

Contents

ENGLISH SECTION

| | Page No. |
|--|----------|
| 1. Matri Vani | 1 |
| 2. Conversations with Sri Sri Ma Anandamayee— Prof. B Ganguly | 5 |
| 3. What mother is not—Vijaianand | 11 |
| 4. Mother—D. Padmanabhan, I. C. S. (Retd.) | 23 |
| 5. Mother Anandamayee : A Votary of Divine Love —Dr. Chou Hsiang Kuang, Ph. D. | 27 |
| 6. In quest of God and Sad-Guru—P.M. Verma, M.A. | 33 |
| 7. New Diary Leaves—Atmananda | 40 |
| 8. From the life of Sri Sri Ma Anandamayee— Dr. Bithika Mukerjee, M. A., D. Phil. | 45 |
| 9. Matri Lila | 52 |

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

MĀTRI VĀNI

“*Mahashunya*—the Great Void—is alone His Form. But it has to be distinguished from the ordinary void that belongs to the world ; where this functions the Great Void cannot be comprehended. • What is and what is not ? Yet everything is and is also not—and neither is it not, nor is it. Albeit—to find all by losing all, this is what is wanted.”

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“You and I are two persons and yet you and I are one ; and the gap between the two of us, this also is myself : there can be no question at all of duality. Attachment and hate arise out of the sense of duality.”

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• *Mahashunya*—Great Void means Absolute Consciousness characterized by the absence of all creation. *Shunya* or (ordinary) void is the interval or gap between every two persons, things, feelings, thoughts, ideas, etc., which of necessity exists in the world of duality.

“Whether this body talks to you or laughs or lies down to sleep, or whether it sinks to the ground and rolls about, as sometimes happened during *kirtan*—no matter how many different states and conditions this body may appear to be in, it nevertheless remains always in the one state. Indeed everything occurs out of the one condition.”

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“Again when *puja*, etc. was spontaneously performed by this body, * then the particular characteristics of the deity worshipped, the *āsanas* (postures) and *mudras*, † the display of power and so on, specific to that deity, everything manifested through this body in exactly the prescribed manner. But all this, far from being the product of imagination, was as real as you are here right now before me. Every detail of the paraphernalia necessary for the ceremony not only appeared of itself, in fact it issued from this body! Even the forms (*murti*) of gods and goddesses were taken out of this body, made to sit down and then were worshipped. Again when the *puja* had been completed they re-entered this body exactly from where and in the same way in which they had emerged. It has to be borne in mind that everything is possible.”

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* Mataji here refers to the time when She played the role of a *sādhika* (in Her twenties.)

† Positions and movements, mostly of the hands and fingers that are a part of ritual.

“You know in what manner service was done by this body : I myself was the patient, I was his suffering, and the nursing was also done by me. This is why whatever was required anywhere, at any time, came about in precisely the way needed. You also should exert yourselves and try at least to engage in service with heart and soul, considering whomsoever you serve as your own self : by so doing, no matter what be the nature of your service, it will in time become instinct with life.”



“It is characteristic of this body that from whatever point of view anyone may speak at any particular time, it will respond from precisely that point of view or angle. This body is not always consistent in what it says in the way you would be. Everyone’s varying thoughts and feelings are indeed ever clearly visible before my eyes.”



“If happens off and on that the forms (*murti*) of diseases† approach this body. They may even enter it and have free play for a certain period of time. It is the nature of this body neither to invite anyone nor to send anyone away. Just as you exist, so do illnesses. This body does not turn

† Mataji says that every disease has a distinct form (*murti*) that can be perceived on a subtle plane.

you away, as you well know ; why then should it mete out a different treatment to them ?”

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“For this body only the ONE exists, there is not even the possibility of a second. Who then can give trouble to whom ? Only if there be ‘another’ can he cause trouble.”

“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.”

“Ma”

Conversations with Sri Sri Ma Anandamayi

RECORDED BY PROFESSOR B. GANGULY

(Translated by Atmananda)

(2)

Question : What is the significance of the saying in the Bible : “Knock and the door shall be opened to you ?” Does it refer to the opening of the door of the ego ?

Mataji : What is your opinion ? One has of course to break up one’s own ego.

Question : When the walls that make up the ego have been demolished, what happens ?

Mataji : On what foundation do those walls rest ?

The Questioner : On the cover that is spread over the Light of the Self.

Mataji : Now you have yourself given the answer !

Question : What actually is the ego ?

Mataji : You imagine that you are the doer of your actions—this indicates the existence of the ego in you. ‘Duniya’ (world) means ‘du-niya’ (based on duality). Here the cause of the conflict lies in the idea that the ego is the doer of actions. Duality breeds conflict, problems, the separate ‘I’ and its activities. In the imperfect ‘I’ the ego is present, while the realization ‘I am the Self (*Atma*)’ is of the perfected

'I'. The result of egotism is blindness. In the attitude of mind : 'I am the Lord's eternal servant,' there also seems to be duality, but the worldly 'I' has not survived. Not until the I is perfect, in other words not unless '*Aham Brahmasmi*' (I am the Brahman) has been realized will the ego be destroyed from its roots.

Question : Which of the two is better : to break the door and enter, or having broken up the ego, to remain lying at the door ?

Mataji : In the first instance the ego has still confidence in its own power and capacity, while the second is a case of self-surrender—and therefore He is sure to open the door and let you see the Light Eternal. The door is meant to be broken ; this may be achieved either by self-effort or by the special *sādhana** that the *Guru* prescribes. All *tapasya*† has for its sole purpose the piercing of the veil of ignorance. But God is not revealed by the seeker's own effort, He is ever Self-luminous and does not depend on any action. However, by one's own doing has the veil been fashioned and by one's own doing will it be destroyed ; and then the One who is eternally pure, fully enlightened and free will shine forth. Only what is removable will be removed ; how is it possible to remove what cannot be removed by any means ? When your life is centred in activity, either in the world or in the domain of thought, you experience relative happiness, for the sphere of the mind is in fact the kingdom

**Sādhana*—Spiritual practice performed for the purpose of preparing oneself for Self-realization.

†*Tapasya*—Hardships undergone with the definite object of attaining to the Spiritual.

of delusion. There, true happiness, which does not depend on anything, cannot be found. To be delivered from this want one has to take recourse to *sadhana*, and then the Beloved (*Ishta*) becomes revealed by virtue of the *Guru's* power. Where nothing undesired (*an-isht*) can be, in other words no want or sorrow, that is indeed one's *Ishta*. Try to burn what can be burnt by Knowledge and to melt what can be melted by faith and devotion ; then the Beloved will stand revealed. The path of discrimination leads to the realization of the essence of Knowledge and the path of devotion to the revelation of the essence of Love. Verily, both are one : by *bhakti* one will arrive at a state where the Beloved is seen everywhere and in everything ; and by discrimination at the realization of the One-Brahman-without-a-second. Both are in fact one and the same ; no matter what be a person's method of approach, ultimately he will reach the One Destination. In nature there is gradual development, while the One State in which there are neither grades nor stages lies beyond nature. Here Pure Consciousness is realized, where even though the whole is taken from the whole, yet the whole remains unimpaired ; where even though the void is taken from the void, yet the void remains unaltered. He alone exists in the guise of nature as well as of supernature. By persevering in spiritual practice the 'I' (*Aham*) will be transformed into "I am THAT" (*Soham*) ; or in the case of those who advance along the line of devotion the wayward servant will be transformed into the Eternal Servant of the Lord.

In the realm of the fleeting there can be no peace, notwithstanding the great variety of objects of enjoyment,

for none of them endure. The sense of want will never vanish unless the Eternal One has been realized. Actions that are the expressions of the ego will only lead to more perplexity ; but by engaging in *sadhana* the Self will be found. Do not be a traveller on the path of death ; become a pilgrim on the path of Self-realization. A life burdened by desires for sense objects is the path of death. So long as craving and passion persist, one is obliged to take a 'return-ticket' as it were, in other words one will be reborn in order to experience pleasure and pain again and again.

Question : Convicts in jail know for how long they have been sentenced. Why do the prisoners of the earth not know for how long they will be confined ?

Mataji : Why, indeed, it is made known to them. Supermen, saints and sages by proclaiming Truth are at all times making it clear that this world is a prison-house. Try to return from your captivity.

Question : Who is a mother (*māti*) ?*

Mataji : A mother ? This is the mother—earth. (Pointing to the earth).

Question : May householders take initiation by *mantra* from a *sannyāsi* ?

Mataji : From whomsoever a person is fated to receive something, from him will it be received.

* *Mā* is the Bengali word for mother. The suffix 'ti' is commonly affixed to singular nouns, thus '*Māti*'. But *Māti* with long 'i' (ee) means earth.

Question : Is it right and proper to sever one's connection with one's family *guru* ?

Mataji : Ultimately all Gurus are one ; He who can reveal the eternal *Guru* who dwells in the disciple, He alone is a true *Guru*. If a *Guru* is given up, it must be understood that He has never really been accepted.

Question : What is the meaning of the word '*ānandamayi*' ?

Mataji : From times immemorial *ānandamayi* has been the epithet of *Bhagavati* (God conceived as mother). *Anandamayi* is in fact contained in all things. Thus it is said that 'wherever a man is, there is *Shiva* and wherever a woman—*Gauri*'.

Question : Why is *ānanda* (bliss, happiness) so attractive to all human beings ?

Mataji : All manifestations are the manifestations of *ānanda*.

Question : What is sorrow ?

Mataji : Sorrow (*duḥka*) is inherent in duality.*

In the realm of the mind, in the material world, which is the world of duality, there must of necessity be sorrow. Everything without exception is a form of God. In the disguises of sorrow, shadow, error and illusion manifests also but the ONE. Nevertheless, the special abode of sorrow and sin is where the thought of God is not. There is a story, in

* *Du* means two, and *duḥka*—sorrow.

which it is related that after God had created the universe and assigned their rightful places to all creatures, sin approached Him and asked: "Where is my place?" The Creator replied: "Where God's name is not, there you may reside; your dwelling-place is with the man who does not pronounce the name of the ONE, who does not cherish the remembrance of Him."

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

"Ma"

WHAT MOTHER IS NOT

VIJAIANANDA

What Mother is in reality is a perplexing question that has been voiced frequently and to which to this day nobody has been able to find a satisfactory reply; for the simple reason, it seems to me, that no adequate answer to this enigma exists. The full solution of the mystery can come only after complete spiritual Realization.

In this article, however, I intend to deal with a problem which is not quite so far beyond my limited possibilities. Among certain people false ideas are prevalent concerning Mother and Her teaching. These ideas are held by persons who have either met Mother only casually or else have merely heard or read about Her. Such wrong notions are to a certain extent excusable, for it is very difficult to find out along what line Mother actually teaches. A *vedantist* for example, when talking to Mother for the first time, will feel convinced that She is a pure *advaita vedantin*; a *śakti* may very likely say that She is an incarnation of the Divine Mother, advocating the cult of *śakti*; while a *vaiṣṇava* will see in Her a great *bhakta*, and so on. It is only after having known Her fairly closely and for a long time that one becomes aware of Her innumerable facets and of Her extraordinary universality. But let us examine one by one the incorrect or partly incorrect views about Mother that I have come across.

Is Mother a Tantrika Guru ?

(I shall refer to the world 'tantrik' not in its etymological and true meaning, but in the way it is commonly understood especially by Western people, namely as the path of *sadhana* that makes use of sexuality in its practices.)

When I first came to India I was told by a young Westerner that he had been warned against Mother, as She was supposed to be a "yogini dealing with 's'aktis'." This opinion can of course be held only by one who has never seen Mother and probably not even talked to any of Her devotees ; who is completely ignorant of the fact that strict *brahmacharya* (chastity) is one of the main requisites for admission into Mother's Ashrams, that people leading married life cannot join the Ashram at all and that moreover not only physical abstinence is necessary, but absolute purity of thought and emotion is aimed at.

Says Mother :

"It is the pure undefiled flower that finds a place at the feet of the Lord and nowhere else. Take great care to spend your life in spotless purity, worthy to be dedicated in worship to the Lord."

('Matri Vani' No. 85.)

As to Mother's own person it is needless to say that the name given to Her by Her parents, namely *Nirmala* (immaculate) is more than justified : Such absolute, flawless purity cannot be found in any earthly or even heavenly being.

Is Mother a Magician or Hypnotizer ?

It has come to my ears that there are those who believe that Mother attracts people through magic or hypnotism, with no other motive than to play with them. Someone from Europe who came to see me, related to me, he had been given to understand that there was a French doctor (the writer of this article) staying in Sri Anandamayi Ma's Ashram, whom She was keeping under the spell of Her hypnotic power. Someone had even been advised to try and rescue me.

To such deluded people we can only say that Mother is indeed a great divine magician, attracting to Herself innumerable men and women, who are under the spell of the terrible and powerful magician called *maya* and hypnotized by the countless ties of mundane life. By the charm of Her divine love Mother hypnotizes them away from worldliness and with Her infinite patience gradually leads them "*From the unreal to the Real, from ignorance to the Light of Wisdom, from death to Immortality.*"

Is Mother a S'akta ?*

I have read an article about Mother in which the writer referred to Her as 'a child of the Divine Mother'. The author had obviously the best intentions and felt deep reverence for Mother, but he evidently failed to recognize Her true greatness. Mother does not worship any aspect of God, being Herself the

*S'akta—Worshipper of God conceived as Mother.

embodiment of THAT, from which all gods and goddesses emanate. It is of course true that Mother often speaks of Herself as a little child and calls all married people Her fathers and mothers. But so far as I can understand, She is the kind of child to whom Sri Aurobindo refers when he writes that the Lord is an eternal child, playing an eternal play in an eternal garden.*

Is Mother S'akti Herself ?

In *S'akti* worship devotion is directed towards the Divine in Its dynamic aspect, putting less stress on the static, transcendental consciousness (*S'iva*). The personifications of *S'akti* as *Durga*, *Kālī*, *S'rī* correspond to different methods of awakening *kundalīni*, the creative power slumbering in man. These deities possess a relative reality. They represent certain aspects of the Divine condensed into name and form. Mother says it is like water in ice. But what manifests through Mother's physical frame is THAT in which all deities have their source. To say that Mother is an embodiment of *Durga*, *Kālī* or any other deity, may be true, but it is only fragmentary truth.

Says Mother :

“The visions of gods and goddesses occur in accordance with one's inherited dispositions (*samskaras*) I am what I ever

*The book by Sri Aurobindo is not with me and the quotation is therefore not verbal.

was and shall be. I am whatever you conceive, think or say,"

(Mother As Revealed to Me, p, 6-7.)

and : ".....Thou art the embodiment of all gods and much more. Thou hast come out of me and I am the epitome of the created world....."

(Id. p. 51-52).

Is Mother Recommending the Cult of S'akti ?

The first nucleus of devotees that gathered around Mother were Bengalis of the upper classes who in their great majority are *S'aktas*. At present also there are quite a number of *S'aktas* among Mother's *bhaktas*. It is easy to understand why the worshippers of the Divine Mother are attracted to Mataji.

Her followers often greet one another by exclaiming : "Jai Mā" and are fond of uttering the word 'Mā' in connexion with *pranava*.

These are *mantras* used by *S'aktas*. When *kirtan* is sung in the *aśrams* the word 'Mā' can be frequently heard and also hymns to the Divine Mother. This is why people who are not well acquainted with Mother and Her ways may get the impression that Her teaching is based on the cult of *S'akti*. But those who have had the chance of becoming more intimately acquainted with Mother and Her surroundings know that among Her followers are not only a great many

Vaiṣṇavas, but also 'Vedantists, Sikhs, Jains, Christians, Jews and Mohammedans, The *kirtans* held in the ashrams are of *Rama, Kṛiṣṇa, Ś'iva* as well as of *Devi* or simply of 'Bhagavan' and some are purely *advaitic*, consisting of *mantras* from the *Upaniṣads*. The recitation of portions from the *Bhagavad-Gīta*, the *Durga Śapta Ś'ati*, the *Upaniṣads* and the *Bhagavata Purāna* forms part of the daily routine of the *āśrams*.

Is Mother a Great Bhakta ?

I have seen it in writing by authoritative hand that Sri Sri Anandamayi Ma is a great *bhakta*. Before coming to India I myself was under the impression that Mother was advocating *bhakti marga* (the path of devotion) and probably many people abroad as well as in India still hold this view. My wrong idea about Mother was based on the following facts :

1. *The bhavas.*

I had heard and read that in Her early days a great variety of extraordinary raptures and divine ecstasies had been observed in Mother, especially when She listened to devotional music. But nowadays things have evidently changed. For the last nine years I have been with Mother, yet have never once witnessed any state of this kind. Those who live near Mother cannot help marvelling at Her wonderful poise and balance, which is quite unshakable. Behind the superficial emotions that are but a momentary identification with the people who happen to approach Her, She is ever in a

state of undisturbed, profound joy and peace, far beyond emotion. Sometimes while singing *kirtan*, Her features seem express deep religious feeling; but no sooner has She stopped singing, in the twinkle of an eye, She resumes Her calm and serene countenance. Evidently She has merely played with the religious emotion, perhaps to give an example to devotional people.

ards the *bhavas* of Her early life, I suppose they occurred in response to the expectations and desires of the devotees of those days and were nothing more than a play on the surface. Mother can often be heard to say that She has ever been the same since Her infancy, notwithstanding all the apparent outer changes. As the pure crystal takes on the colour and reflects the object placed before it without actually undergoing any change itself, so Mother appears to be different according to Her surroundings.

2. *The Kirtans.*

Mother greatly encourages the singing of devotional music. *Kirtan* before sunrise and after sunset forms part of the daily programme of the *as'rams*. Wherever Mother happens to be *kirtan* is performed as a rule. She Herself sings off and on, even during public gatherings.

But at the same time Mother also encourages other spiritual exercises, such as *japa*, *dhyana* (meditation), *vicara* (self-inquiry) etc. in the case of those who are able and willing to engage in those practices. For many people

kirtan is a simple and effective method of luring the mind from worldliness to divine things through the medium of music.

3. *The devotees.*

Quite a lot of the people close to Mother are of the devotional type. *Bhakti marga*, being the easiest path, is followed by the majority of aspirants. But among Mother's devotees all other types of *sādhakas* are also to be found, namely those whose approach is by *karma*, *yoga* or *jñāna marga*, etc.

Is Mother a Vedantist or is She extoling any other school of thought ?

Without a doubt Mother teaches the highest truth as found in the *Upaniṣads*.

“This body* presents the matter from the standpoint of the *Risis* and *Munis*, from the line of approach that they choose.” (Ananda Varta, Vol. V/3, p. 205).

But Mother does not belong to any sect, creed or school of thought. The ‘Real’ which She embodies and teaches is THAT from which all things emerge and in which they are rooted ; but ‘THAT’ itself is beyond caste and creed, beyond religion and philosophy. It cannot be described in words, nor measured by the mind in terms of name and form. However, for the *sādhaka*, the individual on the path, a line of approach through the channel of the mind is necessary.

* Mataji's way of referring to Herself.

Says Mother :

“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 have to pass through the gate of Truth.”

(Ananda Varta, Vol. V/3, p. 204.)

and “When discussing creeds and paths one has to remember that it is only while on the way that one speaks of various paths.....”

“But where there is no question of any doctrine nor of controversy, there is He at the root—He who is present in all these innumerable guises.”

(Ananda Varta, Vol. V/3, p. 205.)

Mother's Universality

The seers, saints and *yogis* who attained to Self-realization have almost all followed a definite line of approach. After becoming spiritual preceptors they lead their disciples along the path they have themselves trodden, although it is true that some of them are able to guide aspirants by a few other lines of *sadhana* as well. But most of them prescribe a definite method by which Truth will be apprehended, as for example Self-inquiry, or *japa*, or self-surrender and so on. The consequence of adhering to one particular line of approach in preference to all the others is that only aspirants of a special type are able to get the benefit of such a *Guru's* guidance.

But the divine Power that manifests through Sri Sri Ma Anandamayi is characterized by an extraordinary integrality and versatility as regards the knowledge of spiritual practices. It seems quite unfathomable that a being should exist to whom no path of *sādhana* is unknown.

In Her early life, during a period of about six years, Mother played the role of a *sādhikā*. It was nothing more than a play, for Mother had never been in ignorance or bondage.

Says Mother :

“Let me tell you that what I am I have been from my infancy. But when the different stages of *sādhana* were being manifested through this body there was something like a superimposition of *ajñāna*.* But what sort of *ajñāna* was that ? It was really *jñāna*† masquerading as *ajñāna*.”

(Mother as Seen by Her Devotees, p. 143).

As a rule it takes a whole life or sometimes several lives to master one line of *sādhana*. But Mother in the short span of six years traversed untold spiritual paths with all their stages and states up to perfection. Every avenue leading to Truth has been explored and mastered by Her. Some of those *sādhana*s are extremely difficult and perilous. Only exceptionally gifted and bold aspirants are able to use them. The few who

* Ignorance of the true nature of the Self.

† Knowledge of the Self.

succeed reach only after long and strenuous efforts and after a great many ups and downs, whereas Mother accomplished all those practices without the least strain or exertion, just as a matter of play and in an incredibly short spell of time.

The following utterances of Mother about this topic are quoted from Sri Amulya K. Datta's diary, translated by himself from the Bengali original.

"I may tell you that this body has not followed only one particular line of *sādhana*, but has covered all the known lines. It has passed through all the different varieties of practices referred to by the sages of ancient times. This body has successfully gone through *nāma sādhana*, *hatha yoga* with its various *āsanas* and through diverse other *yogas*, one after another. In order to attain to a particular stage along one of those lines of *sādhana* an ordinary individual may have to be born again and again ; but in the case of this body it was a matter of a few seconds....."

"Moreover the different forms of *sādhana* that this body has been seen to practise, were not meant for this body, they were meant for you all....."

"When you relate your spiritual experiences to me, I often say that this body has had those experiences and this is why it knows what they are. Not only that : if anyone discloses to this body a special line of *sādhana*, it can describe in minute details the various stages of that very line."

We may conclude that Mother is able to guide every type of *sadhaka*, no matter what his avenue of approach or his level of attainment.

This is why in Mother's *as'rams* there is an astonishing diversity of seekers after Truth. Those who follow *jñāna marga* live side by side with those who practise *bhakti* or *karma* or *hatha yoga*, etc. The *sadhaka* is required to mould himself according to the pattern given by the *Guru*. Mother guides him along the line he is already following and indicates the one that is best suited to his temperament and conditioning. She bestows on him knowledge and power, a knowledge and a power that are not imposed from outside, but come by bringing to the surface the *sattvic* mind, the higher self, which will in due course lead to the revelation of the Real Self, the ONE.

MOTHER

D. PADMANABHAN, I.C.S. (RETD.), BAR-AT-LAW.

In the vast stream of events which constitutes Indian history one feature recurring constantly is the appearance of Saints. For some reason not clear we every few years come upon certain persons who are distinguished not by their wealth or power in the worldly sense, but by a remarkable quality which may be called their 'other worldliness'. These men and in some cases women are marked out from their fellow-human beings by a rare simplicity, extreme purity and striking evidence of their contact with the Reality that lies behind the universe. There is something in the atmosphere of Indian Society which helps to throw up Saints. The Hindu is quite easily assured that this is a natural phenomenon. For does not the *Gita* itself say that in times of stress and of the dominance of the wicked, God incarnates Himself to punish Evil and save the Good ?

But the fact itself remains. A long succession of Sages have moulded Hindu Society and by the examples of their lives furnished an inspiration to their fellow-men. The heroes of India's past are not conquerers or political rebels, but scholars and Sages who have worked for the material and spiritual betterment of humanity. Empire builders have humbled themselves before Saints, and kings in the heyday of

their power have renounced pomp and wealth and embraced poverty in quest of God. Throughout the Hindu period of our history and down the Muslim era and even in modern times there have been Mystics and Saints—both men and women of God. While dynasties tumbled, political groupings changed and the king of today became the beggar of tomorrow, the spiritual stream flowed on. Sometimes the Mystic was a philosopher, such as Shankara and Kabir. Sometimes he was a poet who enriched the foundations of his language like Tulasi Das or the Alwar Saints of South India. Sometimes rarely, the Mystic was a man of action like Samartha Rāmadās, but mostly he or she was a recluse who drew away from the world not seeking disciples, but the latter nevertheless came. Again, rarely, the Mystic became a missionary fired by a passion for leading mankind to salvation. The earliest in Indian history was the Buddha and one of the latest Swami Vivekananda.

The question now arises where does Mother fit into this hierarchy? There is nothing ostentatious about Mother. She dresses very simply. Her extreme humility which prompts Her to address every man as father and every woman as mother must strike everyone who has had the privilege of meeting Her. Her conversation is always direct and extremely courteous. Her language is simple, whether She uses Hindi or Bengali. But in the simplest of Her statements there is an indication of the hidden power which points to inner experience. The writer remembers once he referred to the Buddha in the Mother's presence and while mentioning *Samadhī*, Mother said: "There is another kind of

nothingness." Perhaps the thought is obscure because of our inadequacy i.e. because we have not established rapport with Reality we cannot follow what Mother says.

It will be clear to all who have been privileged to meet Mother that She pays little attention to externals or to form ; She goes to the root of things and though some of the people round Her observe ritual and conform to tradition, She seems to attach no importance to the soulless observance of ceremonies, while She emphasises devotion and faith. If religion is the constant remembrance of God then Mother can be called deeply religious. No one who has heard Her leading *bhajan* with "Hey-Bhagavan" can forget it. There is a deep earnestness and suggestion of surrender to God which recalls the "*Prapatti*" of *Sri Ramanuja*. It would be interesting from the point of view of a layman to compare Mother with another Saint of Modern India, Sri Ramana Maharishi. I have had the privilege of meeting both ; in contrast to Mother Ramana Maharishi did not usually join in *bhajan*. The writer had an impression of an immutable and towering spiritual genius far removed from the ordinary run of humanity in the case of Sri Ramana Maharishi. On the other hand Mother radiates an atmosphere of overwhelming kindness and sweetness. A friend of mine, a noted barrister, told me that in Mother's presence all mental turmoil was stilled and that She had the rare faculty of making you feel close to the heart of things and a deep peace filled the mind when one was with Her. This has been the experience of many who sought Her company. I have heard Her described as the "Joy-Permeated Mother." This is an inadequate description of Her genius. She seems to me full of joy as well

as peace. I have attempted in the above paragraphs to give my impression of Mother's personality. It is very, very difficult for a person who is very much of this world to attempt an understanding of a spiritual genius like Mother and still more difficult to convey to others an experience which necessarily is subjective; but no person who has had the privilege of meeting Mother, but is the better for it.

"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."

"Ma"

Mother Anandamayee : A Votary of Divine Love

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The present age, in which scientific invention is becoming a menace to culture and civilization, needs the healing influence of a religion of unalloyed love and devotion (*Prema Bhakti*), as exemplified by Shri Radha, the Dominated Divinity, in her unparalleled life of self-surrender and service at the feet of Shri Krishna, the Supreme Dominant Divinity. Mother Anandamayee seems to me to be a living Radha, and a living Mira as well.

I have had the good fortune of knowing Her and Her beneficent influence for many years. I met Her first at the Raipur Ashram, Dehra Dun while I was on an educational tour through India. I vividly remember this first darshan of Mother which has remained as a very clear and definite impression in my mind. It was about 1 p. m. on a day in January 1946 when the Manager of Roadways of Dehra Dun who happened to be a devotee of the Mother, very kindly arranged for me to go to the Raipur Ashram in his car. On arriving at the Ashram gate, I found thousands of men and women gathered round Mother. The hall was packed and I was unable to enter and therefore stood outside for about twenty minutes or so. It seemed to me that all men and

women present were asking Mother to give them something of Her grace or blessing without making any effort themselves. It is true when we begin to seek Truth, we need a Guru to guide us safely across all sorts of obstacles and difficulties that have to be faced on the spiritual path. The Guru's grace is certainly needed by the aspirant. But this does not mean that disciples should sit idly by their Guru's side and expect Him to push them into *Samadhi* by some miracle. It is obvious that we have ourselves to walk every step of the spiritual path. God resides within every being, the *Purusha* in His perfection ever exists. If we practise meditation we shall see God. As Mother says, "Meditation is the real form of worship and formal ceremonies are but passing phases." (see Sat-Bani)

When at 1-30 p. m. Mother came out of the hall and stepped into a car, I gave up all hope of meeting Her, for I had come without any introduction, alone with my burning heart in search of Truth. At that very moment Mother called me by raising Her hand and invited me to get into the car and sit by Her side. We drove straight to the railway station. Mother was kind enough to consent to my travelling to Hardwar with Her in the same compartment, along with Mr. J. C. Mukerji, an Advocate of the High Court, Allahabad. We three were sitting together undisturbed all the way to Hardwar. I utilized every minute of the journey to benefit by putting question after question on Indian philosophy, religion and systems of *Yoga*. Mr. Mukerji acted as an interpreter. Mother's replies to every one of my questions gave me great satisfaction. Mother has had as

good as no school education, but Her knowledge is so profound and wide. Of course a person who gives spiritual instruction should not have mere book knowledge but must have first hand spiritual experience. Don't we read in Shri Ramakrishna's sayings that a teacher who undertakes to expound religion from book learning is like a man who undertakes to describe Banaras after having seen merely a map of the sacred city. Mother also gave me some advice concerning meditation.

When we got down at Hardwar railway station, an old Muslim gentleman came and bowed and prostrated himself before Mother. Mr. Mukerji remarked : "Oho, just see how this old Muslim gentleman who is a professor of philosophy of the Allahabad University puts his head on the ground before Her. How great Mother is." Mother allowed me to accompany Her to the Dharmasala for some time and then I had to take leave from Her, as my train for Lahore was due at 6 p. m. or so. Before I parted from Her, Mother told me again that if I had any spiritual experience, I should write to Her. I spontaneously responded by saying, "Will you accept me as your disciple?" She just kept quiet with a smile on Her lips. The sun was setting on the western Himalayas when I returned to the station and Mother strolled to the Ganges to bathe in the holy river.

As the train was carrying me further and further away I felt that She is a Mother, full of love and tenderness. Yes, Mother is the embodiment of *Bhakti*—is intense love for God. When a person attains to it, he or she loves all, hates none; he or she becomes fulfilled for ever. This love has no motive

and seeks no reward ; because so long as worldly desires endure that great all-embracing Love does not come.

When my appointments at the University of Delhi and the Indian Administrative Service Training School expired, I came to Allahabad in 1954 to act as Asstt. Professor of Chinese at the University. Though I went to see Mother at Gopal Ashram and George Town, Allahabad, I got no chance to talk to Her, as day and night She was surrounded by too many people. I therefore went to the Vindhyaçal Ashram when Mother was residing there at the end of October, 1958. I discussed with Mother some problem of *Raja Yoga* in Her own room on the top floor of the Ashram and Swami Chinmayānanda acted as interpreter. Before I left Mother's presence She put a flower garland round my neck. I felt so keenly that if I did not achieve anything along the spiritual path it would be ungrateful to Her and I should feel ashamed of myself. This feeling always remains with me and never goes away.

Recently the *Ardha Kumbh Mela* was held at Allahabad from the 15th of January to the 25th of February, 1960. I met Mother on the 2nd of February at Her camp in the Mela area. About 30,000 Sadhus were assembled at the Mela and more than a million people came from every part of India. They bathed in the Ganges in order to wash their sins away, and at the same time also hoped for some sort of spiritual progress. However I have not a very high opinion of this kind of religious gathering, for God has to be found within ourselves and not without. There is a story in the Chinese Dhyāna-Buddhist texts, which illustrates the idea that we should search God within and not outside of ourselves.

Dhyāna Master Huai-hai was asked by Ta-an :

“How to know the Buddha ?”

Huai-hai answered : “It is as if you were riding on
an ox and searching the ox.”

Ta-an again asked : “What is it like to know the Buddha ?

Huai-hai said : “It is just as if you were coming
home on the ox’s back.”

In Yoga-Vasishtha the same idea is expressed thus :
“Those who forsake God who is within the cave of the heart,
and search for another God outside,—they are really searching
for conch-shells after abandoning the *Kaustubha*, a precious
gem, which is in their hands.”

Before Mother shifted from the Kumbh Mela to
31, George Town on the 2nd of February, She told me at my
request to meet Her there at noon on that very day. I had
lunch at Dr. Bithika Mukerji’s house and Mother replied to
my questions in a gathering for about twenty minutes while
Shri Atmananda (an Austrian devotee) acted as an inter-
preter. Later on I had another opportunity for a conversation
with Mother in her own room and Dr. Panna Lal, I. C. S.,
very kindly took on himself the task of interpreting. By
listening to Mother’s words I have come to understand the
process of *yoga* more clearly, although I have not yet been
able to achieve any spiritual insight.

Today the power-intoxicated, war-thirsty spirit of the
devil is roaring aloud, shouting its battle-cry, menacing not
only to destroy the civilization of the world but also to lay
axe to the root of the entire human race. We do want a
teacher who can give us Faith, who can show us the straight
way to the new Heaven and the new Earth of our fervent

hopes. Mother Anandamayee is the Mother of Supernature and the Pilgrim of Eternity, the great Power and Personality that the Time and Spirit has evolved out of the labour of the ages.

I deeply rejoice on the occasion of Mother Anandamayee's entering Her 65th year in May, 1960. Let us jointly celebrate and prostrate with veneration at the feet of this great saint :—

Mother,

This day too will pass,

And only rumour remain.

I came to the market of the world,

I sat by its bathing-ghat,

I sat down to sell my wares.

Mother,

The sun is seated on high,

And the Ferryman has come :

The load of many doth fill the Boat :

Alas, none thinketh of this unhappy one :

I am left behind,

For they ask for a coin from this poor man :

Where shall I get it ?

Mother,

O, Mother,

Give me, too, a place in the Boat,

Thy glory shall I sing,

And with Thy Name

And Thy Song on my lips

I shall plunge into the sea of life.

—Ramprasad Sen.



IN QUEST OF GOD AND SAD-GURU

SRI P. M. VERMA, M. A., B. Sc., LL. B.

My quest for God started pretty early. About forty years ago, when I had barely entered my teens, I was an inmate of a Boarding House attached to an Arya Samaj institution at Dehra Dun, known as the D.A.V. High School. Every morning and evening there was a compulsory attendance at a congregational *Sandhya* and *Homa* performed with all the elaborate Vedic rites accompanied by the chanting of the sonorous Vedic hymns of which the sound is still ringing in my memory. I derived further inspiration from the works and speeches of Swami Vivekananda and Swami Rāma Tīrtha. There were three of us, fellow students, to whom the call of the Himalayas that were towering high in all their majesty on the horizon, made a special appeal as the traditional *Tapo-Bhūmi*. We fancied that if we could make an intrepid search for Mahatmas doing their *tapasya* in the Himalayas, we might be lucky enough to come across a *Sad-Guru* who would show us the way to God-realization. With that simple faith and with *Ram's Nama* on our lips, one fine after-noon we started on our adventure in the spirit of the proverbial seeker-after-Truth. After crossing the Rispana bed and leaving aside the way going towards Raipur, we climbed a hillock or two at random with a view to getting lost in the jungle as we had absolutely no plans and no parti-

cular destination in mind. On descending into a vale on the other side we sat down to rest for a while, and not knowing where to go further we followed a track down a hillock. We had hardly gone a short way when to our great surprise we found ourselves in the midst of a pretty village, which was no other than Raipur, a place since sanctified by the lotus-feet of a real *Sad-Guru*, Sri Sri Anandmayee Mā, and where Her *bhaktas* have raised an *ashram* in Her name. Crossing over to the other-end of the Village we found a lovely murmuring water channel with a fine bridge across it. As we sat down to rest on the bridge, we beheld a beautiful panorama of snow-clad Himalayan ranges rising above the horizon in front of us across a stretch of green fields. We took stock of the situation and concluded that while we were at that moment as far away from our destination as the snow-capped peaks before our eyes, Destiny had thrown us on a direct road leading back to our Hostel where there was just enough time to get back unnoticed before sunset. Thus baulked in our aspiration, we decided to put off our quest for a more auspicious day, which never came.

Am I credulous ?

My interest in things spiritual has often made my colleagues at the bar think that I must be a rather credulous person. Little do they know that I was not only born and bred in the Puritanic atmosphere of *Arya Samaj*, which makes a fetish of Rationalism and Utilitarianism, but had also training as a scientist—having taken a degree in Science—not to speak of my higher studies in the still more materialistic sciences of Economics and Sociology including the

philosophy of dialectical Materialism. With this back-ground it was simply absurd for anyone to suggest that I was capable of erring on the side of credulity and superstition. Indeed, my early training in the school of *Arya Samaj* had created in my mind a veritable revolt, almost bordering on disgust against the much-abused institution of *Gurudom* to be found in all religions.

Nevertheless, it was, I suppose, because of my keeping an open mind and a ready will to learn of things and values that may be called spiritual that I attracted to myself a rich variety of experiences gained through mystics and mysticism as well as through a study of literature on mystical experiences. That was why, I presume and I should really thank my stars for it, that far from becoming, as is very often the case toward the evening of one's life, a cold and calculating materialist, or a disgruntled and embittered agnostic, or a hardened egotistic misanthrope, or even a money-grabbing lawyer, I still possess, if I may say so without taking any credit for it, a somewhat warm heart under a somewhat rough exterior, which is at least not altogether devoid of, if not full of the milk of human kindness, and a mind as young and receptive as a child's. The fact is that my experience of life has now made me believe almost literally that blessed are those that have a simple Faith, or as Sant Tulsidas has sung: "Pure and simple hearts are the eternal abodes of the Lord." As in the divine scheme of things no true aspiration ever remains unfulfilled, and the divine law, which always works to perfection, is that 'When the pupil is ready, the Master appears', it was—so I believe now on looking back on

the past—necessary for me to pass through the experience of a life-time before the Master or *Sad-Guru* could be recognised by me. Indeed, as it is not given to man to see God with human eyes, he can at first only begin to feel the presence of the hidden hand of Providence, and it may take a life-time of experience before one can acquire a firm conviction of the presence of God and discover the Unity that underlies diversity.

Need of a Sad-Guru.

Can one realize God without the help of a *Sad-Guru*? The highest spiritual message is that God comes to every one of us in the most attractive form that may make an appeal to our minds for our uplift and evolution. That form, of course, differs for every individual according to the stage of his development and his personal needs; but whatever be the form we may call Him or Her a *Sad-Guru* for the individual concerned. The truth was once so beautifully put in Her inimitable words by Sri Sri Anandmayee Ma, that it left an unforgettable impression of Her divinity on my mind. She observed in answer to some question put to Her while She was camping a few years ago at the *Maghmela* grounds: "A Mother goes to her child many a time during the day to call the child back home while it is out at play, but the child heeds her not. She calls and beckons, and chides in vain, but the child does not even look in her direction. Then out of her compassion and mother's love She gently pulls up the child by its ears. For a moment the child becomes disconsolate, but soon forgets all about its

play as the Mother gathers it in her arms, and takes it back home."

To a question put to Sri Rāma Krishna Paramahansa : "Why is there so much suffering in the world ?" the Master replied as follows :—

* "This world is the *lila* of God. It is like a game. In this game there are joy and sorrow, virtue and vice, knowledge and ignorance, good and evil. The game cannot continue if sin and suffering are altogether eliminated from Creation.

'In the game of hide and seek one must touch the 'granny' in order to be free. But the 'granny' is never pleased if she is touched at the very outset. *It is God's wish that the play should continue for some time.* Then—

"Out of a hundred thousand kites, at least but one or
two break free ;

And thou dost laugh and clap thy hands, O Mother,
watching them ;

'In other words, after the practice of hard spiritual discipline one or two have the vision of God through His grace, and are liberated. Then the Divine Mother claps Her hands in joy and exclaims, 'Bravo : There they go :'

On somebody putting in. "But God's play is our death", the Master continued :

'Please tell me who you are. God alone has become all this—*Maya*, the Universe, living things, and the twenty-

* Quoted from *Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* by Akhilananda, P. 362.

four cosmic principles. "As the snake I bite, and as the charmer I cure." It is God Himself who has become both *Vidya* and *Avdyā*. He remains deluded by the *Māya* of *Avidya*, ignorance. Again, with the help of the *Guru*, He is cured by the *Māya* of *Vidya*, Knowledge.'

On another occasion Sri Rāma Krishna Paramahansa is reported to have observed : (ibid, P. 82-83.)

'Let me tell you one thing. God can be seen. The Vedas say that God is beyond mind and speech. The meaning of this is that God is unknown to the mind attached to worldly objects. V. used to say, "God is known by the mind and intellect that are pure." Therefore it is necessary to seek the company of holy men, practise prayer, and listen to the instruction of the *Guru*. These purify the mind. Then one sees God. Dirt can be removed from water by a purifying agent. Then one sees one's reflection in it. One cannot see one's face in a mirror if the mirror is covered with dirt.

'After the purification of the heart one obtains divine love. *Then one sees God through His grace.* One can teach others if one receives that command from God after seeing Him. Before that one should not 'lecture'.....

'A man becomes liberated even in his life-time when he knows that God is the Doer of all things. Once *K.* came here with S. M. I said to him : "Not even a leaf moves except by the will of God." Where is man's free will? All are under the will of God. *N.* was a man of great knowledge,

yet even he was about to drown himself in the Ganges. He stayed here for eleven months. At one time he suffered from stomach trouble. The excruciating pain made him lose control and he wanted to drown himself in the river. There was a long shoal near the bathing ghat. However far he went into the river, he couldn't find water above his knees. Then he understood everything (i. e.,) realised that man is not free even to kill himself and came back. At one time I was very ill and was about to cut my throat with a knife. Therefore I say : "O Mother, I am the machine and Thou art the Operator ; I am the chariot and Thou art the driver, I move as Thou movest me ; I do as Thou makest me do.".....

(*ibid*, P. 95) '*Maya* is nothing but the egotism of the embodied soul. This egotism has covered everything like a veil. All troubles come to an end when the ego dies. If by the grace of God a man but once realizes that he is not the doer, then he at once becomes a *jivan-mukta*. Though living in the body, he is liberated. He has nothing else to fear. This *Maya*, that is to say, the ego, is like a cloud. The sun cannot be seen on account of a thin patch of cloud ; when that disappears one sees the sun. If by the grace of the Guru one's ego vanishes, then one sees God.'

(To be continued).

NEW DIARY LEAVES

ATMANANDA

(1)

Varanasi, 10th October 1957.

An Irish journalist and a South Indian research student of the Benares Hindu University came for Mataji's *darshan*. The following conversation ensued :

Question : Am I right to believe that you are God ?

Mataji : There is nothing save Him alone, everyone and everything are but forms of God. In your person also He has come here now to give *darshan*.

Question : Then why are you in this world ?

Mataji : In this world ? I am not anywhere. I am myself reposing within myself.

Question : What is your work ?

Mataji : I have no work. For whom can I work since there is only ONE ?

Question : Why am I in the world ?

Mataji : He plays in infinite ways. It is His pleasure to play as He does.

Question : But I, why am I in the world ?

Mataji : That is what I have been telling you. All is He, He plays in countless forms and ways. However, in order to find out for yourself why you are in the world, to find out who you are in reality, there are the various sādhanas. You study and you pass your exams, you earn money and enjoy the use of it. But all this is within the realm of death in which you continue life after life, repeating the same kind of thing again and again. Then there is another path as well, the path of Immortality, which leads to the knowledge of what you really are.

Question : Can anyone help me in this or must each one find out for himself ?

Mataji : The professor can teach you only if you have the capacity to learn. Of course he can give you help but you must be able to respond, you must have it in you to grasp what he teaches.

Question Which is the best path to Self-knowledge ?

Mataji : All paths are good. It depends on a man's *samskaras*, his conditioning, the tendencies he has brought over from previous births. Just as one can travel to the same place by plane, railway, car or cycle, so also different lines of approach suit different types of people. But the best path is the one which the *Guru* points out.

Question : When there is only one, why are there so many different religions in the world ?

Mataji : Because He is infinite, there is an infinite variety of conceptions of Him and an endless variety of paths

to Him. He is everything, every kind of belief and also the disbelief of the atheist. Your belief in non-belief is also a belief. When you speak of disbelief it implies that you admit belief. He is in all forms and yet He is formless.

Question : From what you said I gather that you consider the formless nearer to Truth than God with form ?

Mataji : Is ice anything but water ? Form is just as much He as the Formless. To say that there is only one Self (*ātma*) and all forms illusion would imply that the formless was nearer to Truth than God-with-form. But this body declares : every form and the formless are He and He alone.

Question : What have you to say about those who insist that only one religion is the right one ?

Mataji : All religions are paths to Him.

Question : I am a Christian.....

Mataji : So am I a Christian, a Muslim, anything you like.

Question : Would it be right for me to become a Hindu or is my approach by the Christian way ?

Mataji : If you are fated to become a Hindu it will happen in any case. Just as you cannot ask : "What will happen in case of a car accident ? When the accident occurs you will see.

Question : If I feel the urge to become a Hindu, should I give way to it or is it right to suppress it, since it is said that everyone has been born where it is best for him ?

Mataji : If you really felt the urge to become a Hindu you would not ask this question, but just go ahead with it.

Yet there is also another side to this problem. It is true that you are Christian, but something of a Hindu is in you as well, otherwise you could not even know anything about Hinduism. Everything is contained in everything. Just as a tree yields seed and from a single seed hundreds of trees may develop, so the seed is contained in the tree and the whole of the tree potentially in the tiny seed.

Question : How can I find happiness ?

Mataji : First tell me whether you are willing to do as this body bids you to do.

The Questioner : Yes, I am.

Mataji : Are you really ? Very well. Now suppose I ask you to remain here, will you be able to do it ?

The Questioner : No, I will not. (Laughter.)

Mataji : You see, happiness that depends on anything outside of you, be it your wife, children, money, fame, friends or anything else, cannot last. But to find happiness in Him who is everywhere, who is all-pervading, your own Self, this is real happiness.

Question : So you say happiness lies in finding my Self ?

Mataji : Yes. Finding your Self, discovering who you really are, means to find God, for there is nothing outside of Him.

Question : You say all are God. But are not some people more God than others ?

Mataji : For him who asks such a question, this is so. But in actual fact God is fully and equally present everywhere.

Question : Is there no substance to me as an individual ? Is there nothing in me that is not God ?

Mataji : No. Even in 'not being God' there is only God alone. Everything is He.

Question : Is there no justification at all for professional or any other mundane work ?

Mataji : Occupation with worldly things acts like slow poison. Gradually, without one's noticing it, it leads to death. Should I advise my friends and my fathers and mothers* to take this road ? I cannot do so. What this body says is : choose the Path of Immortality, take any path that according to your temperament, will lead you to the Realization of your Self.

Nevertheless even while working in the world, you can do one thing : Whatever you do throughout the day, endeavour to do it in a spirit of service. Serve God in everyone, regard everyone and everything as manifestations of Him and serve Him by whatever work you undertake. If you live with this attitude of mind, the path to Reality will open out before you.

* Mataji addresses all unmarried people as Her friends and married people as Her fathers and mothers.

From the Life of Sri Sri Ma Anandamayee

DR. BITHIKA MUKERJI, M.A., D. PHIL.

(11)

*Kalipuja at Shahbagh.**

Mataji, was sitting in front of the image with a fixed gaze in *thava*. The events that followed can be best described in Didi's words: "Bholanath very gently requested Mataji to perform the *pūjā*. She suddenly began to go through the actions of the ritual, but with Her left hand. Then, as suddenly as She had begun, She stopped, and turning to Bholanath, said: 'I shall sit here, you do the *pūjā*!' Interpreting this to mean that Mataji was declining to perform the ceremony Herself and asking him to do so instead, he was on the point of declaring that he had already made it clear all along that he would not consent to this; however, his words remained unspoken, because he and everyone else were struck speechless with awe and amazement at what they witnessed. Mataji with the speed of lightning traversed the crowded room—the people in the immediate vicinity felt a warmth as that of fire—and going right up to the image sat down, touching it with Her body. In a moment Her sari slipped from Her shoulders, the golden hue of Her skin turned dark as night and Her tongue was hanging out.

* See Ananda Varta, Vol. VII/3, p. 144.

“My father with a frightened voice, perhaps giving expression to the feelings of all present, called out: ‘Mother, Mother’, unable to say anything more. The next instant Mataji had fallen forward on the ground, saying: ‘All of you shut your eyes!’ After a few moments She again spoke: ‘Mahadeiya has not closed her eyes’. Mahadeiya was the gardener’s wife, standing at a distance under a tree. On being told she also shut her eyes. All this happened in much less time than it takes to write about it.

“After some time Bholanath asked everyone to open their eyes. Mataji was now sitting up, Her gracious countenance, if possible, more radiant and beautiful even than usual, Her whole body covered with flowers; Bholanath was performing *pūjā* in an exalted mood. After the *pūjā*, a *yajña** was celebrated.”

Didi writes that she made up her mind from henceforth to look upon Mataji as she had seen Her that day and not to indulge in familiarities with Her anymore. But alas, Mataji Herself again behaved so naturally and normally that it seemed quite impossible to remain at a respectable distance from Her. Perhaps this was Her will, because human beings are so frail in mind and body that they are unable to remain in a state of exaltation for more than a few minutes.

* *Yajña* is a rite of oblations offered into a sacrificial fire, which represents the mouth of the deity. A *Yajña* has for purpose either the propitiation of any particular deity or of the *Paramātmā* Himself.

When the *pūja* was over, everyone took *prasād* and departed one by one with full and overflowing hearts. Only a few remained behind, namely Didi, her two brothers and her father, the Civil Surgeon of Dacca, who subsequently became *Swami Akhandānandaji*. They were all sitting near Mataji, when She suddenly told Didi to go and fetch some of the fiery embers from the *yajña*. Didi collected a few live coals in a vessel, which she brought to Mataji, who took it in Her hands and shaking it, remarked: "Wait and see, I shall convert the fire of this *yajña* into the fire of a *mahayajña*." *

She then added: "Very well, who is ready to sit in *Kali's* room and guard the fire?"

Now, except for the annual *Kali Pūja* at *Divali* householders are not keen on the worship of *Kali*, because She is the all-destroyer, who, if benevolent to the devotee, will annihilate all his worldly ties! Moreover to watch over the fire meant constant vigilance to see that it did not go out, which was not possible for men with professional work and families. Mataji's suggestion, in other words, meant that the person who was willing to guard the sacred fire would have to take to the path of renunciation. No wonder therefore that none ventured to say anything at first. Then Didi's elder brother, Biren babu said: "No, Mother, I cannot. I have to look after my family." Didi's father had dozed off for a few minutes. A little earlier people had been discussing how

* At that time nobody understood the meaning of this statement. But when more than 25 years later a *mahāyajna* was celebrated at the Varanasi Ashram, the statement was recalled and its significance understood.

much courage it required to worship *Kali* at dead of night and other matters of this kind. Now, on waking up, Didi's father thought that Mataji was asking if anyone was brave enough to sit alone in *Kali's* room. (Any way this was Didi's impression. She may not be right in presuming that her father had not realized the full implications of Mataji's request, for he proved himself entirely worthy of the role of a pioneer, who blazed a trail to be followed by many later on.)

Anyway he said : "I can ; what is there to be afraid of ?"

Mataji replied : "All right, ask your sons if they agree ?"

Both sons consented with the words : "If father wishes to take care of the fire, we have no objection."

Mataji promptly handed over the vessel to him, saying : "Go now, immediately !"

Dr. Shashanka Mukherji rose obediently and then and there established himself in *Kali's* room with the fire, Mataji asked the others to return to their homes. Later She Herself took a blanket, and spreading it on the floor in *Kali's*, room, arranged for him to take rest from time to time.

Dr. S. Mukherji guarded the fire in this manner for nearly five months. Being the Civil Surgeon of Dacca, it was his duty to attend the Medical School once every afternoon. On returning from there he used to go home for a few minutes ; for the rest of the day and night he kept vigil in *Kali's* room. In this way started the tradition of preserving the fire of the *Yajña* performed during the *Kali Pūjā* described above.

The day after the Pūjā people gathered again to take out the image in procession according to custom and to immerse it in the neighbouring pond. But something unexpected occurred. Niranjanbabu's wife said : "Mataji, the image is so beautiful. I do not like the idea of its being immersed." Mataji at once acquiesced : "Since you are feeling so sad at its departure, let the image be preserved. We did not invite Her. The Goddess came of Her own accord, let Her therefore remain with us as long as She pleases."

This is how the daily worship of *Kali* was inaugurated at the Ashram. Mataji gave instructions that a garland of red hibiscus flowers should once daily be put round the deity's neck. This duty was entrusted to a newcomer at the Ashram, namely, Brahmachari Kamalakanta. Many interesting incidents took place in connexion with this image of *Kali*. Whenever Kamalakanta forgot to garland the deity, Mataji would know about it, even if She was away from Dacca. This was every time confirmed by letters. Then also the image had to be moved quite a number of times. A few days after the daily *pūjā* had been started, Mataji had *Kali* taken to a smaller, inner room. That very night a fierce storm broke loose the door of the original room and the door crashed down on the exact spot from which the image had been removed. About a year later the Shahbagh Gardens were taken over by the Court of Wards with the result that Bholanath and many others lost their jobs. The Muslim owners of the Gardens were busy with their own families and financial problems. It was deemed proper to shift the image from Shahbagh. A house in town was therefore taken on hire and all the people

as well as the image took up residence in the new quarters. Many were apprehensive lest the one year old earthen image should fall to pieces if moved, but nothing happened to it. Mataji was out of station at the time. About another year later the image was again transferred to a different rented house in Dacca, known as '*Uttama Kutir*.' Mataji remained there for only six or seven months; then all of a sudden She left for *Siddheswari* and *Kali* was taken along. In 1929 Mataji returned to the new Ashram at *Ramna*. In the grounds there was an ancient Śiva temple with a broken *linga*. At Mataji's suggestion the temple was renovated and the *Kali* image installed in place of the damaged *linga*. Some time after, Mataji visited Cox Bazar, a seaside town. One day Didi found Her twisting one arm with the other and on seeing Didi, She said: "Shall I break it?" There was a smile on Her lips, but Her eyes were wet with tears. Didi got frightened, knowing that Mataji was capable of doing just anything; quietly holding Mataji's hands in her own, she gently rubbed the twisted arm. The next morning also she found that Mataji's eyes would fill up, although Her expression did not change. After a few days a letter arrived from Dacca with the news that on that particular night a thief had broken into the temple, stolen the golden ornaments of the Goddess and broken one of Her arms in the process.

In 1931, during Mataji's birthday celebrations a new temple was constructed around the ancient one. The room with the image of *Kali* naturally fell far below the level of the new floor. A roof was erected over the image and the golden image of *Annapūrṇa** installed in the new temple.

* *Annapurna* is now in the Varanasi Ashram.

Kali remained in the cavelike room, which had a door and steps leading down to it. It was arranged that once a year the door should be opened and *pūja* performed. On that day everyone, irrespective of caste and creed be permitted to enter the temple. Then in the evening the temple would be cleaned and after the *pūja* locked again for another year. A photograph of the image was placed in front of the door. The daily *pūja* and the daily garland of red hibiscus flowers were to be offered to this photograph of the image. Mataji entrusted this task to Sri Jogesh Brahmachari.

In this manner *Kali* has hidden Herself in a cave at the Ramna Ashram and perhaps will reveal Herself once again when the right time comes.

(To be continued.)

MATRI LILA

(JANUARY 15TH—APRIL 15TH 1960.)

From January 13th—February 3rd Mataji stayed alternately in George Town, Allahabad and in Her Camp at the *Kumbh Mela*. This time it so happened that Mataji bathed at the Triveni on all 3 auspicious bathing days, namely on January 14th and 28th and on February 1st, while on former occasions Mataji as a rule only used to sprinkle Ganges water on Her head. We recall the *Ardha Kumbh Mela* twelve years ago, when Dr. Panna Lal I.C.S. (Retd.) was in-charge of all arrangements, including the construction of Mataji's Camp. Mataji then went to bathe in the Ganges to-gether with Sri 108 Mohnānandaji of Baidyanath Dham with the late Gopal Thakur of Allahabad. She now related that on that occasion the sacred rivers that form the Triveni, namely *Ganga, Jamuna and Sarasvati* appeared to Her in the shape of three young girls who came to Her arm in arm and requested Her to bathe.

Many devotees, Indian as well as European, American and even Chinese, availed themselves of this opportunity to spend a few days or hours with Mataji at the *Kumbh*, enjoying the *Satsang* as well as the sense of freedom and holiday from all worldly affairs that is characteristic for life in such a Camp.

On February 3rd Mataji motored to Varanasi where She remained till the 10th. On the 9th four young

Brahmins boys received their sacred threads in Mataji's presence. On the 10th She proceeded to Vindhyaçal. Just below *Astabhuja Hill*, on the way to the Ashram, Sri Tushar Kanti Ghosh, the Chief Editor of the Amrita Bazar Patrika has built himself a house about a year ago. He was celebrating a *Vishnu Yajña* in his compound ; Mataji halted and blessed the function by Her presence. She also attended the final ceremony (*pūrnahūti*) on February 12.

In Vindhyaçal Mataji as usual enjoyed a comparatively quiet time, although as always many visitors came from various places, some to stay for a few days, others in cars for a few hours only.

On February 23rd Mataji returned to Varanasi, where the Sivaratri festival was celebrated on the 25th. Ever since the Ashram has been deprived of its hall and open terrace there is great dearth of space on such occasions. Yet every inch of the available space was used most ingeniously. People were seated in groups round *Siva linga*, doing *pūjā* all night in the temples; on the verandas and in the courtyard over which a roof of cloth had been spread. Everything was arranged so beautifully, it was truly inspiring to watch the *pūjā* ; the atmosphere during that night is always one of profound peace and solemnity.

Devotees had come from Calcutta, Delhi, Lucknow, Allahabad, etc. etc. to join in the celebration, the fast and the vigil. Mataji was up almost throughout the whole night, moving from group to group, without showing any signs of fatigue. A number of Europeans and Americans were present

during the celebration, among them was Swami Kriyananda, a disciple of Swami Yogananda, who had also spent some time at Mataji's Camp in the Kumbh and again at Vindhyachal.

On February 27th Mataji boarded the train to Etawah. At Etawah, where She alighted on the 28th early morning, a special *pūjā* had been arranged for Her in the house of a devotee, Sri Bajpayee. It was practically on the scale of the Birthday celebrations.

Mataji was to leave Etawah for Bundh (near Aligarh) on February 29th at 3 p. m. Originally it had been planned that She should spend the *Holi* festival at Vrindaban, but at the request of Sri Haribabaji She had agreed to go to Bundh instead. However Her state of health suddenly became such that Her trip to Bundh had to be cancelled at the last moment. At the time that She was to leave for Aligarh, She moved to the Etawah Ashram and the next morning travelled to Delhi, where She remained in the Chandraloka Ashram for a week, resting in Her newly built room on the upper floor. Visitors were allowed *darshan* only twice daily at fixed hours.

On March 7th She came downstairs early morning and expressed Her wish to start immediately for Hardwar. Two hours later She was driving by car to Kankhal, where She and Her party put up at '*Santiniketan*', the house of a devotee. On March 10th She moved to the Sapta Rishi Ashram, which is nearly half way between Hardwar and Rishikesh. It will be recalled that the 6th *Samyam Vrata* was held in the Sapta Rishi Ashram in November 1956. On that occasion we

gave a detailed description of this spot of solitude and great natural beauty near the banks of the Ganges.* The Ashram has since been enlarged by a number of small houses and a Sanskrit School for boys, but we regret to say that Sri 108 Ganesh Dutta Goswamiji, who was the heart and soul of the place, has since left this world. Rai Bahadur Narayan Das, who had specially come from Delhi, acted as the host and made everyone feel at home and at ease. Sri J. K. Birla had sent his Ayurvedic physician to attend to Mataji. Actually Mataji's health improved considerably in that quiet and congenial place. A number of visitors came for Mataji's darshan, among them Sri Ayengar the Speaker of the Indian Parliament with his family. Sri 108 Haribabaji also arrived by car from Delhi and stayed for two days. He was eager that Mataji should visit Hoshiarpur some time in April, but Mataji does not seem vigorous enough to comply with his wish.

Mataji's ill-health is not due to *Karma* as in the case of ordinary human beings and therefore has quite a different significance. It is well known among Mataji's devotees that She does not take any medicine, be it allopathic homeopathic or ayurvedic. On certain occasions She gave way to doctors imploring Her to try some medicine, Her condition was thereby definitely aggravated. Besides it is difficult or rather impossible to diagnose Her illness, as the symptoms change so rapidly and without apparent reason. Doctors therefore feel puzzled and at a loss. At times it seemed obvious that

* See Ananda Varta, Vol. IV/4, p. 347.

Mataji took on Herself the sufferings of others. Unless Mataji discloses the reasons, we are not in a position to know why Her body exhibits signs of ill-health. However, whenever they occur, those who are close to Her arrange for perpetual *japa* or meditation, in which everyone takes part in turns, as it has been observed that the atmosphere produced by the constant remembrance of God is more congenial to Mataji's health than anything we know of. Her devotees whether far or near in space, therefore make an effort to increase their hours of *sadhana* and the intensity of their aspiration, in order to contribute their mite to the well-being and vitality of Mataji's body—which at the same time benefits everyone of them.

As to Mataji Herself, She has declared again and again that She is always well and full of bliss, welcoming every condition as a manifestation of the One who alone exists.

On March 22nd Mataji moved to *Ananda Kashi* 15 miles beyond Rishikesh where the H. H. Rajmata of Tehri-Garhwal has a couple of houses and a Shiva temple in the most enchanting surroundings. There is also a cottage which is reserved for Mataji only and which She usually occupies once a year for a few days or weeks. We have more than once in the pages of this magazine written about this unique, solitary place on the banks of the Ganges, where Mataji is able to relax more than anywhere else, since it is inaccessible to crowds.

It had been planned to celebrate Didima's *Sannyasa*.

Utsava on April 13th in Delhi this time but at the last moment Mataji decided to remain at *Ananda Kashi* till the middle of April. Since neither Didima nor Didi were willing to leave Mataji, the *Utsava* is being held at Ananda Kashi itself. Soon after Mataji is expected to move to Kishenpur near Dehradun and on May 2nd She is due in Bombay where Her birthday is to be celebrated upto May 14th.
