

Ananda Vartā

A quarterly journal dealing mainly with the divine life and teachings of Shree Shree Ma Anandamayee and with other religio-philosophical topics.



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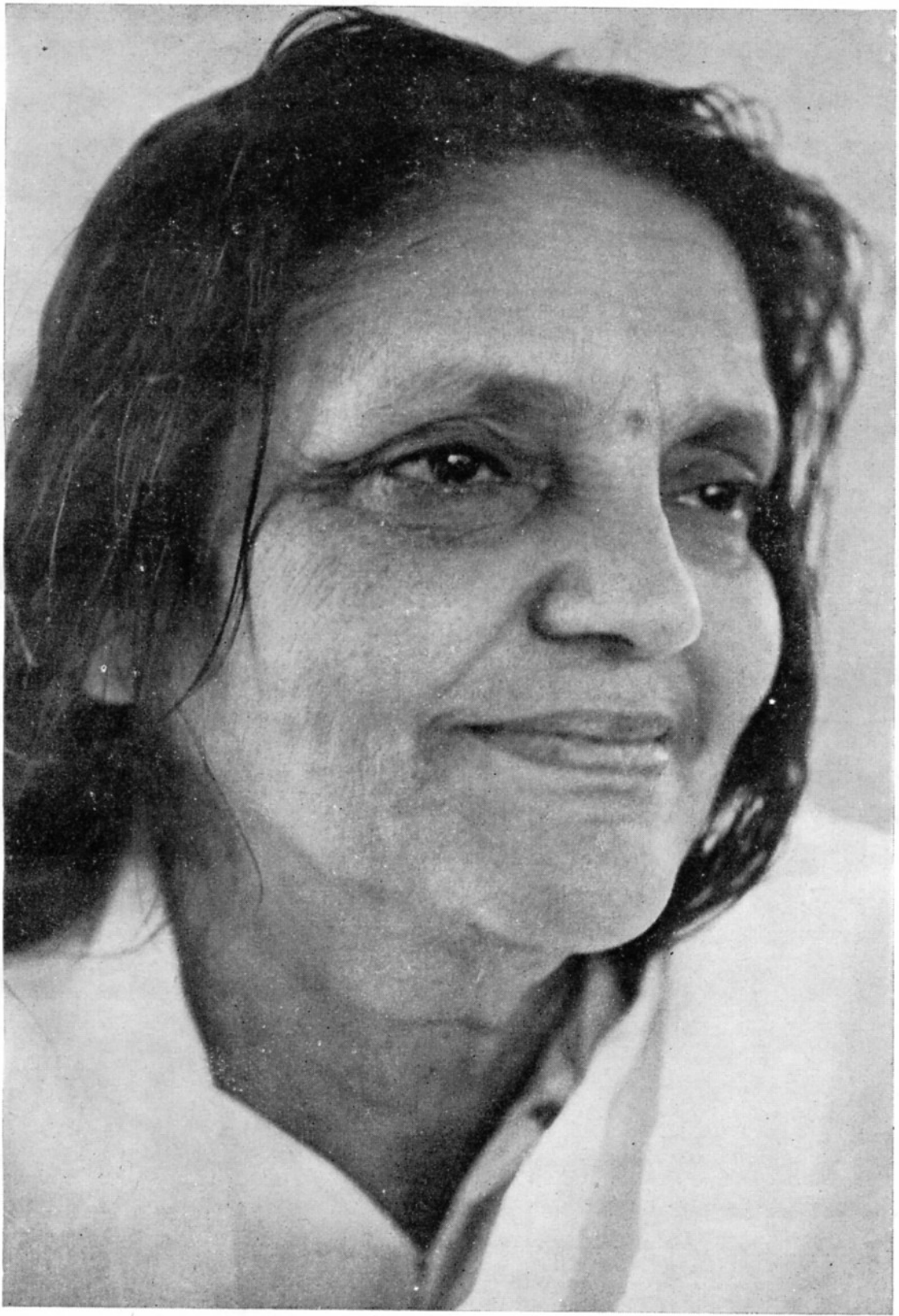
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The ONE who is the Eternal, the Atman,
 He Himself is the traveller on the path of Immortality.
 He is all in all, He alone is.

MATRI VANI

Even on this thorny path the Guru is constantly holding your hand and leading you towards the One. Remember, this is the actual truth !

Occasionally to mistake marsh-gas for real light is but natural. Albeit, it is He alone who manifests in all forms. The path that brings full and unobstructed Enlightenment must be pursued with the utmost concentration, at every moment, and to the limit of one's capacity. Where He manifests as the pilgrimage undertaken for the sake of Supreme Union, there is hope of its being crowned with success.

Who belongs to whom in this world ? By exhausting one's particular *karma*, everyone must endeavour to bring to

exist to soothe this burning agony, save to take refuge in Him, from Whom all beings emanate, by whom they are succoured, and in Whom they ultimately are absorbed.

Worldly life is indeed a battle-field. By becoming conscious of one's spiritual wealth one must strive to emerge victorious from the battle.

“A person who knows that he is ignorant must be credited with having most certainly attained to some measure of knowledge.”

“Ma”

Essential Unity of All Religions

(DR. M. HAFIZ SYED, M.A., PH.D., D. LITT.)

The word 'religion' by latin derivation means something that binds. Religion is essentially that something which binds together the hearts of all men, without distinction of race, creed, caste, colour or sex ; binds them all to each other with the golden thread of universal brotherhood ; binds them to the heart of that universal God, who is the very principle of Life, of Consciousness, of Being, in everything. It is that which binds the hearts of men to all ideals.

It is the conscious or unconscious recognition of the fact that the spirit of man extends beyond the present moment, extends from the past through the present into the future.

Wherever there is common feeling, wherever there is *esprit de corps*, however narrow, there we have the very spirit of religion, though restricted ; there we have, although limited, the manifestation of the Unity of the Self, the Supreme Spirit, which alone binds together many selves into one organic whole.

Sympathy, fellow-feeling, love, the sensing of the common Self of all in all, is the one bond that holds together individuals, families, tribes, nations, races.

Just as hate is the one sharp edged instrument that sunders and scatters them apart. This love for all living things is the very essence of religion. Such universal love is the first and last manifestation of God, who is the universal, immortal Self. It is this which triumphs eternally over death, hate and evil. All association, all co-operation of any kind, is the product of this fellow-feeling.

It is possible to see and feel the Self in all men, whatsoever their creed or colour. If a common country, a common language, a common spirit, a common colour of skin make such strong bonds, how much stronger should be the bond of the common Life in all men ! When the Universal Spirit of all men is recognized and realized by all men, then shall we have reached the stage of humanism, the federation of all the nations. That is the ultimate stage of religion.

Every religion tells its followers (a) what to think or believe, (b) what to desire or feel, (c) and what to do.

Under the sub-division of knowledge every religion teaches the existence of One Supreme Spirit. The nature of this Universal Spirit hidden in the heart of every living being is described in almost the same terms in the teachings of every religion, the Vedanta of Hinduism, the *Rahasya* teachings of the Buddha and Jina to their Arhat disciples, the Gnosis of the Christians, the *Tasawuf* of Islam.

Another belief common to all religions is the belief in worlds beyond this one.

Yet another common belief is the existence of various grades of spiritual beings, dwelling in and governing the different worlds. Finally all religions teach, more or less clearly, that the human soul, being a portion of the Divine Being, has emanated from it and will go back to it some day, after passing through various experiences of good and evil, virtues and joys, sins and sufferings, in various worlds.

It may be borne in mind that without true religious feeling, without spiritual earnestness and purity of character, without benevolence and philanthropy, no nation can attain to real civilization.

Hatred ceases never by hatred, between men as between nations, but it ceases wholly and only by love. Righteousness must prevail in the end in the relationship between men and between nations. Blessed are the peace makers, who studiously promote peace and love amongst all, within their own homes as well as within and between all other homes. Whatever induces moral and friendly relations between single individuals or between nations is of the very essence of universal religion. It enables men to realize in life the common Self of all.

We may thus see that the Hindu Vedanta, the Christian Gnosis, and the Muslim *Tasawuf*,—which teach that the spirit in all is one and the same, and that therefore men should and ultimately must love each other—are not the vain visions of idle dreamers, but the most practical of all practical politics. The answer of all religions to the question: “what

to feel ?" is : "Feel love for each and every living creature". The second part of the book of every religion is called ethics. The third part is the answer to the question 'what to do'. It may be named the manual of special rites, ceremonies and sacraments, of special directions for conduct in life, both individual and collective.

Each religion has a set of sacraments—some fewer, some more numerous—which may be divided into (1) ante natal, (2) post-natal and (3) post-mortem, connected with the three main events of life, viz. birth, marriage and death. The purpose of all these is to purify and consecrate the grosser and subtler bodies, inhabited by the soul, in such a manner as to make its life here and hereafter more elevated, richer and nobler, and enable it to attain to ever greater and greater perfection and communion with God and men.

In modern times people are unfairly indifferent towards the religion in which they were born, failing to study it seriously and to act up to its ideals. The spirit of true religion is lacking everywhere. That is the real cause for the degeneration of mankind. Leaving religion aside for the time being, we must say we are not sufficiently rational in our outlook on life. If we had looked at the passing events of our own life, and at the nations around us in the light of reason and past experiences, we should have moulded our life and attitude to other nations more justly and generously than we had done upto now. We have to outgrow our animal tendencies and become convinced that we are more spiritual than material.

That alone would guarantee our friendly and harmonious relation with one another.

True spirit of science leads us to the same goal of mutual goodwill, co-operation and friendliness. It has been acknowledged from all quarters that matter is a unity. In spite of its multifarious forms it is truly one ; so we must work for others with as much interest as we work for ourselves. This is the way to peace and harmony.

“Let ‘I cannot’ be eradicated from your vocabulary. Time is gliding by swiftly : for a few days only lasts this reunion with friends and kinsmen. Gather up your possessions, brother, no one accompanies you on your final journey.”

“Ma”

Raja Yoga or the Path of Mind Control

SWAMI SIVANANDA, RISHIKESH

Raja Yoga means 'King of Yogas'. It aims at controlling all thought-waves or mental modifications. *Raja Yoga* is suitable for men of mystic temperament with a leaning towards the occult. A serious practice of *Raja Yoga* can be thought of only after you have purified your mind and have gained some control over your senses and appetites.

The eight limbs of *Raja Yoga* are *Yama* (self-restraint), *Niyama* (religious observances), *Āsana* (posture), *Prāṇāyama* (restraint of breath), *Pratyāhāra* (abstraction of the senses), *Dharaṇa* (concentration), *Dhyāna* (meditation) and *Samādhi* (super-conscious state).

Yama and Niyama.

Yama is the practice of non-injury, truthfulness, non-stealing, celibacy and non-covetousness in thought, word and deed. This is the foundation of Yoga.

Niyama is the observance of the five canons—internal and external purity, contentment, austerity, study of religious books, and worship and surrender to the Lord.

Impure motives, lack of celibacy, over-eating, indolence,

over-sleeping, false fears, building castles in the air, allure-ment of minor supernormal powers like clairaudience and clairvoyance are all obstacles on this path.

Asana and Prāṇāyama.

Any comfortable and steady pose is Āsana. A steady pose gives concentration of mind. If you have mastery over the *āsana*, then heat and cold and all other pairs of opposites will not disturb you. You must be able to sit in one position for three hours at a stretch. The pose becomes steady by thinking of the Infinite.

There are some *āsanas*. such as Śirshāsana and, Sarvangāsana, that are very useful for the preservation of good health and Brahmacharya (celibacy).

Prāṇa is energy, it is life-breath, it is the life-principle. When *prāṇa* vibrates, the mind begins to think. *Prāṇa* is expended in thinking, willing, acting, talking, etc. The excess of *Prāṇa* is stored up in the brain and nerve centres.

If you can control *prāṇa*, you can control all the forces in the universe.

Prāṇa manifests as motion, gravitation, magnetism, electricity. The knowledge and control of *prāṇa* is what is really meant by *prāṇāyama*. *Prāṇāyama* removes diseases of the body, steadies the mind and purifies it. It strengthens the intellect and augments intellectual capacity. It

increases the power of memory. When you practise *Pranayama*, you will have to be careful about your diet: you should avoid over-loading the stomach and should take light, easily digestible and nutritious food. You should be moderate in copulation.

Pratyāhāra and Dharaṇā.

Pratyāhāra is abstraction or withdrawal of the senses from their objects. *Pratyāhāra* checks the outgoing tendency of the senses. The practice demands considerable patience and perseverance. It gives tremendous power. During the course of the practice you will have to withdraw the mind again and again from the sense-objects and fix it on the object of contemplation. The Yogi who is well established in *Pratyāhāra* can meditate quite calmly even in the battlefield while countless machine-guns roar in a continuous stream.

Dharaṇā or concentration is centering the mind on one single thought. During concentration the mind becomes calm, serene and steady. The various rays of the mind are collected and focussed on the object of meditation. There will be no tossing of the mind. When there is deep concentration, you will experience great joy and spiritual intoxication. You will forget the body and your surroundings.

Concentration increases by curtailing wants and desires, by observing silence for one or two hours daily, by practising *Pranayama*, by prayer and by increasing the number of daily sittings in meditation. You must always try to be cheerful and peaceful.

Dhyana and Samadhi.

Meditation (*Dhyana*) follows concentration. The mind dwells on God alone during meditation. Deep meditation cannot come in a day, a week or a month. You will have to struggle hard for a long time. Gradually you will enter into deep meditation and *Samadhi*. You will have to pass through the six stages of meditation and finally you will enter into perfect *Nirvikalpa Samadhi*, a superconscious state. The perception of form will totally vanish. The meditator and the meditated will become one. You will attain the highest knowledge and supreme, eternal peace. This is the goal of life. This is the aim of existence. This is the final beatitude of life. You will be absolutely free from pain, sorrow, fear, doubt and delusion. You will experience: "I am the Immortal Self. All indeed is God. There is nothing but God." You will feel that the whole world is nothing but Pure Consciousness. Tables, chairs, men, women—in fact all things will appear to contain this consciousness just as vessels contain their contents. You will feel that the Lord is sporting in all things as this Pure Consciousness. You will actually lose the sense of perceiving the material nature of things around you. This rare experience will give you great bliss.

May you all attain success in Yoga and enter into *Nirvikalpa Samadhi* or the Blissful Union with the Lord by controlling the mind and the senses and practising regular and constant meditation.

Prajna—The Light of Intuition

PROFESSOR MADAN GOPAL, M. A. (ALLD.), B. LITT. (OXON),
C. P. E. S. (RETD.)

(Continued from the last issue.)

Prajñā is a feeling for Truth, which arises in us from within, giving us a sense of the truth-value of any statement or thought that we consider. It is known that sometimes people have a faculty for judging character correctly, so that when they meet a person, they perceive immediately whether he has certain qualities or not. But if you ask them how they arrive at this judgement, they are unable to explain it clearly. They feel it as a sort of inner perception, and when that feeling is present they know that they have reached the truth. A story might illustrate this. It was related to me by a friend in whose veracity I have complete belief. A South Indian lady, who was a doctor by profession, came to Mount Abu for a holiday and there met a *śadhu* to whom she became devoted. She used to visit him daily. One day, to her horror, she read in a newspaper that a certain young man, a student in a Madras College, had been drowned whilst bathing in the sea. His name was that of her brother and every particular agreed with him ; so she naturally thought that her brother had been drowned. She decided to return to Madras at once, but before starting went to say good-bye to the *śadhu*. He received the news with complete calmness, smiled and said that there must be some mistake and that he felt sure that

her brother had not been drowned. He advised her to ascertain the truth by telegram. The reply confirmed that her brother was quite safe. She was astounded and went to the *śādhū*, wondering how he could have known the actual facts at such a distance. The *śādhū* simply answered: "I felt that the statement was not true".

Such instances could be multiplied. It is a well-known fact that spiritually advanced people develop a kind of inner sense, which immediately tells them whether a thing is true or not, even though they can give no detailed reason for it. This quality or power, which is at the basis of all genuine and lasting spiritual experience, deserves to be carefully investigated.

Modern psychology has come to know something of this power, but is puzzled as to its real nature. This faculty of rapid judgement baffles any scientific analysis, and cannot easily be connected with either the intellectual or the physiological make-up of those who possess it. Sometimes intuition of a high character may be exhibited by a person with comparatively poor intellectual equipment; and sometimes it may be seen to be accompanied by morbid symptoms or an unbalanced material life. But this is not always so and intuition is seen at its best when both intellectual and moral qualities are well developed. Here in the East this power is well known to the yogis, and is cultivated by appropriate physical and psychical exercises. Briefly, since the central manifestation of *prajñā* is through the "heart-mind" or the mind purified by appropriate emotion, the foundation of this function is a truly ethical life. It is the harmony of all life,

the inter-relatedness of all things, which is reflected in *ethical* conduct that after all means only putting oneself in harmony with the universe and all its forces. This ethical view of things (also called *dharma*) is essential to the idea of *prajñā*, and *prajñā* cannot be cultivated without ethical purity, nor ethical purity (*dharma*) practised without the rousing of *prajñā*. It is notorious in Western philosophy that no sure foundation for ethical conduct can be found by a consideration of intellectual principles alone. Further it is well known that the practice of ethical life is so difficult, not only on account of our desires and selfish prepossessions, but also on account of *ignorance*. Many times, with the best intentions, we find ourselves puzzled by the conflicting claims of duties, because we do not know what exactly is the right course in a particular situation, nor can we attribute any mathematical values to the different considerations that arise. I was once told the story of a saint who consented to tell a lie in order to save the lives of some cows; when asked for an explanation, he said, he considered saving the lives of the cows as more important than his personal purity. In such cases it is the *prajñā* that acts and points out the way that is best at the time and for the individual concerned. Hence *prajñā* and *dharma* are very deeply interrelated. The one (*prajñā*) is the reflection in individual life of the action of the other (*dharma*) as a cosmic principle.

Buddha, one of the wisest teachers of humanity, emphasized only two things, i.e. right conduct and well directed meditation, refusing to enter into metaphysical questions.

His wisdom was founded upon the perception that these two principles, practised together strenuously, would infallibly lead to the unfoldment of *prajñā*; and that would light up the path for each individual aspirant according to his own needs. It is well known to all of us that there are so many paths and so many methods, all efficacious in their own way, between which the early aspirant finds himself puzzled. Really, most traditions have a basis of experienced wisdom and could under proper circumstances lead to Enlightenment. But it is difficult to decide as to when, how and by whom a particular discipline should be pursued. If a proper Guru is available, he can guide the aspirant, but even so the aspirant must have some inner light in order to choose the right Guru. Thus from the beginning spiritual progress rests upon this invaluable faculty in our psyche, namely intuition or *prajñā*.

It may also be pointed out that *prajñā* is represented as a *feminine* principle, i. e. according to Hindu psychology *prajñā* leans for support upon some other principle. If *prajñā* leans on the intellectual principle which is masculine in a sense, then it leads to the birth of genius, intellectual brilliance, scientific ability etc., or united with emotional elements produces the artist or the musician. Whenever we see any extraordinary powers manifested by a human individual, we can be sure that *prajña* is acting in him in some part of the psyche. We may say that it is a faculty which has just begun to dawn in humanity, but is seldom seen fully developed. Its action can be many-sided and produce various forms of what may be called genius, and sometimes it may be difficult

to see its connexion with the ethical principle. For instance, great poets and musicians may seem to us to be lacking in common morality. This is what has led to the mistakes which beset European thought on the subject, connecting genius with disease and insanity. The mistake is really due to the fact that in the European tradition, men of genius tend to over-exploit their gifts, and so become unbalanced and morbid. Their *prajñā* has been aroused in a peripheral rather than central section, and consequently does not show its connexion with the ethical principle or *dharma*. Here the wisdom of the East is more discerning, for it sees in all manifestations of genius the signs of a previous *tapasya* ; i.e. its connexion with the ethical principle is clearly perceived.

If on the other hand, the principle of *prajñā* is aroused in its central section, and supported by ethical conduct and self control, it leans over to the next higher principle which in our text has been called *Mahat* or the Great. This is the beginning of higher yoga and is accompanied by the development of spiritual powers. In the Eastern tradition little attention has been paid to the cultivation of genius or artistic gifts, but much to the problem of producing the saint or the *yogi*. Hence the psychology of *prajñā* has been investigated from this point of view, and much attention paid to its ethical and moral concomitance.

I have thought of *prajñā* as a sort of torch, very useful on a dark night, but showing only a limited section of the landscape. With its help, if one uses it wisely, one can go safely from one point to another, but it cannot illumine the

whole scene. Therefore we find that men with only a limited opening of the *prajñā* contradict one another, for each is in truth following his own path, as dictated by his previous experiences and *samskaras*. Very few at this stage possess the capacity to direct others ; they can only guide their own steps by a very careful use of their light. Still, the darkness that surrounds humanity is so opaque that even this little help, which sometimes a man in whom *prajñā* is developed can give, may be very valuable. But we must not expect too much from it, nor should we imagine that the light that has guided us safely from one point to another will also serve for another. For each aspirant is treading a path of his own, and has to use his own faculties in order to direct his steps. It may also be pointed out that like all faculties *prajñā* can grow only by exercise and nourishment. Its exercise means learning to utilise it in all kinds of unexpected situations and problems and in not shrinking from any new aspect of truth that may be presented ; and its nourishment means keeping it constantly fed on ethical striving and the practice of *dharma*.

(To be continued)

Two Incidents

VIJAIANANDA (DR. WEINTROB)

We have frequently heard Mother say that She does not go anywhere ; yet we see Her travel from place to place. Being all-pervading and therefore everywhere at all times, Her body and its movements have significance only for us. Mother has assured us that She will never leave us, no matter where we may go or what we may do. I feel convinced that She is the all-pervading divine Consciousness, for whom there is no limitation of space and time, for whom the word 'impossible' has no meaning. However, for most of us, this knowledge is only on the level of the spoken word. Many just repeat it from hearsay. But those who have for a longer period of time lived under Mother's guidance, have experienced in a variety of ways the benediction of Her presence, and are able to understand that Her blessings and Her divine love are the same, whether we are far or near Her physically. But our mind is like a stupid child that has to be taught his lesson again and again, because he keeps on forgetting it, until it is hammered right into his brain. On occasions something happens that impresses deeply on our foolish minds the evident fact that Mother is ever with us, seated in our own hearts, guiding us constantly, removing obstacles, saving us from dangers. It is to this that I want to refer here.

(1)

In 1954 Mother's birthday celebrations took place in the Almora Ashram. I was then staying at the Varanasi

Ashram and proceeded to Almora to attend the function. Already for three years I had enjoyed the good fortune of living under Mother's direct guidance. During the first half of this period I had constantly travelled with Mother, accompanying Her wherever She would go. To leave Her even for a single day was a source of almost unbearable mental suffering to me. This is how Mother at first attracts us towards Her physical presence, in order to wean our minds from all worldly attachment. Love for Mother—although it is still *moha*—purifies mind and heart, awakens, and greatly increases our yearning for the Divine. What may be achieved after long years of struggle by the practices of *pranayama*, *japa*, or Self-inquiry, is accomplished within a short period of time, effortlessly, as it were, by pure and intense love for Mother. In fact, intense pure and selfless love for Mother is in itself a most powerful *sadhana*. This love has then to be expanded progressively to the all-pervading presence. Thus Mother leads us stage by stage.

Some temperaments may actually feel Mother nearer while far away from Her in space. This may sound a paradox, but can be explained as follows: When we are with Mother physically, Her sweetness and kindness, Her childlike simplicity may make us at times forget Her divinity. While far away, if the mind is capable of rising beyond the physical aspect, we have perhaps a greater chance of grasping that which abides in the heart.

When talking of Mother's divinity, it may not be out of place here to draw attention to some misunderstanding, not uncommon with Westerners. For people in the West,

grown-up in the belief of one of the Semitic religions, to worship God in the form of a human being is considered a great sin, a blasphemy. In the Occident, it is the dualistic doctrine that prevails—God being worshipped as the Lord or Creator of the universe, while the individual soul is conceived as remaining ever separate from Him. In India, on the other hand, the doctrine of Advaita is accepted commonly by the educated. According to the advaitic teaching, the ONE, who is beyond all thought and description, is the 'Being par excellence', the substratum of everything; without Him nothing can exist—in fact, He alone really exists, the phenomenal world being but a surface play, like the waves of the ocean. In a perfect Being, this Divine Consciousness, this Eternal One is present in His full effulgence, without any covering veil. Therefore it is quite natural to look upon such a Being as the Divine Incarnate.

But let me again take up the thread of my story. During the second half of the three years that I had spent travelling with Mother, I could bear to remain without Her for short intervals; but never (as far as I remember) had I been without Mother's *darshan* for more than a month. When I came to Almora for the birthday celebrations, the yearning for Mother's physical presence had come again, even stronger than before. The infinite Love of the Guru is quite different from what is usually called 'love'. Real Love knows no weakness. It may even appear hard and merciless on occasions. The grown-up child was clinging to the toys of the baby, and Mother most probably knew that the time had come for him to shake off the habits of the infant.

Mother's skill in seizing the psychological moment is well-known. At such a moment I was made to promise to remain in the Almora Ashram for one whole year, without travelling anywhere. One whole year without seeing Mother! It seemed like eternity to me. Previously, even after fifteen days of separation, I would count the days and wait for Mother's return, like the well-know *chatak* bird for the rain.

Mother stayed for more than two months at Almora that summer. Whilst She was there, a number of improvements were made in the Ashram, which thereby became a place provided with modern comforts, such as electric light, tap water, etc. Only too soon the inevitable day of Mother's departure came. I was standing by the road-side, looking at Mother's car that was ready to start. It was beyond my imagination that Mother, knowing my state of mind, could leave me behind for such a long period of time. Before starting She called me, gave me Her blessing, and uttered a few kind and soothing words. The car began to speed down the road to Kathgodam. I followed it with my eyes until it vanished out of sight. All kinds of childish ideas flashed through my mind. I thought that Mother was just testing me and soon would send back someone with a message for me to join Her. But the time passed and nobody came. My mind was overcast by sadness, as the sky by dark clouds. I felt helplessly despondent and depressed. Of course, I was not compelled to stay on. (I have never witnessed Mother exercising compulsion over anyone). I could have easily followed Mother to the plains—She would probably have laughed the matter over, as had in fact already happened on

a former occasion, and waited for a better opportunity to make me stay in solitude. But then I had given my word and moreover, my mind having matured in the meanwhile, I understood that it was necessary for me to practise *sadhana* and lead a secluded life. I thus tried to divert my thoughts from their painful one-pointedness, keeping myself engaged in some work or other. During Mother's sojourn at Almora, I had temporarily occupied a room near the tank of the Patal Devi temple, since the Ashram had been overcrowded. Now I had to shift to the Ashram. So I began to pack and arrange my belongings. But my sorrow would not leave me. I was slowly ascending the narrow path leading from Patal Devi to the Ashram. The sky was spotlessly blue, the air fresh and light. In the plains, I mused, there must be broiling heat, heavy with dampness. Here, at Almora, was the calm stillness of the Himalayan mountains with their majestic beauty. In the plains I would have been in the midst of the buzzle and noise of the towns. Travelling with Mother means to endure all kinds of hardships and inconveniences. Here I had every facility, almost as in my own home. But of what value were the beautiful sceneries, the bracing climate, physical comforts and all the rest, when the main thing was lacking, namely the happiness I found in Mother's presence ! It was a happiness that did not depend on any outer circumstances.

With eyes veiled by tears, I was gazing at the gorgeous range of mountain peaks in the direction of Kasar Devi. All of a sudden something extraordinary happened. My whole being was flooded with joy. Mother was there ! Here, present before me ! Yet, not in Her physical form But how to

describe what cannot be put into words? There was no form—yet I could clearly see Her long black hair floating along the mountain ridges, although it was not to be beheld with these eyes. There was no face, although I could distinctly perceive Her divinely sweet smile filling my heart with inexpressible joy and peace. Glued to the spot I stood like a small child gazing in awe and wonder at Her majestic features. She was outside and also inside of me—verily, She was my life-force, my *prana* having taken shape, nay, She was the *prana* of my *prana*. No sound could be heard, but in the depths of my heart I understood the meaning of Her silence. It was telling me: “Why do you lament, O fool? I have not gone far away from you; I am ever with you, ever present in your heart, I am your Real Self.” This experience lasted for a few minutes only, but it sufficed to disperse the clouds of my misery, to chase away the heavy mists that had obscured my understanding.

(2)

Not only in times of distress is Mother present; She is ever watchful, even where the small details of our daily routine are concerned. The following is an instance of how we are sometimes made aware of this fact.

It happened at the Varanasi (Benares) Ashram. That Ashram, apart from its sanctity, is one of the beauty spots of the city. Even tourists often come to see it. It is situated right on the banks of the Ganges, built on an elevated foundation, overlooking the river. The terrace and the roofs command an extensive and inspiring view over the Ganges.

Here, perhaps more than elsewhere, the Ganges has a great natural beauty. In the rainy season it becomes flooded and gives the impression of a huge lake. To the left, the crescent of the *ghâts* up to the Dufferin bridge spreads out. In the dark of night the funeral pyres may be seen burning at the *Manikarnika Ghat*, standing out like sign posts, to remind us in the eternal city of the impermanence of all that is born. To the left, on the opposite river bank, is visible the small but picturesque town of *Ramnagar*, with the palace of the Raja of Benares. Opposite *Ramnagar* lies ever green *Lanka* and the Hindu University. At the time of which I am telling, the Ashram was much more charming than it is now. Its beauty was enhanced by a large semi-circular terrace, protruding over the river, with two small, finely built temples on either side. The spacious hall below the terrace was used for religious gatherings such as Kirtan, devotional singing, discourses or discussions on religious and philosophical topics, and so forth. To the right and left of the hall were a few rooms to accommodate Ashramites or guests. The whole Ashram front with the terrace, the hall, the exquisite little temples and the guest-rooms, had to be demolished a few years ago, since they were in danger of collapsing, due to damage caused by high floods.

At the time to which my story refers, some threatening cracks had already appeared. The hall could not anymore be used for public gatherings, and visitors were not allowed to go downstairs. Only a few inmates occupied some of the side rooms. I happened to be one of those fortunate ones. I say 'fortunate', for I enjoyed the great privilege of living in

solitude, right in the midst of that crowded Ashram. My room, facing the Ganges, was near "Anandamayi Ghat". In the stillness of night I frequently would sit in the hall near a window that opened out unto the river.

Next to the Ashram, on top of the *ghat* is a small shrine, dedicated to Sri Ganesh. Every year the community of fishermen who live in the vicinity, organize a function that continues for five days. The celebrations begin on the fourth day of the bright moon of the month of *marga shirsha* (November - December). On this occasion a raised platform is erected over the *ghat*, the upper part resting on the steps of the *ghat*, while the lower is supported by wooden pillars. A canvas roof and canvas walls are pitched over the platform and beautifully decorated. Every evening, when their day's work is over, the devotees assemble in the pandal, where *kirtan*, devotional singing and the recitation of scriptures continue until late at night.

During one of those nights, I was as usually sitting in the hall, looking down at the river. Mother was not at Varanasi at the time. I could distinctly hear all that was being said or sung at the function on the *ghat*. Frequently, *sādhakas* who start engaging in regular spiritual practice and live a secluded life, become very sensitive to the vibrations of their surroundings. This was also the case with me at that time. But the loudness of the function did not disturb me at all, so long as it was of a religious nature. On the contrary, I listened with great joy and appreciation to the *Nama kīrtan* and the *bhajans*. But all other kinds of sound or noise would sometimes considerably upset me.

That night I could observe that the mood of the people on the platform was gradually changing. Although I was unable to understand the words of their songs, yet the tunes and the laughter of the audience gave me the impression that the celebrations had taken a worldly turn. It was perhaps quite harmless and moreover, my impression might have been wrong; but that night I seemed particularly sensitive and felt quite disturbed. In a prayerful mood, I said mentally: "In holy Kashi, on the banks of the Ganges, next to Sri Anandamayi Ashram, how can one possibly indulge in vulgar songs? They should at least sing the *Mahamantra*!"

No sooner had this prayer taken shape in my mind than I heard a mighty sound—I could even say that I 'saw' the sound. It is a well-known fact that sound and form are intimately connected. There is a level of perception where the two mingle. The sound I heard was not uttered by any human voice, it had its own living personality. It came like a huge wave from the terrace of the Ashram, flowing down into the hall and finally enveloping the platform where the function was in progress. Although the wave had no definite shape, I somehow felt that it was connected with Mother's physical presence. The sound wave was uttering once only "*Hari bol*" (which means "repeat the name of the Lord"), but not in the tune in which Mother usually sings these words. Here the voice was mighty and stern, like a rebuke or severe command. No sooner had the wave engulfed the platform, than the people present stopped singing instantaneously. A blank silence prevailed for a few minutes. Then, without any transition, they began to chant: "*Hare*

Ram, hare Ram, Ram, Ram, hare, hare", which is the first verse of the *mahamantra*. They continued with this for some time, without singing the second verse (*Hare Krishna* etc). Later they sang "*Sitarām, Sitarām*" and, as far as I remember, the remaining part of the night was spent in *Nāma kīrtan*.•

My prayer was a childish one and hardly deserved such supernatural response. But very likely it was one of those psychological moments, a moment of conjunction, brought about by the interplay of various factors, in which the lesson so frequently forgotten, could be hammered into the mind of the above mentioned child.

• The aforesaid is written from memory and therefore may not be quite precise in all details.

Pages from My Diary

GURUPRIYA DEVI

(Translated from Bengali .

29th June, 1959.

Mataji is at present at the Kishenpur Ashram. Early morning, while Mataji was still in bed, I entered the room. Mataji said with a veiled voice : "I saw Mohanananda Brahmachari standing in the Ganges with offerings for *Surya*, the sun-god, in his hands. From the left side a stream of water was falling on his head. A little later Bholanath came and stood there as well. This body was also present..." Having uttered this much, Mataji remained silent and said no more.

7th July, 1959.

This morning, in the course of some conversation, Mataji disclosed that She had on a subtle plane, seen Swami Shankerananda of Kashi, who came to Her and said : "Ma, I am shifting to another house". On hearing this, I felt rather concerned, fearing that something might have happened to the Swami.

In the evening Choudhry Shersingh's daughter, Darshan Kumari, came with her son Ravi to see Mataji. Ravi had

recently been very seriously ill at Lucknow. We had repeatedly received news about his most precarious condition.

Her eyes full of tears, his mother now related the whole story of his illness to Mataji. A short time ago he was hovering between life and death. His temperature had shot up to over 107°. His body seemed to be suffused with poison and the doctors wrapped him into ice. Suddenly Ravi felt as if the breath was leaving his body. At that very instant he remembered Anandamayi Ma, and in the midst of his delirium, he screamed : "Ma, Ma !" No sooner had he uttered the cry, than it seemed to him that he commanded unlimited strength and vigour, that Ma Anandamayi was with him, and that there was nothing to be afraid of. Slowly the patient recovered.

Some time before he fell ill, his mother had come to the Ashram with him. Ravi's character was not quite flawless. This is why his mother had on various occasions prayed to Mataji that he may be freed from all his weaknesses. Accordingly, Mataji had repeatedly told Ravi : "Give up all these bad habits ! They only drag you deeper and deeper into that which is of death."

The astonishing thing is that, during Ravi's illness, the doctors declared that, unless he gave up alcohol for the rest of his days, the hopes of saving his life were extremely meagre. Ravi was therefore frightened and besides, his mother reminded him again and again of the fact that he

owed his life only and alone to Mataji's unbounded mercy. His family were firmly convinced that Ravi's recovery was solely due to Mataji's *kheyala*.

10th July, 1261.

At night Mataji came and sat in my room. Pandit Sunderlal and a number of others were present. The pandit asked Mataji : "When Bhaiji was about to drown in the Ganges, while you were far away, and you suddenly appeared and rescued him, did you go there in your physical body? For, the strange thing was that at that exact time your clothes were dripping wet, as everyone present could see."

Mataji : "Pitaji, anything is possible. All bodies are in fact my bodies. Here itself is Kashi, the Ganges—everything. Therefore, even from here, everything may take place. Anything at all may happen to this body. That its clothes were drenched on that occasion, is a clear and simple illustration of this fact."

To-day a well-known artist from Holland came to see Mataji. She is a professional painter. In the evening she showed Mataji a collection of her beautiful drawings. She is eager to paint two or three very good portraits of Mataji.

11th July, 1959.

This morning, the Dutch lady was sitting in Mataji's room for a whole hour, trying to sketch Mataji's portrait. But

all her efforts seemed futile, she was unable to get Mataji's likeness. Greatly disappointed, the Dutch lady exclaimed that she had portrayed a good number of saints and *sadhus*, but had never failed in a similar manner. While sketching Mataji's picture, she had observed ten or twelve different faces of Hers in that short hour. Which of them she was to put on canvas, was beyond her comprehension.

However, this is nothing new to us. We know that, up to date, no artist has succeeded in painting or modelling a real likeness of Mataji. The famous English photographer Richard Lannoy, came to India and spent some time with Mataji. He took many photos of Her, displaying a great variety of expressions. Two or three of these photos have been published in Europe and earned unusual praise and appreciation. Nevertheless, he also used to marvel at the extraordinary changes that Mataji's appearance underwent constantly. Each of his photos of Mataji shows a different face—one of them may resemble a child, another an old woman, and a third again be quite different. All this is *Mataji's Lila*. Many famous artists have tried and are now also trying to create a likeness of Mataji. But, it seems to me, that not a single one of them has been really successful.

24th August, 1959.

Mataji is in the New Delhi Ashram, at Kalkaji. This morning Sri Jawaharlal Nehruji's personal secretary, Sri Upadhyayaji, came to pay his respects to Mataji. He has known Her for many years, and whenever he has the chance, he

comes for Mataji's *darshan*. He announced that Panditji himself would come for Mataji's *darshan* this evening.

Mataji is due to leave for Vindhyachal by the night train. At 6-30 p.m. Pandit Nehru, accompanied by Sri Upadhyaya, arrived at the Ashram. I noticed that they did not come by any Government conveyance but by his small private car, without any orderly or guard. At the time, the Maharaja of Tehri Garhwal, the Raja of Mandi, Rai Bahadur Narain Dass, Sri P. L. Verma and many others were present at the Ashram. All of them accorded a most hearty welcome to Nehruji. He was at once taken upstairs to Mataji's room, where he partook of some light refreshments. Not long ago he had seen Mataji at Rishikesh. He is of course unable to spare the time to come to Mataji frequently. But his daughter Mrs. Indira Gandhi off and on pays a visit to Mataji. His wife, the late Srimati Kamala Nehru, was deeply devoted to Mataji and used to come day after day for Her *darshan* at Dehradun. On various occasions I have recorded this at length in my earlier diaries.

This time, it was Mataji's *lheyāla* that a number of things should be communicated to Pandit Nehru. She therefore dictated to us what She wished to tell him, and before his arrival, we noted it down on two sheets of paper. Mataji then requested Brahmachari Panu to read it out to Panditji, who afterwards folded the papers carefully and put them away safely in his pocket. Without Mataji's express instructions, we are not in a position to publish the contents of those papers, since they were meant for Panditji personally.

As soon as the reading was over, we left the room. Panditji then had a private interview with Mataji for about 20-25 minutes. When it was time for Mataji to start for the railway station, I found that Panditji had got up, ready to leave. Mataji put a string of *rudraksha* beads and another one of *tulsi* beads around his neck. He accepted them gratefully and later rolled them up with his right hand and put them away. After doing *pranām* to Mataji, he went downstairs, where, for a few moments, he joked with the little children of some devotees, and then drove away. I observed that Panditji was extremely calm and concentrated while in Mataji's presence. I felt that if Mataji had not been leaving just then, he might have stayed for longer. On leaving, he asked to be informed whenever Mataji would visit Delhi again. A few minutes after Panditji's departure, Mataji motored to the railway station.

New Diary Leaves

ATMANANDA

(6)

New Delhi,
January 21st, 1961.

A European lady had a talk with Mataji. Amongst other things she asked : "How does the love of God come ?"

Mataji : Does it not happen that you make friends with utter strangers and come to love them ? To love God, who is your own Self, is natural. If you feel drawn to a particular form of God, such as Christ or Krishna, contemplate that form of His, repeat His Name constantly, think of Him, read about His greatness and His glory, let your mind constantly be occupied with the thought of Him.

Question : Suppose one does not feel attracted to any particular incarnation of God, how should one proceed ?

Mataji : Sit perfectly still and dive into yourself, trying to find out who you are. To find your Self means to find God, and to find God means to find your Self.

New Delhi,
January 23rd, 1961.

An American lady, who has come to India for the sole

purpose of seeing Mataji, and has been with Her recently in Varanasi and Allahabad, asked a few questions. It is just twelve days since she has arrived in this country.

Question : What is the cause for the sense of unreality of everything I perceive, even though I know it to be good and beautiful, as for instance a sunset ?

Mataji : This sense of unreality comes from within. Whatever is perceived by the senses is transitory, ever changing, and therefore unreal. The *Atma*, which is eternal and real, causes this sense of unreality. It is a good sign to feel this. Turn within and seek the *Atma* !

Question : Since the will of the individual is illusory, and one does not know God's Will, how can one lead a purposeful life ?

Mataji : By contemplating the Self one will find out how to make one's life purposeful. It is man's duty to aspire to Self-realization.

Question : What about self-expression in art ?

Mataji : This also belongs to that which is fleeting. You paint a picture, but it cannot last. The most beautiful song fades away in a moment.

Question : Presuming that the striving goes on, no matter what, how can one know how to live in relation to human beings and one's own creative energies ?

Mataji : A man who is out for worldly things and occupied with the business of this world, gets satisfaction

from what he does ; for otherwise, why should he do it ? He feels he is doing well, he gets praise and fame, money and prestige, and his mind is engrossed in his affairs. If someone opposes him and puts obstacles in his way, he gets angry and feels hostile towards him.

A person who strives after Self-realization, will turn to great souls (*mahatmas*) for advice, guidance, and company. He will read books written by the Wise, will admire them, and desire to become like them. Since He is searching after Truth, he will come to be truthful in speech and behaviour. The Self is one, therefore he will be loving and friendly to all. Even when abused and reviled, he will not retort, but remember the oneness of all. A dog may bite you, but you will not bite back.

The man who works for worldly goods and satisfaction is working for death. For everything of this world is constantly dying and giving place to something else : just as the child dies to the young girl, the young girl to the woman, and so forth. But one who is striving after Self-realization is working for immortality. When living and working in the world and mixing with worldly people, one's creative energies are exhausted in the pursuit of sense objects, and thus one may come to feel weak, tired or ill. Whereas by aspiring to Self-realization one's creative energy will be preserved and strengthened.

While a person living in the world takes pleasure in parties, meeting people, etc., the one whose aim is Self-

realization will delight in meditation, singing the praises of God, reading books of wisdom, listening to discourses on religion and philosophy, and mixing with those who are pilgrims on the Path.

Now about behaviour. The devotee will come to feel that he is the servant of the Lord, and therefore be ever more humble, gentle and sweet. Everyone, no matter what his line of approach, should try to be gentle, kind and loving to all, for the Self is one. The active person will engage in service—not to others, but with the thought that everyone is a manifestation of God, and that he serves God in whomsoever he may serve. This alone is real service. It purifies the mind and therefore also helps towards Self-realization. A man who is out for Illumination, will reason that all are expressions of the One and so he also will be kind and compassionate to everyone. When dry leaves fall off a tree, fresh ones grow quite naturally. Similarly one's behaviour and relationship will change automatically when one alters one's attitude of life. There are various paths and ways of living and behaviour for the aspirant, but here this body has pointed out only a few of them. According to his status, the *sadhaka* will have to observe certain rules and restrictions; as for instance when he is initiated into Brahmacharya or becomes a Sannyasi, he will have to live up to what is demanded of him.

A young girl asked : "Is it necessary to join an Ashram in order to find God, or is this also possible while living at home?"

Mataji : God is everywhere and can be found every-

where. The home is also an Ashram, namely the householder's Ashram. People join an Ashram or sit in solitude on the banks of the Ganges only to realize that God is everywhere, that there are no boundaries except in the mind. Everyone chooses the type of life, which is most helpful to him in his search.

New Delhi,
January 24th, 1961.

Question : Is freedom an illusion ?

Mataji : No, man is free.

Question : But man is an individual, an ego, and the ego is an illusion. Therefore how can he be free ?

Mataji : Of course, the ordinary person, who is identified with mind and body, is not free. But man—the real man (*atimanus*), is free.

Hardwar,
February 5th, 1961.

To-day a party of about half a dozen Swiss people came to talk to Mataji. Most of them did not understand English and I had to translate into German what Mataji said. One of them, a middle-aged woman, can heal people by laying on hands, and even from a distance, by imagining the people to be healed. She said, a clergyman had taught her how to do this, but she was apprehensive that her technique was not quite perfect, as she felt exhausted after the healing and also

experienced on her own body the ailments she was trying to cure. For instance, she became blind for 10 minutes, when attempting to make a blind man see—although in this particular case she was unable to effect a cure. A certain *mahatma* at Rishikesh had advised her to give up the healing of illnesses, as it would retard her spiritual progress. She wanted to know, what Mataji had to say about this. (The Swiss lady was a mother of several children whom she had to maintain. Healing meant a livelihood to her.)

Mataji : It is true that the laying on of hands in the way described will arrest one on the level from which the healing is performed, and one will therefore be prevented from going beyond it. For one who has dedicated his life entirely to the Supreme Quest, this kind of healing represents an obstacle. But the position of the householder, who in any case has to do some business or other in order to earn money, is different. You may accept payment from some patients, and treat others free and thereby be able to do service. Some people will be benefitted by this. In some cases you may not be able to effect a cure, as it does not lie in the patient's fate to get well, but at any rate you will be able to do some good. The householder, who has to make a livelihood and educate his children, cannot live without compromise. However, a person, who has given his life completely to the search after Truth, knows no compromise. He has to adhere to truth at all costs. For such a one, activity of this kind would represent an obstacle.

Question : We intend founding an international spiritual centre

in Europe, where yoga of all types will be taught. The spiritual hunger all over Europe is acute and ever increasing. Should we go ahead with our project ?

Mataji : Who is to instruct in yoga ?

Questioner : We are getting people from all over the world to come and teach. Some have already offered to give their co-operation.

Mataji : If you can secure really competent teachers, then it is no doubt a good plan to found such a centre. But mind you, all depends on the capacity and the inner qualification of the instructors !

MATRI LILA

15TH APRIL—15TH JULY, 1961.

In the last issue we reported that Mataji left Kankhal (Hardwar) on April 16th for Delhi. There She stopped in our Ashram for one night. A large crowd of devotees enjoyed Her *darshan* until late. On the 17th morning Mataji went to Gwalior, alighting there the same afternoon. H. H. the Maharani of Gwalior had specially come to Hardwar to invite Mataji to be present at the consecration of some newly built temples at Gwalior. The function proceeded with great splendour. Many *mahatmas* attended. Everyone was entertained with the most generous hospitality. During Her stay at Gwalior, Mataji visited the Scindia Public School, at the invitation of the Principal.

We are extremely grieved to give our readers the sad news of the untimely passing away a few days ago in Bombay of H. H. the Maharaja of Gwalior. He had great veneration for Mataji. He went to see Her in Poona a number of times just before his illness took a turn for the worse, and wished to come again before Her departure on July 15th ; but unfortunately his condition became serious and his illness proved fatal. He was greatly beloved by the people of Gwalior.

From Gwalior Mataji travelled to Allahabad on April 22nd. A *Bhagavata Saptah* was held there from April 23rd-30th.

The family of the late Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru was responsible for the function, which proved a great success. Pandit Sri Nath Shastri of Vrindaban officiated, and the audience listened spellbound to his lucid, and often very humorous Hindi rendering of the great *Purana*. On April 25th Mataji payed a flying visit to Varanasi, returning to Allahabad the next day. As soon as the Bhagavata Saptah had been completed, Mataji's birthday celebrations began. This time the function was compressed into two days only, ending with the *Tithi puja* on the 4th early morning, that was followed at midday, by the inevitable feast given to all who care to participate. The devotees of Allahabad had made excellent, carefully thought out preparations, so that everything proceeded most beautifully and harmoniously, without a hitch. A large, artistically decorated pandal had been erected in the compound of the house of the late District Judge N. N. Mukerji, at 31, George Town, where Mataji was accommodated in the charming little cottage that had been built for Her use a few years ago. Sri N. N. Mukerji's whole family has been in close contact with Mataji for many years. Their devotion and selfless service, rendered quietly and unobtrusively to Mataji, and in fact to all their guests, is something that cannot easily be forgotten.

As usual, the birthday was celebrated by a full programme of religious discourses, *kirtan*, perpetual *jaṅga* throughout the day and night. On May 2nd and 3rd morning, the *Rasa Lila* was enacted by a party from Vrindaban. On the 3rd night, the Prime Minister, Sri Jawaharlal Nehru, came with his daughter, Srimati Indira Gandhi to pay homage to

Mataji on the occasion of Her birthday. He stayed for about an hour and a half, first in Mataji's own room, and then accompanied Her to the pandal, where Swami Chetan Giri Maharaj was just delivering a talk. At the request of several devotees, Mataji afterwards led the *kirtan*, and finally a member of the *Rasa* party performed a dance, balancing with great skill two trays with burning lights in both hands. Panditji seemed to enjoy everyone of the items, especially Mataji's singing.

A special feature of the Allahabad function was a talk in English by a Frenchman, Mr. Arnaud Desjardins. Mr. and Mrs. Desjardins had come all the way from Paris to participate in Mataji's birthday celebrations, notwithstanding the flaming heat of the Indian plains in May. This was not their first visit. They had already had Mataji's *darshan* at the time of Durga Puja in 1959 at Varanasi. Moreover, Mrs. Desjardins had come again, all by herself, in October 1960, accompanying Mataji for two months wherever She happened to go, which included the *Samyam Mahavrata* at Naimisharanya. Mr. Desjardins works at the Paris Television. While in India in 1959, he had prepared a film, which he called "At the Secret Heart of India." The film includes some very impressive pictures of Mataji that have roused profound interest, nay adoration, in many Westerners. We have received a great number of letters to give evidence of this fact. Mr. D. showed his films privately at first, and recently in large halls in Paris and North Africa, with remarkable success. He was able to take some more moving pictures this time at Allahabad, and also in Bombay and Poona. He

showed those films to Mataji and the assembled devotees, once at Bombay and once at Poona.

* * *

On May 5th Mataji left Allahabad for Bombay, while most of Her party proceeded directly to Poona. It had been expected that Mataji would remain in Bombay for a few days only, and then motor to Poona for a long stay. However, in order to be near Mahamahopadhyaya Dr. Gopinath Kaviraj, who had to undergo a serious operation, Mataji changed Her programme. Except for two short visits to Poona for a couple of days each time, She was in Bombay until June 9th, putting up in the Burmese Pagoda, that Sri B. K. Shah had several years ago built for Her in his compound at Vile Parle.

It seems fitting on this occasion to say a few words about the unique personality of Dr. Gopinath Kaviraj, who is well known and greatly revered all over India, and in certain circles also abroad, for his fabulous learning as well as for his quite outstanding qualities as a human being. No religion, no philosophy exists that has not been mastered thoroughly by this great scholar. To any question along these lines he will, on the spur of the moment, give the most lucid and enlightening reply. At Benares, where he has resided for many years, every research student comes to him for advice when working at his thesis, practically every foreigner, interested in the spirituality of India, consults Dr. Kaviraj, and none ever leaves disappointed. He is not only one of the most prominent contemporary Sanskrit scholars, he also reads

Persian, Urdu and any number of Indian and European languages. He has moreover practised *yoga* most of his life and obviously gained experience of his own. Many, therefore, seek spiritual advice from him. But even more extraordinary than his unequalled learning, even greater than his achievements on the Path, seem to us his loving kindness, his childlike guilelessness and simplicity.

When this rare personality recently became seriously ill, it was solely due to Mataji's watchfulness and motherly care that his illness was found out and treated in good time. While at Hardwar in April, Mataji had asked him to come and see Her there. He had hardly arrived, when She arranged for him to go by car to Delhi and consult Dr. S. K. Sen, the famous surgeon, who diagnosed cancer. She then requested Dr. G. N. Kaviraj to travel to Bombay and have the diagnosis confirmed by other experts. He was subsequently operated on May 16th by the foremost surgeon of the Tata Cancer Institute. Mataji took great trouble to make arrangements for the very best treatment and nursing, supervising every detail in person, and waited in Bombay until he was well enough to be discharged from hospital. A few days later he was taken to Poona to convalesce. At the moment he is staying in our new Ashram at Poona and expected to remain there till the end of this month. We owe a debt of deep gratitude to Mataji for saving this wonderful human being from succumbing to a disease that might easily have proved fatal. Sri Kavirajji is now well on the way to complete recovery. He is able to move about, and people are again allowed to come and see him and put their

problems before him. We rejoice in stating that there is now every hope of his remaining with us for many more years to come in perfect health and vigour.

* * *

Last summer Mataji had spent 6 weeks at Poona at the invitation of Sri S. T. Nanda, who put up a special structure for Mataji's use in his garden, and accommodated most of Her party in his own house, which is by no means over-spacious. Everyone was happy there. The devotees of Bombay and Poona were eager to start an Ashram in Poona. Recently, a bungalow consisting of a few rooms has been donated for this purpose by Sri Bhagwandas Nangpal and his wife, both devotees of Mataji. The surrounding plot has been acquired by the Shree Shree Anandamayee Sangha. We are glad to say that the Ashram is situated in one of the best localities of Poona on Ganeshkhind Road, almost next to the Poona University, and a few furlongs distance from Government House. There are two hills in the immediate vicinity and much open country. Mataji stayed in the Ashram from June 9th—July 15th. Sri Haribabaji also was accommodated in the building for a whole month. A large pandal, effectively protected from the very abundant rain by a tin roof and walls, holding about 150—200 people, was put up in the compound, and served as a *satsang* hall during Mataji's stay. Sri Haribabaji expounded the Gita every morning, the Ramayan in the afternoon and related stories from the lives of bhaktas in the evening after Kirtan. Mataji gave *darshan* at least three times daily and sometimes even more often.

Sri Dilip Kumar Roy, the well-known singer and disciple of Sri Aurobindo, has his own Ashram in Poona, less than a mile from our Ashram. He came several times to talk to Mataji and to Dr. G. N. Kaviraj, and we had the privilege to listen to his songs. Mataji also visited his Ashram once.

On June 23rd, the President of India, Dr. Rajendra Prasad, together with the Governor of Maharashtra, Sri Prakasa and his family paid a visit to Mataji. They stayed for the best part of an hour in Mataji's room and had a most interesting conversation of general practical value. The main question asked by Sri Prakasa was, how an active life in the world could be reconciled to a religious life. Mataji replied in great detail, pointing out that if the right education and teaching is given in childhood, in other words, if the Brahmacharya Ashram is observed as enjoined by the Shastras, then the rest of man's life will naturally proceed in the right manner, in fact the householder's life will then be a dedicated, a religious life. (Notes of what Mataji said have been taken, and we hope to publish them in English translation in the next issue of Ananda Varta.)

On July 10th, the famous singer, Srimati Hirabai Barodkar came and delighted everyone present by her beautiful and delicate songs. Mataji remarked that *Harikīrtan* was a way to experience His touch, that He may be revealed in the rhythm and the melody of the song. Ram Prasad, the Bengali *bhakta* was constantly engrossed in singing the praises of Mother Kali, and finally realized the Great Mother of the Universe. Gurupriya Didi was then called and asked

to relate some incidents from Ram Prasad's life. At Hirabai's request, the musical evening ended by one of Ram Prasad's compositions, sung by Brahmachari Vibhu. Mrs. Barodkar had agreed to come once more on the 14th July, but the floods made this impossible.

On July 11th, the day before the dam broke, Mataji visited the National Military Academy at Kharakvasla. She and Her party were taken to the guest house that faces a large lake, one of the main reservoirs for the water supply of Poona. Didi later remembered that while riding in the car, Mataji had remarked two or three times: "Suppose the dam breaks, what will happen?" On the 12th afternoon a large part of Poona was under water, but fortunately it was not the main dam at Kharakvasla that had been damaged, for in that case the whole of Poona might easily have been drowned! The locality in which the Ashram is situated was not affected, being on a high level, except that the water supply stopped completely during the last two days of our stay. Water had to be fetched by car from a great distance, while military lorries were distributing water to the general public.

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At the invitation of the Chief Justice of Mysore, Sri S. R. Das Gupta, (a devotee of many years' standing, who formerly used to live in Calcutta), Mataji with a number of Her companions proceeded to Bangalore on July 15th. She

is expected to leave for Calcutta via Madras on July 23rd, reaching Calcutta on the 25th. Gurupurnima is to be celebrated there on the 27th. Mataji will most likely remain in Calcutta for a few days.



At the invitation of Sri Sitaram Jaipuria of Kanpur Durga Puja is due to be celebrated at Swadeshi House, Kanpur, from 15th—19th October. The *Samyam Mahavrata*, is planned to be observed this year at Sukhtal near Muzaffarnagar, from November 9th—15th, followed immediately by a *Bhagavata Saptah* (15th—22nd November). Sukhtal is situated on the banks of the Ganga.
