



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

MATRI VANI

It is by crying and pining for Him that the One is found.

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Reliance on God can come only if He grants it to you, then alone will you be capable of it. What does self-reliance mean? What He causes to be done is called self-reliance (*puruṣakāra*).

* * *

Why do you wish to become a child of the world? Be a child that will not change into anything else anymore. Truly, the cause for failing to remain childlike is desire.

* * *

This body does not practise either *tantras* or *mantras*, nothing of the sort. What is called *tantrik kriyas* and how they are performed does not come into the picture here. This body is indeed spiritually related to everyone; here there is no such thing as a separate home, or if at all you want to speak of a home, it is HE, the boundless ONE.

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According to one's strength and capability one should try to set apart a day for self-restraint (*samyam*), if not once weekly, then at least once a month or once a fortnight. On those days strict control is to be exercised as regards food and drink, speech and conduct, going to see places and people—in fact in every respect whatsoever. In this way one may gradually succeed in developing self-mastery and be able to live according to these rules quite effortlessly, or at any rate with some measure of ease, even for two or three months a year. Later it may perhaps become possible to sustain permanently such an attitude of life, which will set in motion a current leading to Self-realization. The consequence of indiscipline and self-indulgence is sorrow—it means moving away from one's own true Self.

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Who is it that appears as distress and hardship? To take suffering upon oneself is quite a different matter. Every

kind of action is not possible everywhere. Here, in this state, laughter, giving life and stifling it—every thing is HE—THAT; here there is no such thing as taking on oneself the tribulations of others, there is only perfect equality, identity.

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“There is only one book and everything is contained in it. Once it has been mastered nothing else remains to be studied. *Sadhana* has to be practised for the sole purpose of discovering one’s own true wealth.”

“Ma”

Conversations with Sri Sri Ma Anandamayi

RECORDED BY PROFESSOR B. GANGULY

(Translated by Atmananda)

(5)

Ranchi Ashram,
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Question : You often advise devotees to take recourse to periods of silence (refraining from speech); does this help spiritual progress ?

Mataji : By refraining from speech energy is preserved. To keep silence (*mouna*) means that the mind has reversed its outward course, in other words, has turned towards God.

Question : Is it right to pray to God for all kinds of things ?

Mataji : The most excellent prayer is for God Himself.

Question : If God is omnipotent, why do we have to suffer so much ?

Mataji : Where you dwell, that is to say in the world, it appears thus. By invoking God all pain and suffering will be destroyed.

Question : So many people are ill with paralysis and other terrible diseases. Why does not God deliver them from their agonies ?

Mataji : Human beings are born into this world so that the results of their past actions may be enjoyed and suffered and thereby exhausted.

Question : If one's *sādhana* is the *shabda Brahman*, will a stage come when the eternal sound (*pranava*) can be heard.

Mataji : Yes, it will be heard.

Question : What happens then ?

Mataji : Ultimately there will be the revelation of the *Brahman*.

Question : Mother earth* is the Mother, is it not ? Therefore, if one can grasp or recognize what the earth intrinsically is, is it possible thereby to attain to the realization of the *Brahman* as Being-Consciousness-Bliss ?

Mataji : Yes, the earth is the mother. Whatever you grasp in its essence, in that very thing will you find Him. What is the purpose of worshipping earthen images ? The revelation of the Lord.

Question : From where do the distinctions arise that men make between high and low

* In Bengali *Mā* means mother and *māti*—earth.

Mataji : In the world of desire one perceives high and low it is therefore natural to make these distinctions.

Question : What is it that creates ignorance ?

Mataji : The individual is bound by desires and passions ; consequently it lies but in the nature of things that there should be ignorance. It is said that ignorance is created by desire and desire again by ignorance.

Question : Why do *sādhus* perceive differences ?

Mataji : This can be the case only on the way. Once the destination has been reached, the perception of difference ceases. However it is true that while on the path one should adopt what is noble and excellent and relinquish mere pleasure. This is why it is appropriate that seekers after Truth should partake of such food as will aid them in their spiritual effort. Also they will do well to avoid company that distracts. Those who believe in difference of caste should observe caste rules while practising *sādhana*. Is not caste also His Creation ? It is therefore in many cases necessary for *sādhakas* to beware of impurity communicated by touch or contact and to observe strict rules of purity, otherwise there will be obstacles on their path. The *s'āstras* have laid down what kind of work has to be done by each caste, what kind of food to be eaten and so on. While one acknowledges the *s'āstras* it is right to follow their injunctions. Whereas when one has become established in THAT, which is whole and undivided, one is free to act as one pleases. Then there will

be neither acceptance nor rejection of caste. Just as God is present in all forms without exception, so one who has realized the *Brahman* may use any form whatever. But the ordinary *sadhaka* cannot compare his conduct to the behaviour of such a Being.

Question : What is the difference between *bhakti* (devotion) *bhāva** and *uchhvas* (exaltation, rapture) ?

Mataji : There are two kinds of *bhava* : namely the one that occasionally arises in the state of constant wanting (*abhava* † and the other one which is an expression of man's true nature (*svabhava*). The latter kind alone is genuine *bhava*. The love of God is called *bhakti*. When real *bhava* occurs, which is the outcome of *bhakti*, it can be recognized by eight *satvic* signs. †† A *bhava* that is spasmodic and uncontrolled may be styled as '*uchhvas*' (exaltation or rapture). Real Knowledge (*jñāna*) and *bhakti* are one, real knowledge is synonymous with *bhakti*. In certain cases, on certain levels, the one or the other predominates.

Question : How can *bhakti* be developed ?

Mataji : By following the Guru's instructions.

* Spiritual ecstasy, generally emotional in nature.

† The state of every ordinary person.

†† These are described in *Vaisnava* literature and are *pulaka* (a scene of divine joy), *as'ru* (tears), *kampan* (trembling), *romānch* (hair standing on end), etc.

Question : If one does not feel like doing so ?

Mataji : Father, if one is ill one has to be made to go to hospital by force and to take medicine. Quinine, although very bitter, has to be taken by malaria patients. Similarly it is imperative to try and develop love and devotion for God by practising *sādhana* according to the Guru's instructions. This is how *bhakti* is kindled.

“The sovereign and universal remedy is the contemplation of God. At all times to think only of Him and to serve Him is essential for every human being.”

“Ma”

SPIRITUAL EXPERIENCES

SWAMI SIVANANDA.

The entrance into the higher meditative life depends upon the grace of God.

The higher meditative life demands tremendous humility, serenity and courage.

In higher meditative life the senses and the mind are completely subdued. There is no more use of the mind, emotions and imaginations.

In higher meditation the Yogi withdraws himself completely and enters into the state of consciousness above the mind and intellect. He is conscious only of Pure Being.

In samādhi or the superconscious state the Yogi abandons the sense of his own being and enters into the Being of God.

Spiritual experience will come to you when you are ready, but not before.

There is inner unfolding from level to level in your spiritual experience. Wait patiently. Plod on in your sādhana with purity and courage.

Like draws like on your spiritual journey. You are never really left alone. You will get help from Yogis and Saints internally, from different parts of the world. Their spiritual vibrations will elevate and inspire you.

Meditate and enter into the realm of radiant light. There are no limitations; here there is no worry, there are no obstacles. There is no time or space. In that holy realm there is no fear, no doubt, no indecision. It is all eternal joy, bliss, peace and happiness.

Samyam and Bhagavata Saptahs in Naimisharanya

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For the last seven or eight years the Shree Shree Anandamayee Sangha arranges every year for a week of concentrated collective sādhanā in the presence of Sri Sri Ma Anandamayi. This is called संयम सप्ताह (*Samyam Saptah*), which literally means a week of restraint or self-control. Its object is explained as follows in the Hindi leaflet :—

अपने स्वरूप को पहिचानना, अपने स्वरूप को प्राप्त करना—सब तरह से सत्य, ब्रह्मचर्य, अहिंसा आदि के परिपालन द्वारा अपने अपने आध्यात्मिक जीवन में उन्नति सम्पादन की चेष्टा करना और संघ के सदस्य तथा अन्य भाग लेने वालों के आत्मोन्नति में सहायता पहुँचाने के लिए सेवा करना संयम सप्ताह महाव्रत का उद्देश्य है ।

(The object of the *Samyam Saptah Maha Vrata* is Self-realization, the development of one's spiritual life by the observance of truth, celibacy, non-violence, etc. in every way, and to assist the spiritual progress of members of the Sangha and other participants.)

It will thus be seen that though the name refers to one aspect only of what has to be done in order to reach God, viz. keeping in check one's unruly lower self, this week is intended to be utilized as a general introduction to or first steps in *sādhanā*, an intense pursuit of every means to realize God. It differs from the initiation which a *Guru* may give

to a particular disciple. Such initiation (*dikṣa*) is of a much more intimate nature and only meant for those who have decided to give up worldly pursuits and to dedicate themselves to God. The *Samyam Vrata* is meant for the ordinary householder who, while following his avocation in life, is at the same time acutely God-conscious and desires to reach Him, i.e. one who is not prepared to become a *Sanyasi* (recluse), yet is something more than an ordinary devotee (भक्त). He must be a *Jigyasu* (one who wants to know) or *mumukṣu* (one who seeks the path of liberation). We may therefore say that the *Samyam Vrata* is meant for a selected band of devotees. It may be compared to a training course or military exercise camp for officers of the Auxiliary Force in the old British days. These were civilian officers who offered themselves for military training in order to be able to render service in war time as officers in the army. At these camps they were toughened to be able to put up with hardships of war-fare and got intensive training in the use of various weapons and military tactics. It seems to me that something of this kind, but for a religious purpose, is sought to be achieved by the *Samyam Mahavrata*. Just as the civilian officers became, during the period of military exercise, officers of the army to all intents and purposes, devotees participating in the *Vrata* are expected to lead during that period the life of a *Sanyasi*, a life of rigour, restraint and dedication. It is a *tapasya* (penance) for the purpose of attuning oneself to the Divine. In holding this week annually Mataji seems to carry Her mission of making people God-minded a ~~step~~ further, giving them practical training in preparing themselves for Self-realization. Undoubtedly such a course is

intended for those few who are serious in their pursuit of God and many of Mataji's devotees wish that it were restricted to only such persons, so that it could be small, intimate and easily manageable. But Mataji in keeping with Her general attitude that God's door is open to everybody and that She Herself is approachable to one and all, refuses to impose restrictions as regards the attendance of these gatherings. So anyone may join in the *Samyam Mahavrata* or even be a partial participator in some of its functions. However, though there are thus many casual visitors to the *Samyam Saptah*, there is always a core of serious-minded devotees who go through the whole course.

As this was the first time I was fortunate enough to be able to attend the *Samyam Saptah* I am in no position to compare it with previous occasions. Those who have been regular participants, however, tell me that this year's *Saptah* was unique in many respects.

It took place from the 21st to the 27th of October and was immediately followed by a *Bhagavata Saptah* (the reading of the *Bhagavata* in seven days), which ended with a *pūrnahuti* (offering of oblations in sacrificial fire), on the 4th of November. Many people had entertained the wish that since they came from considerable distances so as to be with Mataji for the *Samyam Saptah*, they could stay on longer. This long-cherished desire was fulfilled by the unusual joining of the weeks which made it for the first time a holy fortnight of basking in Mataji's grace.

Secondly the fortnight chosen was eminently suited to

the occasion. It started immediately after Divali and ended on *Tripura Sundari Purnima*—a period most conducive to devotion and contemplation. Even from a worldly point of view the timing turned out to be very seasonable. The weather was pleasant—neither too hot nor too cold and there was no rain. It was therefore possible for some of the crowd that thronged to the place to live in the open and no elaborate structures had to be put up for cooking and eating.

Thirdly, the spot selected was not one of Mataji's Ashrams but an out-of-the-way place like *Naimisharanya*, and therefore most appropriate for the purpose. The legend has it that when 88000 *Rishis* (Sages) wanted to perform a prolonged penance they sought the guidance of *Brahma* (the Creator) regarding the most suitable place. He created a *chakra* (wheel) out of his mind and told them that wherever it fell on the earth that would be the spot. The *Rishis* followed the *chakra* and the area around the spot where it dropped its *nemi* (felly) came to be known as *Naimisharanya**. This region is hallowed by the penance and the 1000 year *yajña* (sacrifice) performed by the 88000 *Rishis*, by the preaching to them of *Sūtaji*, of the *Bhagavata Purana* (a Hindu religious scripture about the

* The spot where the goddess Lalita Devi stopped the Chakra is marked by an underground spring which spurted up as a result of the wheel's impact and is known as *Chakra Tirtha*. The U. P. Govt. have in recent years enclosed this spring with a circular wall and built an octagonal ghat all round it, where thousands of pilgrims come to bathe every new moon day.

Lord's glories and the greatness of devotion to Him), • by the composition of the *Puranas* by *Bhagavan Vyasa* and by the austerities practised by King *Manu* and his queen *Satarupa* after renouncing their kingdom. The effects of these past penances must still be lingering in the air for the whole place seems surcharged with spirituality. What better location could have been found for our *sadhana* ?

Fourthly, this holy spot had been recently further sanctified by the purifying flood waters of the Gomati. Only a few days before the appointed day the place was still submerged and serious doubts were entertained whether it would be possible to establish a camp there for the two functions. But as Mataji half jokingly said, the floods had been sent to wash off the dirt and impurities accumulated through the ages ; when the time of our functions came they had receded and left the place clean and dry, with sparkling white sand laid on, for the devotees. (Some of us did not fail to see Mataji's influence in the timely subsidence of flood-waters and the absence of rain).

Fifthly, even though this place is so remote from civilization, there was a record attendance. The *Samyam Mahavrata* is undoubtedly gaining in popularity every year but this time because of the lack of housing and other

- नैमिषेऽनिमिषक्षेत्रे ऋषयःशौनकादयः ।
सत्कृतं सूतमासीनं पप्रच्छुरिदमादरात् ॥
'यस्यावतारो भूतानां क्षेमाय च भवाय च ।
तस्याख्याहि हरेर्बोमन् अवतारकथाःशुभाः' ॥

In the divine region of Naimisha.

amenities, it was thought that fewer people would turn up. Strangely enough, undeterred by these handicaps, the number was larger than ever before. There were people from all parts of India and there must have been two to three hundred men and women who observed all the restrictions and rigours of the *Samyam* week. In addition, there used to be daily visitors who joined in various items of the programme including the silent meditation of one hour at a time. I have no aptitude for judging numbers and have not made any efforts to collect statistics, but I think the public Pandal was large enough to accommodate about 2000 people. Even during the meditation hours it used to be fairly full and on other occasions when *Mahatmas* spoke or Mataji answered questions it was simply packed. I was told that as many as 800/900 persons had their meals in the camp every day. During the Bhagavata Saptah the crowds were phenomenal.

Sixthly, all those who had been present in previous years were agreed that this was the grandest and best *Samyam Vrata* they had ever attended, not only in size but also in the quality and standard of the spiritual fare provided in the form of discourses by *mahatmas*. These talks were never boring—as religious discourses sometimes tend to be—but were really a treat. Some of them like those of Sri Naradananda Swami were sweet, of Swami Vishnu Ashram full of humour, of Swami Avadhutji somewhat contentious, of Swami Maheshwaranandaji measured and dignified, of Swami Akhandanandaji forceful like a sledge-hammer and yet dripping with the love of God's personification as Brijlal, of Swami Chaitanya Giri Maharaj bearing the stamp of high scholarship,

a clear analytical mind and mastery of the *Upanishads*. These great saints alternately cajoled and castigated, consoled and encouraged. The total effect was purifying and ennobling, leaving the hearts of the hearers filled with a spirit of love and devotion for God. What is most unusual and gratifying is that these words of great truth and wisdom will not be lost in the air of Naimisharanya because they have all been sedulously tape-recorded (by Sri Kamalda Brahamachari sitting unobtrusively at the back-stage in a corner). This welcome innovation will make it possible to have these talks in book form later on.

The above recital of some of the striking features which made the last *Samyam Saptah* so outstanding will not be sufficient to create a clear picture in the mind of the reader of all that happened. I shall therefore try to recapture the atmosphere and recapitulate some of the events.

In a secluded spot, at some distance from the little township of Nimsar as well as from the main places of historical and religious interest like the *Chakra-Tirtha*, *Lalita Devi* temple and *Vyasa Gaddi*, is the Ashram established by Sri Naradananda Swami who conducts there an *Adhyatma Vidyapith* (School of Divinity). In the unusually spacious grounds belonging to this Ashram were erected several rows of about seventy tents and a number of soldaries for those who came to attend the *Saptah*. One cottage of the Ashram was reserved for Mataji and some other cottages were made available for ashramites. A big pandal was erected for the main functions. In one corner was a small open kitchen with open space in front for serving meals.

In this temporary Ashram, Mata Anandamayī's devotees started arriving on the 20th Oct. by lorries, buses, cars and trains. Long before it was time for the evening *bhajan*, I found that those who had come to take part in the *Samyam Varta* were spreading out their *asanas* (little mats or rug-pieces) in the public pandal in order to secure places in front of Mataji's seat on the dais. The idea was that everyone should stick to one place throughout the week. That evening after the usual 15 minutes' silence from 8.45 to 9, the programme for the week (which had already been circulated by post) was announced by the master of ceremonies, Brahmachari Sri Kantibhai, who also explained the rules to be observed, viz. celibacy, no smoking or tea-drinking, no shaving or putting oil on one's hair, eschewing bad temper and gossip, etc. Then all present were symbolically initiated by Gurupriya Didi who put sandal-paste *Tilak* (mark) on their foreheads. This is a ceremony which takes place in the Ashram every year on the day after Divali. We retired to our tents duly impressed with the solemnity of the occasion, wondering whether we would be able to stand up to the rigorous regimen. (The diet for the week was complete fasts on the first and last days with only Ganges water to drink and one mid-day meal of one or two items only on the remaining days. For weaklings like myself a concession was allowed in the form of a *kulhad* (mud-tumblerful) of milk every night and a meal on the last day).

We were to be woken up at 4.45 A. M. by the beating of a gong so as to be ready for the early morning *kīrtan* which would start at 5.30 A. M. Afraid of over-sleeping, I was up

at 4 A. M. even before the gong sounded. One by one, through the cold and dark, men and women trooped into the pandal and exactly at 5-30 A. M. a small group started the *Bhajan*, Brahmachari Hiruda leading the chant with ॐ धृतसद्गज समाधि, going on to भजो मां आनन्दमयी; जय शिवशङ्कर; गुरुदेव दया करो and हरि बोल and ending with the usual गुरुप्रणाम । So the day started with the sweet singing of God's names for half an hour after which, with our ears ringing and hearts filled with those names, we all went back to our tents to do our ablutions and daily prayers or meditation, etc.

The main morning session started at 7.30 A. M. with the chanting of *Vedic mantras* by Sri Batuda for 15 minutes with proper intonation and gestures. Between 7.45 and 7.55, all those who were doing the *Varta* and had not yet turned up occupied their places. The raised platform or dais was filled up with *Mahatmas* and Mataji came and took Her seat among them. The atmosphere for meditation was enhanced by the burning of incense in a large urn, which Billoji waved around all over the place and the minds of the devotees were attuned to thoughts of the all-pervading ONE by the most thrilling strains of the hymn, *Satyam Jñānam, anantam Brahman*' which Vibhuda sang with such deep feeling and intensity that the hearers felt transported.*

* The effectiveness of this hymn in putting one in tune with the Infinite can be realized only by those who have heard it being sung by Vibhuda at the *Samyam Saptah*. For the readers who have not had that good fortune, I can only quote it in full and give its meaning :—

सत्यम्, ज्ञानम्, अनन्तम् ब्रह्म ।

शांतिम्, शिवम्, अद्वैतम् ब्रह्म ।

आनन्दरूपम् अमृतम् ब्रह्म ।

एकम् एवाद्वितीयम् ब्रह्म ।

Brahman is Truth, Knowledge, Infinity,

Brahman is Peace, Goodness, Non-dual,

Brahman is Joy, Immortal,

Brahman is the One without a second.

At 7. 55 Kantibhai warned everybody that after five minutes no one would be able to go out or come in for an hour. Then the entrances were closed ; exactly at 8 A. M. a conch was blown and the whole assembly became as if petrified, all sitting erect, quiet, motionless in meditation. It was an inspiring sight. There were a stray few who could not keep still and some who had to clear their throats, cough or sneeze occasionally. But on the stage was a beautiful still picture of Mataji and the *mahatmas*, which served as a model and an inspiration, in particular Mataji's beatific face. Towards the end Mataji would be glancing all round the hall and it almost seemed as if She was seeing angels and the ancient *Rishis* hovering over us. The end of the silent meditation was announced at 9 by the blowing of the conch again and the wafting over the air of the very soft, almost inaudible words of another hymn "हे पितः हे हित हे ब्रह्मत्त्वम्", which came as a fitting end of the hour's *dhyana* (meditation) and had almost the effect of waking one up gently from a trance*. After this

* "हे पितः हे हित हे ब्रह्मत्त्वम्
हे पितः हे हित हे ब्रह्मभूतम्
हे पितः हे हित हे ब्रह्मस्वरूपम्"

'Oh Father ! Oh Benefactor ! Oh *Brahman* in truth, *Brahman* in spirit, *Brahman* in His essential Form.'

At question time one evening, Mataji was asked and told us the origin of this hymn. At the first *Samyam Vrata* in Benaras, during the meditation from 8 to 9, Mataji was half reclining and saw a small boy of about 4 or 5 years of age with long locks of hair, sitting in front of Her, facing south. He looked like the child Dhruva and was singing this tune. As soon as the meditation was over, Mataji repeated the hymn and from that time She has prescribed this to be sung at the end of the silent meditation only during the *Samyam Vrata*. This story is also given at page 8 of the collection of music called कীরतन-रस-स्वरूप "Kirtan Rasa Swarupe"—published recently by the Sangha in book form in Bengali and Hindi.

three chapters of the *Gitz*, one *Stotra* from the *Durga Sapta S'ati* and a chapter from one of the Upanishads were read by all in chorus. At 9.45 Sri Naradananda Swami gave his talk, followed by Swami Chaitanya Giri, who spoke on the Keno-panishad. The morning ended with some more *kirtan* at about 11.15 or 11-30.

After the midday meal there was a short period of rest for some of us. Even during that time the girls continued to sing *kirtan*. From 2.45 began similar preparations as in the morning for another hour of meditation from 3 to 4, followed by talks by Swami Vishnu Ashram and Sri Avadhutaji. The afternoon session ended at about 5.45 with evening prayers sung by the student Brahmacharis of Swami Naradananda Ashram.

The recess from 6 to 7 was intended for private individual evening prayers and meditation (*Sandhya*). *Kirtan* started at 7 p.m. and from 7-30 p.m. there were again talks by *mahatmas*, generally Swami Maheshwaranandaji and Swami Akhandanandaji. From 8.45 to 9 p.m. silence was observed as usual and for half an hour afterwards any questions could be put to Mataji. The refrain of most of the questions, which Dr. Panna Lal (I.C.S.) articulated most aptly (for which reason I dubbed him the *Shaunaka Rishi* of our assembly!) was a short-cut to reach or realize God, some miraculous power which would bring Him to us. Ma's reply was always suited to the questioner. To a married lady she would say: Treat your husband as Narayan, your children as Bal Gopals (the child Krishna), and devote some time to meditation. Her

specific for everybody is to repeat God's name, engage in spiritual practices, read sacred books, meet holy men. The *Mahatmas*, Akhandanandaji in particular, devoted a lot of their talks to this very subject and exhorted people to reserve some time and place for repeating God's name and doing His service. On one or two occasions Dr. Panna Lal prevailed upon Mataji to sing *bhajans*. Every night we lay down to sleep feeling uplifted by Mataji's words.

This was the prescribed routine during the *Samyam* week. There was also provision for meditation at midnight between 11. 45 and 12. 15 called *Mahanīsha dhyāna*, but this was supposed to be done by us in our tents, except on the last night when we all assembled in the pandal for this purpose. I have no doubt that even on other days, there was meditation going on in tents every night though perhaps at different times.

All this may sound very taxing, but we were all exhilarated and hardly felt the strain or even the lack of our habitual tea or cigarettes. Everybody cheerfully bore the vigour of camp life. Rich and highly-placed ladies, some of them elderly and some even Maharanis, used to a life of luxury and ease, not only lived in tents but even walked on foot early every morning a mile or so to the Gomati or Chakra Tirtha for a holy bath. Young men occupying high official positions would walk, buckets in hand and clothed in nothing more than a lungi (loin cloth) to the well or pump. On the 28th morning there was a *yajña* to celebrate the completion of the *Vrata* and we received Mataji's blessings.

On the 28th, simultaneously started the *Bhagavata Saptah* on a grand scale, but here I can comment upon it only briefly. 108 Pandits had come from all over India to read the *Bhagavata*. In the special pandal erected for the purpose, sitting with neat little desks in front of them, arranged in long rows, they presented a colourful spectacle dressed in their yellow robes. At the head, on a decorated dais facing all the rows, sat the head priest Agnishwatta Agnihotriji (Batuda,) who was the main reader. For a week every day, for three hours in the morning and three in the afternoon, all these together read the *Bhagavata* in the original Sanskrit. Simultaneously in the public Pandal, an eminent scholar and saint, Swami Vishnu Ashram, explained to us the whole of the *Bhagavata* in Hindi. Originally it had been announced that Swami Akhandanandaji was to do the exposition in Hindi but he withdrew at the last minute owing to throat trouble and his place was gallantly and ably taken by Swami Vishnu Ashram. It was no easy task to read the *Bhagavata* in Sanskrit and explain it in Hindi, continuously for a week, 6 hours a day, 3 hours at a time. Swami Vishnu Ashram performed this feat in a calm and unhurried manner, without unnecessary gloss and yet without letting the subject get dry. This was the first time I have listened to the whole of the *Bhagavata* and found it very interesting. Swami Akhandanandaji who is an authority on the subject also did his bit by speaking about it in the evening. Except for the periods from 8 to 11 and 2.30 to 5.30 that were occupied by the *Bhagavata*—reading, which replaced the two one-hour meditations and some of the talks of the *Samyam Saptah*, the rest of the programme remained the same. Though it was no longer necessary to keep to the same dietary restric-

tions as during the *Samyam Saptah* (and some of us resumed at least the tea drinking habit and started shaving as soon as we were allowed to) the *Bhagavata* week was also observed by many as a fast and ordinary meals were taken only at night, after the *Bhagavata* reading for the day was over.

Usually a *Bhagavata Saptah* is arranged by some individual for a special reason like the peace of the soul of a deceased relation. This was one of the rare occasions when the *Saptah* was arranged by the Ashram. Mataji told us later how this had happened. After the last time when such a *Saptah* had been performed in Varanasi some years ago, one lady had voiced the wish of several people that another one should be held soon. Mataji who knew that the last one had cost a lot and another one would cost not less than 25,000 rupees, had declined. But the lady was insistent, had put down Rs. 1000 herself and several other persons had collected about Rs. 4000. This money remained in a bank for 4/5 years and in the meanwhile the lady died. So this time though the money was inadequate it was decided to celebrate the *Saptah* and Yogi Bhai, the Raja of Solon, had suggested Naimisharanya. The actual cost had run up to Rs. 35000/- but the money had somehow come !

Before closing I must relate two incidents connected with the *Bhagavata Saptah* about which we came to know subsequently.

One of the readers of the *Bhagavata* was Pandit Sri Vasistha Dutt Misra, a Professor in the Benaras Hindu University, who also teaches the students of the Ashram

Kanyapeeth. After the reading of the *Bhagavata* was over on the 3rd Dec., he was returning by train to Varanasi. At Balamau Station at night while trying to get water from an overhead hydrant in between the railway tracks, he was knocked down by a goods engine which ran over his right arm and clean cut it off just below the shoulder ! Any other person would have died of shock or at least fainted, but this gentleman calmly picked up his severed arm with his left hand and walked up to the Railway platform ! In the absence of any medical aid there, the S. M. arranged to send him to another station Sandila. Railway Engineer Mr. H. C. Banerjee, one of Mataji's devotees, hearing of the accident, went to the Railway Hospital in Sandila and enquiring about the patient from the doctor in charge, was surprised to find Mr. Misra sitting up on a blood-stained bed with a beaming, ruddy countenance and absolutely unconcerned ! As the hospital was ill-equipped it was decided to take him to Benares. After a week or ten days he was reported to be progressing satisfactorily. Whenever people express surprise that such a sad mishap should have occurred immediately after his participation in the *Bhagavata Saptah*, he cheerfully replies that his time had come to die and it was the *Bhagavata* reading which had saved his life at the loss of only an arm ! Mataji remarked when relating the incident that it was the *Bhagavata* which had made him स्थिर (steadfast and calm).

Even the accident might possibly be explained by the fact that he had left without waiting for the पूर्णहिता (completion sacrifice) next day and without taking Mataji's leave. Furthermore, according to the Hindu faith, however good and godly

you may be in this life (for which your reward will come in due course) you cannot escape your *prārabdha karma*, the past actions which have started bearing fruit in this life.

The second incident is not gruesome like the first but a pleasing one and illustrates how Mataji lives the life She preaches, of recognizing God in everyone. The day after the camp was dismantled and most people had left, while we were sitting near Mataji on the veranda of Her cottage, a woman, dressed in a gorgeous Benarasi *Sari* and bedecked with ornaments, came up with a plate to do Mataji's *arati*. She was the *bhangin* (sweeper woman) of the camp to whom Ma had given away the sari and the ornaments that had been presented as an offering to Mataji at the end of the functions by one of the Rajahs.

New Diary Leaves

ATMANANDA

(4)

Kishenpur,
22nd July 1960.

During Mataji's *darshan* hour someone asked : How does the remembrance of God come ? By attending *satsang** and listening to religious discourses (*Bhagavat katha*) ?

Mataji : To some people the remembrance of God comes easily, they cannot remain without it. In this way they keep *satsang* with God. When repeating a *mantra* or one of God's names, He is present as that *mantra* or name ; one should bear this in mind. Some say they go on repeating 'Rama' but to no effect. '*Jemon bhava temon labh*' : the benefit derived from one's practice depends on one's sincerity and fervour. *Kirtan*, *satsang*, listening to religious discourses etc. are only the means of sustaining the remembrance of God. When one speaks about Him or sings His praises He Himself is present.

* *Satsang* in this context means a religious meeting. It also means the company of sages, saints and seekers after Truth and in its widest sense the practice of the Presence of God.

Kishenpur,
9th October 1960.

Question : At times one feels jealous or angry, etc. but circumstances do not permit one to give expression to one's feelings. Then one dreams of what one has been unable to express in waking. Is thereby the knot undone ?

Mataji : It depends. If the person concerned happens to be immersed in *sādhana* and on waking feels pained at harbouring such undesirable feelings even in a dream, these feelings will thereby be thrown out. But if a person has a worldly outlook and takes pleasure in that kind of dream, it only gives nourishment to those feelings and makes them grow stronger—like a creeper that spreads and spreads.

So long as one enjoys the *rasagulas** of the world even in dreams, one cannot get a taste of the real '*rasogulas*', on the contrary one remains within the *gula* (round) of the world, of ever recurring births and deaths.

Question : How can *sādhana* be uninterrupted since it is necessary to sleep ?

Mataji : When one becomes well established in ceaseless practice during waking hours, it will continue also during sleep.

Question : How can one verify whether this is a fact ?

Mataji : If one wakes up with the same kind of thought

* A famous round and juicy Bengali sweet. '*Rasa*' means juice and also nectar, and '*gula*' round. It is sometimes referred to as a symbol of divine bliss.

with which one has fallen asleep, one may presume that it has been there all along.

The Questioner : But while asleep one is not conscious.

Mataji : No, not then. Although there is a much higher state where one remains conscious even during sleep.

Question : If one undertakes something to atone for a wrong deed or sin one has committed, can this be called *niskāma karma* or is it *sakāma karma* ? *

Mataji : The best thing is to do everything for God, for the sake of realizing Him. Such an attitude will automatically blot out all sins and wrong deeds. There are people who acquire money by unrighteous means and then give away a large sum for charity or some other good purpose in order to be washed clean, after which they start sinning all over again. Those people will have to reap the fruits of their evil as well as of their good deeds. It is like bathing in the Ganges and then smearing dirt all over one's body. Therefore everything one undertakes should be done with the sole motive to realize God, one's own Self.

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Kishenpur,
October 10th, 1960.

A French lady who had come flying from Paris for the

* *Niskāma karma*—action without attachment to its result, done disinterestedly, without egoism. Such action purifies heart and mind and does not create new *karma*. *Sakāma karma*—action done with a motive and for some definite result.

only purpose of spending a few weeks with Mataji, asked the following question :

“You say that everything is God’s *līla* ; thus there seems very little scope left for human freedom. It looks as if we were like marionettes and He pulling the strings. On the other hand you also say that *jagat* (world) means perpetual movement and that which ever moves cannot be tied down and is therefore free. There seems to be a contradiction in these two statements. Is there any freedom for the individual and how much ? Have we not the freedom at least to choose at every moment between advancing further into worldliness or towards Reality ?”

Mataji gave a detailed and enlightening reply ; the following is the gist of what She said :

Mataji : Everything is God’s *līla*, but since you do not know this you ask questions, yet even your questions are part of His *līla*. The world is indeed perpetual movement and the individual is that which is bound. However the bondage is only temporary because it is of the world that is in constant flux. You may lock your room and go away, but the lock cannot last for ever and neither can the door. Every *jīva* (individual) is indeed *S’iva* in reality. You are longing for freedom because you are in fact eternally free. When one is advancing towards God it will be found difficult to move towards the world and vice versa.

What now is the freedom of the individual ? Mataji asked a young *Sannyāsini* who is learned in Sanskrit to state

the opinion of the *s'astras* on this point. The *Sannyasini* said : "The *s'astras* declare that the position of the individual resembles that of a cow tied to a post by a fairly long rope. The cow cannot get away from the post, but as far as the rope goes it is free to move as it pleases."

Mataji : Yes, this is indeed a beautiful simile. But one thing has to be said : If the individual uses the whole of his will-power in anything he undertakes, he gets in touch with *Mahas'akti*, the Supreme Power—and then, where is the boundary ? Think of a plant that is surrounded by a fence or by bricks while it is young and weak. But as it grows into a strong tree it breaks the boundary and spreads far beyond it. Sometimes it happens that a cow digs up the post and runs away with it and the rope. In some cases the *Guru* may destroy the boundary.

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Kishenpur,
October 12th, 1960.

To-day the French lady wanted to know what exactly was the meaning of *Mataji's* saying : "*Vipad diya Tini vipad haran koren—*" (By adversity does He destroy adversity.) since this may be understood in various ways.

Mataji : First let us hear what according to your opinion these various possibilities are.

The Questioner : To be an individual is in itself pain, since it means bondage, separation from the One. But immersed in worldly

happiness the individual is not aware of his sorrow. So God sends suffering and adversity, so as to wake one up to the consciousness of one's innate misery.

Mataji : Yes, you see, happiness of this world is always short-lived and so you begin to search for permanent happiness. What other meaning do you think of ?

The Questioner : It may also mean that He sends misfortune to prevent disaster.

Mataji : This does indeed happen at times : a great disaster is due, but averted by a smaller one. Furthermore whatever suffering is in a person's fate has to be borne, but when it is exhausted, it is over. From that point of view also suffering is beneficent. Moreover if a very great difficulty arises, one is obliged to turn to God, since one feels utterly incapable of coping with it. Although one may doubt His existence, yet one will start praying to Him in such a grave emergency.

From the audience : Mataji, this reminds me of something that was related to me. Some people were sailing in a boat that was about to sink. One of the travellers who did not believe in God, said : "If God exists, let Him save us !" The boat did not sink.

Mataji : This again reminds me of something else. Mr. Modi once related to me that on one occasion when he was journeying by aeroplane, some engine trouble arose. The passengers were given to understand that they had only about 15 minutes more to live, as the engine could

not work longer than that. A panic broke out, people started lamenting and bewailing their ill-luck. Mr. Modi however said : "Why lament ? You are indeed very lucky. This is the time to pray. If you die with the thought of God you will go straight to Him." Thereupon most people began to pray with intense fervour. Lo and behold, the pilot somehow managed to land in some town. Mr. Modi and some others got out. The engine was repaired ; but when the plane took off again it hit the electric wire, caught fire and instantly was consumed by flames with all those who were still boarding it.

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Kishenpur,
October 11 th, 1960.

In reply to a question Mataji said :

"It is difficult for the householder always to find opportunities to sit down in his shrine-room for his prayers or meditation. It is difficult to cultivate the company of saints and sages at all times or to attend religious gatherings frequently. But it is easy and always possible to keep company with God in the shape of His Name or a *mantra* received by the *Guru*. One cannot constantly have an image or picture of a deity in front of one's eyes, but the *vigraha* (living presence) of God as *akṣara** can be one's constant companion under all circumstances.

* *Akṣara* means letter of the alphabet (or syllable) and verbally 'indestructable'. Here it stands for God's name or a seed-mantra.

Ma Anandamayee

A humble Tribute

PROF. K. R. R. SASTRY

Humanity tossed about helter-skelter always yearns for Truth, Goodness and Beauty. Achievements have not been often satisfactory. Our dear mother-land divided much against our desires, wherefrom food had been exported is now in dire need of importing food.

The demon of increase of population by four lakhs every year does not deter me. Statistics is not often dependable in a land of conservatism, *Parda* and frustration. One thing is clear, we have *more Sarkars* and *less workers* with us.

Standards of human behaviour have fallen and are falling. Adulteration of milk, adding mud and small stones to food-stuffs, even tamperings in weights and measures—these give a clue to our deteriorated standards. The young men particularly are growing up in an atmosphere of frustration, loudness and lack of respect for decent behaviour.

And so to Benignant Mother

All of us stand to gain very much at a deeper layer of our being through pilgrimages to persons of unimpeachable integrity and overflowing Bliss.

One such choosing to live among us is the ecstatically blissful Ma Anandamayee. After the exits of Sri Aurobindo and Maharshi Ramana, the greatest living dynamo of perennial Bliss in India is Ma Anandamayee.

Her satisfying presence

Surrounded and served by a noble band of dedicated men and women Ma Anandamayee has a kind word, a beaming smile or a Himalayan stillness to give every visitor.

To her Ashrams hasten many dignitaries, distressed couple and devoted pilgrims—North, East, West and South of India have found in her a Haven of Peace and Bliss. A fine Frenchman was also with us one Sunday when the whole group was in meditation in her Ashram at Vindhyachal for full one hour. *One hour of silence* when each at that level was examining the functioning of his mind till it settled down *to rest on the Residuum*. That *per se* is a tribute to her satisfying serenity.

Sharing in Bliss

Sugar when tasted is sweet not while written in parchment. The Vaishnava Alwars, the Shaivite saints and the evolved ones in our land as Buddha, Shankara, Ramanuja, Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa, Swami Vivekananda, Sri Aurobindo, Maharshi Ramana and now available to us Ma Anandamayee have been helping us *to taste the divinity in us all*.

Mother's Ways

At Vindhyaçal in the prayer hall, gracefully decorated with flowers by dexterous fingers, sat Ma Anandamayee. Next to her sat in austere serenity Swami Hari Babaji. What a variety in discipline ! Mother *still, fragrant* and *Blissful* in her closed eyes and Babaji bent down in compelling austerity— Oh ! this was a sight for the divine in us to get pulled out.

And back again at my post of duty I come to serve and sacrifice, surcharged with Purity and ever satisfying *Ananda*.

COSMIC CONSCIOUSNESS

T. KRISHNAJI

Shree Anandamayee Mataji had described one of her mystic experiences in Cosmic Consciousness thus : "Such a halo of light flashed from this body that all the space around it was illumined. That light gradually seemed to melt away enveloping the universe" ("Mother as Revealed to Me" by Bhaiji, page 59).

Bhagavat Gita compares the effulgence of Visvarupa to the brilliance of thousand Suns. Mundaka Upanishad says that when He shines, every thing shines after Him. In Mystic experiences, light, sound, smell, colour etc play an important role in Cosmic Consciousness or illumination of the Self. Several Mahatmas experienced such a phenomena of *Jyoti*, or light in their experience of Cosmic Consciousness.

Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa also described his experience as follows :—

"It was as if houses, doors, temples and all other things vanished altogether ; as if there was nothing anywhere. And what I saw was a boundless infinite Conscious sea of light, however far and in whatever direction I looked, found a continuous succession of effulgent waves coming forward, raging and storming from all sides with great speed. Very soon they fell on me and made me sink to the unknown

bottom. I panted, struggled, and fell unconscious." ("Sri Ramakrishna the Great Master" by Swami Jagadananda, Page 143.)

In the case of Shree Mataji the cosmic *jyoti* had centrifugal action, light flashed from her body and spread around. But in the case of Sri Ramakrishna, it was a centrepetal action, waves of light stormed and submerged him. Sri Ramana Maharshi also saw a vision of dazzling light suddenly streaming forth and pervading all space. (Self Realisation, P. 37.)

Sachal, a Sufi saint of Sind, described his inner illumination, "Like the sea coming into the pitcher." St. Paul saw light out of heaven shining round him. Soon after Lord Buddha obtained illumination, his body emitted light which illumined the Bodhi Tree under which he sat.

Dr. Buck narrates several persons having had Cosmic Consciousness and mystic experiences. He refers to one lady and describes her experience, "Walking homeward, enjoying calm beauty of the evening, I was conscious of an unutterable stillness, every object about me became bathed in a soft light, etherial, and she heard a voice "God is All."

Jacob Bohme, the unlettered shoe maker of Germany, vividly describes his illumination, "While I was battling being aided by God, a wonderful light arose within my Soul. I recognised the true nature of God. Suddenly I was embraced with love as a bridegroom embraces his dearly beloved bride.

In this light my spirit suddenly saw through all and in and by all the creatures, even herbs and grass, it saw through all. It knew God."

Dr. Buck, himself a mystic, states that he learned more within a few seconds during which illumination lasted than previous years of study and suggests that heredity, intelligent contact with Cosmic Conscious Minds, simple life free from pride and ego are all aids to cosmic consciousness. Saints and Mystic souls live for the welfare of all spreading love, light and Joy. Shree Mata Anandamayee is a Divine Phenomenon spreading light and Bliss. We pray that the light emanated from her may remove the darkness of our ignorance to be worthy of her grace and guidance.

A PILGRIMAGE TO POONA *

B. D. LAKHANPAL

Everybody has been on a picnic, but few have had the experience of a spiritual picnic. I had my first experience of such a picnic recently when, in company with friends, I went from Bombay to Poona to have *Darshan* and *Satsang* of Ma Anandmayee. As many may know, Ma Anandmayee is a highly advanced soul and is one of the foremost spiritual leaders of the country today. Hailing from Bengal, she has Ashrams at Benaras, Dehradun, Brindavan, Delhi, and many other places in North India and has a large following in Bengal, U. P. and Punjab.

We were four in the party: Mr. Anand, Brahmachari Om Sharan, Mrs. Padma and myself. Mr. Anand is a young businessman with wonderful devotion and love. Brahmachari Om Sharan, formerly a radio artist, renounced the world a few years back. He sings magnificently. Mrs. Padma is a lady with great devotion.

We left Bombay at about 3 p. m. by car. It was very hot. Up to Thana our progress was slow. The road was dotted with newly coming up factories. An atmosphere of congestion prevailed. However, as we left Thana, the whole atmosphere changed. There was invigorating freshness in the air; the

* By courtesy of "The Vision."

panorama of rugged hills, clear sky, green fields, opened its arms as it were to welcome us. Our spirits rose as the car sped along the beautiful cemented road, now stretching almost perpendicularly straight, now curling viciously around a hill, now going steeply up a mount and now jumping dangerously down a valley. Spontaneously we started singing "Sri Ram Jai Ram Jai Jai Ram". Mr. Anand is a fast driver and as the tempo of our Kirtan ascended, his foot on the accelerator descended ! So immersed were we in this 'duet' between our singing and the speed of the car that we did not know when we reached Khapoli.

Khapoli is situated at the foot of the Western Ghats and the ascent to the Deccan plateau starts there. The Khapoli-Khandala Ghat is, I think, one of the most beautiful drives in India. The road zig-zags up the mountain rising about 2000 ft. in about 6 miles. The scenery changes every few furlongs—steep precipices, awe inspiring chasms, dainty little villages, lovely mountain alleys and pathways, tall trees through which the naughty wind ever sings !

Half way up the hill is situated a Maruti temple. Motorists and truck drivers offer coins here for insuring a safe journey. We also stopped at the temple. It was a beautiful spot. Mrs. Padma suggested that we should sing some Bhajans. Out came the harmonium and the quiet jungle air resounded with Kabir's Bhajans in which the Brahmachari was an adept.

Singing sweet Bhajans and chanting 'Ramnam', we reached Poona at about 6-30 p. m. and straightaway made for

the address where Ma Anandmayee was staying. Entering the beautiful lawn of Mr. Nanda's (Ma's host at Poona) house, we were enchanted by a wonderful sight. Clad in pure white, with her glistening black hair falling loosely around her serene face, there she sat, the Mother, now bestowing a hovering look at the devotees squatting before her, now smiling ever so imperceptibly, now becoming as if remote from her surroundings. As I approached her to pay my respects, she looked up and gave me a bewitching smile. As I knelt down, my eyes met a pair of eyes which were full of a strange love. Where had I seen such love before? —I thought, as I lay prostrate. And, in a flash, I became a small boy. With my limbs aching and my eyes swollen, I was lying in her lap. Her balmy touch was on my back, the love in her eyes rained in streams. I was again with my own mother! Yes, Ma reminded me of my mother.

The whole atmosphere was surcharged with devotion and soon it was 9-30 p. m....and time for dinner. We had made no arrangements for eating or sleeping. We had left all that to Ma. Someone asked us to go and take Prasad and we went. Then someone took us to a nearby bungalow, where we passed one of the most restful nights of our lives sleeping on the hard floor!

Next morning I got up at about 5 a.m. and was surprised to see others sitting in meditation. Not to be outdone, I also sat down. We went to Mr. Nanda's house at about 8 a. m. The morning was passed in Bhajans, Upanishad recital, reading of the *Bhagavata* and Kirtan. At about 11-30 a.m. Ma came

out and replied to devotees' questions. She usually reserves about half an hour for this purpose. Ma, it should be remembered, is more or less unlettered. She has not received any education, as it is usually understood. But all sorts of questions by all types of people are asked. It is really remarkable how clearly, concisely and pointedly she replies to the most difficult and delicate questions. Her reply to the question: "What is good and what is bad?" is, I think, classic. Spontaneously she replied: "That which takes us to God is good and that which takes us away from God is bad."

In the afternoon we went to Alandi, which is about 10 miles from Poona. Saint Jnaneshwar took Samadhi here. We reached Alandi at about 4 p. m. Just as in other old holy places, so also at Alandi, the local "guides" do not allow one to visit different places in peace. Firstly, about half a dozen "guides" surrounded us and all insisted on accompanying us. In a chorus, they related events and pointed out important places so that, with our poor knowledge of Marathi, we did not follow a word!

However, we were very happy to pass about half an hour under the tree where the saint had done *tapasya*. Situated on the bank of a river amid peaceful surroundings, the place is ideal for contemplation. After singing a few songs, the Brahmchariji asked us to sit quiet for some time. It was a highly enjoyable experience. We returned to Poona at about 7 p. m.

In the evening, we were again blessed with Ma's *Satsang* and had a wonderful time in singing, reading and discussing.

Sunday was our last day at Poona. In the morning we went to the Ashram of Sri Dilip Kumar Roy, the celebrated disciple of the Sage of Pondicherry. Nestling under a hill, it is a neat, little, beautiful building. The temple hall is scrupulously clean and tastefully decorated. The image of Krishna here is one of the most charming I have seen. An atmosphere of devotion pervades the place. Dadaji, as Sri Roy is known at the Ashram, sings wonderfully.

Returning at noon, we were fortunate to have a private interview with Mataji. One of us asked: "Ma, why don't we get full pleasure in spiritual practices?"

Mataji replied: 'Because your pleasures are divided. You want to take pleasure in both worldly and spiritual matters. That will not do. You must go after God with your whole heart and a firm determination. Half-way efforts will help, but not much. It will take a long time. And where is the time? Do your *Japa* twenty-four hours a day and do it with devotion.'

Soon it was time for us to depart. We took our leave from Mataji, met the new friends we had made during our stay. It is remarkable how close friendships are made in a short time in spiritual surroundings. We met Surindar only on Saturday night—in fact he merely accompanied us to the place where we used to sleep. By Sunday afternoon, when we left, we had become fast friends with no formalities! At the time of parting, he would not let Mr. Anand go without touching his feet! (In good fun, of course!) And Surindar is a top executive in some foreign firm in Bombay!

Speeding along the Poona-Bombay Road, I thought: "This has been a wonderful new experience.....I have enjoyed myself immensely.....how happy one feels sitting before Ma.....I must come back to Poona!"

I looked at my companions. They were all quiet. Perhaps they were tired, perhaps they were thinking the same thoughts. Though quiet, all looked happy—not boisterously, but quietly and calmly. And then, as if everybody could read everybody else's mind, we all looked up and smiled at each other.....and the Brahmachari started the tune :

Sri Ram Jai Ram Jai Jai Ram !

MATRI LILA

We apologize to our readers for being unable this time to provide the usual detailed account of Mataji's movements during the last 3 months. However the most important functions of this period, namely, the 11th *Samyam Mahavrata* and the *Bhagavata Saptaha* at Naimisharanya from October 23rd to November 4th have been described in great detail in Sri K. G. Ambegaokar's article (p. 175 to 189 of this issue). After the functions were over and the city of tents dismantled, Mataji remained at Naimisharanya for another fortnight with only a few companions, mostly, Sadhus. The whole party was accommodated in huts directly on the banks of the *Gomati* river. This solitary stay in the most charming surroundings was enjoyed so much by everyone that it has been suggested by many to acquire a plot of land there and put up a structure on behalf of the Shree Shree Anandamayee Sangha.

On November 23rd Mataji left for Sitapur at the requests of many devotees of that place. She passed the night at the place of Sri Sripal Singh, where there is a separate room specially constructed for Mataji. She was also present at the foundation laying ceremony of a separate block of the renowned Eye Hospital at Sitapur.

On the 24th noon Mataji motored to Lucknow staying for the night at the residence of a devotee, Sri P. K. Banerjee, Retired Deputy Director of Education, U.P. where a special

room had been constructed for her use. Mataji shifted on the 25th along with her companions to the residence of the Chief Conservator of Forests, U.P., Sri Rameshwar Sahai. She remained there at the Forest Rest House for full seven days and thus fulfilled the prayers of Mr. and Mrs. Sahai who had been repeatedly requesting her to pass a few quiet days there. The scenic beauty of the entire surrounding, the peaceful atmosphere and the lavish and sincere hospitality of the Sahai family as well as the spirit of service amongst the whole office-staff left a deep impress on the minds of all who had the privilege to stay there with Mataji.

Mataji then left for Varanasi on the 2nd December early morning by Doon Express reaching there the same afternoon. It was believed at first that she would stay there for only one or two nights. But infact she did not leave for Rajgir before 7th noon reaching there the same night.

Mataji stayed at the Rajgir Ashram for full sixteen days and had a rather quiet and peaceful time there without any special programmes. A young American, connected with the Self-Realization Fellowship of California, Brahmachari Stephen was with Mataji for the whole period of stay there. During that period Swami Kriyananda, an American *Sadhu*, now Vice-President of the world-wide Self-Realization Fellowship organisation founded by the great Indian Saint Paramahansa Yogananda, paid a visit to Rajgir along with one of his American companions. After an enjoyable time there, both of them paid a visit to our Ashram at Varanasi and were pleased to stay there for two nights.

On the 24th morning Mataji, along with her party, motored to Patna and remained the whole day there in the Station Waiting Room. Sri N. Bakshi, I. C. S. (Retd.), Bar-at-law, a great devotee of Mataji, had made all arrangements for her departure for Calcutta the same night by Delhi-Howrah Express.

Mataji alighted in Agarpara Ashram on the Christmas Day, 25th morning, where She remained for an unusually long period, i.e, for seventeen days. During that time she visited a number of places in Calcutta. Mr. James George, High Commissioner for Canada in Ceylon, came to Mataji with his whole family having motored all the way from Dhanushkodi to meet her. They were very nice and spiritually-minded people

Mataji reached Varanasi on the 11th January midnight to be present for the annual celebration on the 14th of the *Sankranti*. This is the anniversary of the day on which the great Vedic *Yagna* that took place in our Ashram at Varanasi was begun in 1947 and successfully completed after full three years in 1950.

During her short stay in Varanasi Dr. Miss Luce Sannangelantonio, a famous Italian Endocrinologist and Psychologist who is connected with the UNESCO and is now on an official tour of India, came to meet Mataji and had private interviews on two consecutive days. She seemed to have been deeply impressed by the personality of Mataji and also by the talks she had with her.

During that same period two foreign ladies arrived in India who came all the way only to have her *darshan* and stay

a few days with her. They were Madame Jean 'Trocmé' from Paris and Markell Brooks from Minnesota, U. S. A.

Mataji left for Allahabad on the 17th early morning by car to spend three days in the Ashram of Late Gopal Chandra Chattopadhyaya. The two foreign ladies also accompanied Mataji to Allahabad. From there Mataji went to New Delhi on the 20th morning at the cordial invitation of Sri Hari Babaji Maharaj who had arranged a programme there.

It is expected that Mataji will be at Hardwar on the *Shiva-ratri* day (13th February) and at the New Delhi Ashram during the Holi festival.
