically.

Question : How does the mind become still ?

Mataji : By treading the path that leads to the realisation of "Who am I ?" Your body that was young and is now old with its greying hair and its teeth falling out, does not last for ever. It is not the real "I". Therefore man has to find out who he really is. When he tries to do this, his mind will be supplied with the right nourishment that will calm it. The right sustenance for the mind cannot be had from anything that is of this world and hence perishable, but solely from that which is Eternal. The taste (*rasa*) of the Eternal will still the mind.

The universe was created out of Joy and this is why you find joy in the fleeting things of the world. Without joy life is an ordeal. You must try to attain to that great joy which has brought forth the world.

Question : What is the special contribution a woman has to make as apart from a man ?

Mataji : A woman is essentially a mother and consequently her duty is

to serve everyone. Also since you are daughter, wife and mother all in one to recognise the oneness of the three. Besides in every woman is contained a man and in every man a woman. If man were not contained within you, you would not be able to recognize a man; and if woman were not contained within a man, he would be unable to recognize a woman. Thus one of the tasks of a woman is also to discover the man in herself.

Question : What then is the special contribution a man can give ?

Mataji : Man is the reflection of the Supreme (*Purusha*), the one who upholds the universe (*Jogaddhatri*). True manliness means divinity. But then there is the (*Atma*) which is beyond man and woman. Everyone has to find that *Atma* that lies hidden within himself. It is the task of every human being to unfold both the man and the woman potentially contained within him or herself and to realize the *Atma* which is beyond man and woman.

* * * *

Kishenpur, July 1957

One evening Mataji was talking about the time when She first came to Raipur near Dehradun, where She stayed with Bholanath and Bhaiji. She told us how Bhaiji (J. C. Roy)

who was a high Government Official tried to serve Her and Bholanathji, attempting to do the most menial work such as he had never before done in all his life. It was a difficult undertaking, but by his great devotion and perseverance he soon acquired skill in this direction. He insisted on walking barefoot. Having worn shoes and socks for so many years, his feet became crooked and sore, but he remained undaunted. After two years of practice he said : "Now I have won the right to wear shoes, for I have learned to walk barefoot".

Mataji's older bhaktas who have known Bhaiji are still grieved at the loss of him, who was a living example to everyone at the Ashram. By his brotherly love and by his spirit of service to all without distinction he had earned for himself the name of "Bhaiji" (brother). When newcomers came he would help them to approach Mataji and make room for them near Her, whereas he himself kept in the background. In fact he never sat down in mataji's presence, but remained standing at the back of the hall or room. Only after he left his home and came to stay with Mataji and Bholanath, he was obliged to sit down in Her presence as he could not remain standing all the twentyfour hours. He would tell people : "If

you come to Mataji and accept Her guidance, do not think that you must practise this or that *Sadhana*, but do exactly as She bids you. Mataji is surrounded by people of the most varying types, belonging to all classes and castes, with different outlook and different upbringing. None of them is perfected, for they have all come to improve and perfect themselves. It is therefore difficult for everyone, as he has to put up with the habits, customs, weaknesses and idiosyncrasies of all the others. Yet he should bear in mind that this is an important part of his *tapasya* or *sadhana*, which will teach him patience and forbearance and help to break down his ego. He should therefore not attempt to reform others, but try to endure things as they come and strive to improve himself rather than his companions. By this he will profit greatly."

* * *

Kishenpur, July 1957.

As so often a bereaved mother had come to pour out her heart to Mataji, lamenting the loss of her son. Mataji spoke soothing words of comfort to her, reminding her that her son was in the care of the Almighty wherever he was and that by turning her mind to Him she would also draw ever closer to her

son. When the woman kept on crying, Mataji related a true story, which we have heard Her tell before on similar occasions :

"When I stayed in Bengal I used to visit Tarapith about once a year. One day a woman came, weeping at the loss of her daughter who had died at the age of seventeen or eighteen on the eve of her marriage. The woman had still a younger daughter, aged about ten or eleven. This body told them both to turn to God for comfort and the little girl also started practising *Japa* regularly every morning and evening with the help of a rosary which I presented to her. She became very fond of this practice and even when she fell ill she would keep her rosary under her pillow and continue her *japa* with great regularity. But as fate would have it, she succumbed to the illness and died. When this body came to Tarapith the following year the woman was again in mourning. Having lost both her daughters she was naturally broken hearted. I told her that her grief would react on her children, keeping them tied to the earth instead of their being able to proceed unhampered on their upward path. After much talking she finally promised to try her best to remain cheerful. She made a sincere effort, but often she could not

help longing for her children. One evening she was thinking with regret : "Not even in dreams am I allowed to see my little darling." That night she dreamt of her younger child, who appeared to her dressed in white, with a wreath of flowers in her hair looking radiant and beautiful. She motioned to her mother to follow her and led her to a place where many girls of her age were singing the praises of God. All were dressed like herself and decorated with flowers. A venerable old man with a long white beard, who looked like a Rishi, seemed to instruct them. They all appeared full of joy and peace. When the woman awoke from her dream she had a distinct feeling that her little daughter was happy where she was and she made up her mind not to disturb her. However, after sometime the lonely woman started pining again for her lost children. One night her husband had a strange dream. His younger daughter came and put her arms round him, saying : "Mother is so sad and lonely without me, I can't bear it any more to see her cry, I am coming back to you." And in his dream the father took his child in his arms and placed her in her mother's lap. Ten months later a baby girl was born to them. When I came to Tarapith the next year the woman brought her tiny baby to me.

The child grew up and is now a woman. In this way it may happen that the grief of their loved ones drags souls back to this world, but it is better to leave them free to progress on their upward path. God alone knows what is best for everyone and provides for it.

Kishenpur, July 1957.

The Principal of a college related as follows :

"In the town where I live there is a quite uneducated young man who, whenever he lies straight on his back (in *Savasana*) goes into a kind of trance. In that state he recites the Vedas and holds discourses on spiritual topics often for one or two hours. He also replies with great learning to whatever questions are put to him. But in his ordinary waking state he is an ignorant person, who remembers nothing of the wisdom that he displays when in trance—in fact he does not even know that he gets a trance. But when questioned about this strange phenomenon while lying in trance he declared that he was a Rishi, who burnt one of his disciples to ashes to punish him for some misdeed he had committed. Brahma then cursed him as a result of which he was born in an uneducated family and had neither inclination nor capacity to acquire

knowledge. It seems to me, added the gentleman, who related the incident that the rishis are using the said young man as a medium to give teaching to the world.

Mataji did not directly comment on this but started talking about spiritualistic seances. "There was a woman," She said, "who contacted her deceased husband by using a planchette. She seemed to be successful and got much satisfaction out of this practice. But I explained to her the danger of being deceived by some other spirit and persuaded her to drop the practice. Another widow however would not listen to the advice of this body and continued the table-tapping. She got more and more fascinated by it. To contact another world, which is not ordinarily accessible, tickles one's vanity and when one has become addicted to this kind of thing it is difficult to give it up. The woman gradually became mentally disturbed and finally raving mad.

To get in touch with spirits is dangerous, for one may become subjected by them.

"There is a certain sadhu who feels that he on occasions gets inspired or overshadowed by Sri Krishna. Many people have intense faith in him and firmly believe that the inspiration is genuine. In that state he replies to questions on spiritual topics and recites poetry. The replies he gives are of a mixed quality, some are true to the spirit of the Bhagawad Gita but others are not. I told him : "If these states do not bring about a transformation in you, what is the use of them? Moreover when the replies you give are sometimes right and sometimes wrong how can you be sure who it is that inspires you?"

The extra-ordinary thing was that at that very moment the shadhu about whom Mataji had just spoken entered the room, arriving quite unexpectedly from a far off place in the Punjab.

MATRI LILA

(August — October 1957)

In the last issue of 'Ananda Varta' we briefly reported about Mataji's movements from May to the end of July. We mentioned that Mataji arrived in the Kishenpur Ashram at Dehradun on June 28th for a long stay for about two months, interrupted by a visit of five days to Hardwar from July 8th to 12th on the occasion of *Gurupurnima*. The celebration at Hardwar marked a joyful reunion of bhaktas who had assembled in large numbers even from places as distant as Calcutta, Bombay, Almora etc. not to speak of those who had come from Delhi, Dehradun and so forth, to pay homage to Mataji on that auspicious day.

We are sorry to state that Mataji did not keep good health during Her sojourn at Kishenpur, although for the first few weeks it would have been difficult for a casual visitor to notice it, since Mataji attended the Satsang daily, talked and joked in

Her usual lively manner, and almost every evening went for walks to 'Kalyanvan,' where a great many devotees from Dehradun used to gather for *Darshan* and occasional discussions. Towards the end of July, however, Mataji's condition took a turn for the worse. From August 1st to 23rd She did not come downstairs at all. During those 23 days we had *Darshan* three times daily for a few minutes only and every time we found Mataji sitting or lying on Her bed.

Within that period fell *Jhulan Purnima* and *Janmastami*. Everyone felt rather anxious and perturbed about Mataji's bad health and nobody was in a mood for celebrations. But Mataji insisted that celebrations, decorations and feasts should be observed in the usual manner and She Herself gave instructions about every detail of the preparations. Although during *Jhulan* week Mataji's

health was at its worst, She came out on the veranda near Her room on the nights of *Jhulan Ékadasi* and *Purnima* and sat in an arm-chair in front of a large ventilator that opens out into the hall below, so that She could admire the charmingly decorated swing that had been installed for the occasion. Several images of Lord Krishna had been placed on it, to be worshipped according to the custom. The people sitting in the hall could at the same time have Mataji's darshan from a distance.

By *Janmastami* (the birthday of Lord Krishna) which fell on August 18th this year, Mataji's condition had fortunately improved and Mataji came out of Her room four times that day and sat before the ventilator giving Darshan to all and listening to the excellent Kirtan that was sustained for twenty-four hours by bhaktas from Karanpur (Dehradun) and Delhi. Mataji was also present in the same place from 12 - 1 a. m. watching the midnight Puja. The attendance was tremendous throughout the day and night. On that special occasion people were allowed to go upstairs, to do obeisance and place their offerings before Mataji while She was sitting on the veranda. In spite of everyone's deep regret that Mataji was too weak to come

downstairs and move about among people as She always used to do on similar occasions, this festival was celebrated in a most beautiful, dignified and solemn manner. Even the frolics of the traditional '*Nandotsav*,' which expresses the joy of the cowherds over the birth of the Divine child Sri Krishna the next morning, were not omitted. Some of the young people dressed up as *Gopas* and *Gopis* and acted their parts, dancing round the room with large pots of curds on their heads. Mataji appeared again in Her elevated point of vantage, but it fell to Didi's lot this time to distribute the curds to everyone present at the end of the function.

A new feature of those days was that while as a rule whenever Mataji leaves the Satsang many people get up and follow Her wherever she goes or if she retires to Her room wait in front of the closed door, this time people attended all the meetings daily in large numbers, although Mataji's seat remained vacant.

On August 23rd almost the whole of Mataji's party, including Didima and Didi, left for Varanasi, whereas Mataji with a very few people only moved to '*Kalyanvan*', Her second Ashram at Kishenpur. To our ama-

zement Mataji walked down the steps very steadily, after having been confined to Her set of rooms for over three weeks. After sitting in the hall for a few minutes, She boarded the car that took Her to *Kalyanvan*, where She at once began to stroll about on the large platform and then sat down in the open, giving Darshan to those who were tearfully taking leave as well as to the crowd that had come from Dehradun. Mataji spent three days in the little garden house, and then moved to the Raipur Ashram. This is the site near an old Shiva temple where Mataji stayed for many months with Bholanath and Bhaiji when She first left Bengal years ago. The approach to the Ashram is by a good number of steep steps and some of us wondered whether Mataji would not have to be carried up in an armchair. But lo and behold, She climbed up the steps as if She were quite well and strong. Her condition had improved and when Mataji left for Varanasi on August 29th She even followed the urgent invitations of bhaktas to three different houses and sat in their gardens for a few minutes each on Her way to the station. In one of the houses She responded to the host's request to sing '*Rama nama*' and to our delight we heard Her sing after a long time.

As always with Mataji, the nature of Her illness could not be defined by the various doctors that had been called from Delhi and Varanasi as well as Dehradun to relieve the anxiety of the bhaktas rather than Mataji's condition. It is a well-known fact among those who are close to Mataji, that Her illnesses baffle and bewilder medical experts as much as laymen. A doctor may diagnose a certain disease, only to discover that it has simply vanished the next day or else given place to quite a different type of illness, only to change into a third one the day after or he may possibly find Her perfectly well again. It is very similar as regards Her pulse: it may be very quick at one time and ten minutes later quite slow and weak and so forth. When taking Her temperature the thermometer may show high fever and perhaps half an hour later subnormal temperature. Doctors mostly do not dare to diagnose Her condition any more and since medicine of any kind, be it allopathic, homeopathic or ayurvedic, far from having a curative effect, only aggravates the trouble. Nobody has the courage to request Mataji to take medicine. All that doctors can do is to give suggestions as to state and rest and to allay the anxiety of Her attendants by reassuring words. Often they humbly

request Mataji to explain Herself the nature of Her illness, which She does with a most radiant smile and complete detachment, as a perfectly dispassionate spectator. On such occasions She repeats invariably that She is always well and in "Ananda" and that She does not experience any discomfort, although the ailment seems obvious enough to us. When asked why She gets ill at all, since there is no Karma for Her to be worked out as in the case of ordinary human beings, She has often been heard to say: "Diseases are beings with definite shapes like every one of you. I do not send you away when you come to me, but welcome everyone and everything as forms of Him. Why should I make an exception with those of His guises which are called illnesses? It is all His Play. He is in all forms, be they pleasing or painful. I can assure you that I feel no discomfort, all conditions are equal to me, I am always well."

Nobody can comprehend why She should get seriously ill suddenly and be cured equally unexpectedly without the use of medicine or treatment. Sometimes, as also during Her recent sickness, Mataji has stated that health and disease depend largely on the breath, on its quality, its rhythm and rate. (It must be borne in mind that

the breath is the outer expression of the life force (*prana*) which keeps the body alive.) If the rhythm of the breath is disturbed this is followed by illness, but if the normal rhythm of the breath can be regained and be made harmonious the body will be fit and healthy in no time. Then also She says: "I am the nerves, the arteries and the veins, I am the breath as well as its movement, I am also the observer who stands apart and watches the process of living and breathing if at all the word 'I' is to be used!"

During the days when Her condition appeared most critical to us She would perfectly calmly and smilingly—albeit with a weak voice—explain the details of the symptoms, the details of the disturbed functioning of breath and pulse, while in spite of seeing the general disability of Her body, all the doctors agreed that every one of Her organs was in perfect condition. It was in fact most perplexing.

One day, while Her illness was acute, Mataji told us that in the night certain Mahatmas had come to see Her in their subtle bodies. They first sat before Her for a while and then walked round Her in solemn circumambulation. She did not tell us

why they had come, but we feel that it may probably have been to join in the fervent prayers of devotees all over India, nay all over the world, for Mataji's speedy recovery. Of course we cannot know, it is only speculation on our part.

Mataji has repeatedly been heard to state that not only visible beings flock round Her, but also equally many or even more human and other beings come to Her in their subtle bodies, invisible to the ordinary eye. They come for many different reasons : to have *darshan*, to enjoy Mataji's company, for Satsang, to ask questions and have their problems solved and also for purposes which are beyond our ken.

Fortunately Mataji has granted the prayers of all the thousands of visible and invisible devotees and been gracious enough to become much better again, although She is not yet in perfect health.

Mataji reached Varanasi on August 30th after an absence of nearly five months. From September 1st to 8th a *Bhagavata Saptah Jayanti* was held, which now has become a regular feature of the Ashram. It was celebrated in an even more impressive manner than on former occasions—perhaps to make up for Mataji's absence from

Varanasi during *Jhulan* week and *Janmastami*, which used to be such feasts of joy there in years past. Part of the success of the *Bhagavata Saptah* was surely due to the active interest of a devotee from Bombay who attended with his whole family. Although functions of this kind are being repeated time after time, yet in Mataji's presence they seem ever new and inspiring.

A few years ago the parents of a promising young man, who had died under tragic circumstances in an aircrash, arranged for a *Bhagavata Saptah* in the Ashram. The bereaved father was a fairly Westernised person, who had not much faith and moreover the simplicity and frugality of the Ashram was not quite to his taste when he first arrived. But day by day his mood brightened and he came to appreciate more and more the spiritual atmosphere around him, until by the end of the week he was a changed person, full of joy at having made contact with Mataji.

A veritable host of visitors had come to take part in the *Bhagavata Jayanti* this year. Many of them returned to their homes when it was over and Mataji had a more restful time until a new influx of guests arrived to attend *Durga Puja* which

was celebrated from September 30th to October 3rd.

Already a year ago an old bhakta of advanced age had begged Mataji to be present at the Durga Puja at Varanasi this year, as it might possibly be the last celebration in the old lady's lifetime. The request was granted. Preparations for the Puja began quite early and invitations were sent to all bhaktas and friends. A surprisingly large number responded to the call—in fact one was reminded of the 60th *Jayanti* celebrations in 1956 ; of course it was all on a miniature scale compared to that gigantic function. Nevertheless this time also many guests had to be accommodated in various houses near about, even though the Ashram itself can give shelter to a very considerable number of visitors. The whole celebration was pervaded by a great joy. Mataji was not present for as many hours as She used to in former years, visibly or invisibly She was felt to take part in everything and at intervals could be seen moving all over the Ashram giving suggestions, directions, encouragement. Visitors had Her *darshan* several times daily.

A word must be said about the artist who created the image for the Puja in front of our eyes in the Ashram

itself, in an incredibly short time and yet with rare artistic skill and perfection. It was quite an experience to watch him work and produce the beautiful image, seemingly out of almost nothing, as if by magic.

On October 8th Lakshmi Puja followed. In the *Chandi Mandap* of the Ashram there is a lovely statue of the goddess Lakshmi, which was used as the focus for the worship. Lakshmi Puja is performed after dusk, in the full moon night and takes only about two hours, which Mataji graced with Her benign presence. It was on a much smaller scale than Durga Puja, but none-the-less impressive, charming and harmonious.

A fortnight later, on October 22nd and 23rd Divali, the festival of lights was observed in the traditional way by a profusion of oil lamps and candle lights outlining the Ashram roofs and verandas, by crackers and fireworks for the children and by the solemn worship of the goddess Kali throughout the moonless night. Mataji was present in the evening and again during the Puja from 10 p. m. to nearly 3 a. m. When everyone had partaken of the Prasad it was nearly dawn and therefore time to start cooking for *Annakut*, the yearly feast of *Annapurna*, the goddess of plenty. An enormous quantity of food of a

great variety (108 dishes in all) has to be offered on that occasion and there was no end to the guests who kept on pouring in the whole afternoon, until at about 6 p. m. everyone had his fill. No special invitations had been sent out for this feast, but everyone who ventured along was welcome to partake of the Prasad and thanks to *Annapurna's* grace there was no scarcity; everyone who came could be satisfied. It was no small task for those of the Ashramites who prepared and served the meal, not only in the two dining-halls, but also simultaneously wherever else space permitted. Mataji could be observed now in the kitchen, the next moment in the temple, then again taking part Herself in the serving of food and a little later receiving people in Her own room, putting a garland round one person's neck, a fruit into another one's hand, with a smile for one, an encouraging word for yet another — as ever giving just the right thing at the right moment to everyone who comes within Her orb.

On October 24th Mataji motored to Vindhyachal. There She had

a comparatively quiet time, although guests from Calcutta, Bombay, Ahmedabad, Delhi, Kanpur, Lucknow, Allahabad, Varanasi etc. kept on coming and going without a day's interval there as well.

We have already in other issues of *Ananda Varta* tried to give an idea of the exquisite view over the surrounding plains, hills and the Ganges which the Ashram commands, situated as it is on Ashtabhujā Hill, a few minutes' distance from the P. W. D. rest house. A visit to the Vindhyachal Ashram, however short, while Mataji is present, will remain a cherished memory for the rest of one's life. Everything is delightful on Ashtabhujā Hill. The wide landscape, the soft breeze, the sparkling water from '*Kali Kuan*,'* the excavations of ancient sculptures at the entrance to the Ashram, the herds of cows and goats grazing on the hillside, the solitude and the pervading peace — and last not least the fact that Mataji can be met here surrounded by a handful of people only in contrast to the large crowds in most other places. In the Vindhya-

* *Kalikuan* is a famous well in the courtyard of a Kali temple nestling in the midst of a picturesque jungle. The water has curative properties and patients suffering from gastric troubles flock to Vindhyachal all the way from Calcutta, many claim to have been restored to health by drinking the water of that well.

chal Ashram there is no rush and no pushing, one may relax and feel at perfect ease.....

On November 15th Mataji returned to Varanasi only to leave for New

Delhi on November 19th, to be present at the sixth Samyam Mahavrata, to be held at the Ashram at Chandralok, near Kalkaji on the outskirts of New Delhi.
