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*Just as there is a veil of ignorance for the individual,  
so there is also a door to Knowledge.*

## MĀTRI VĀNI

Undertake only work that is an aid to *sādhana*; so that no time may be wasted by attending to it. Anything at all can be accomplished by sustained effort. You must spare no pains to make the mind concentrated. How many lives has man not frittered away in eating, drinking and sleeping! "I am immortal"—this is the idea that should give direction to your life.



According to one's actions the fruit is reaped. Nevertheless, by the contemplation of God, fear withdraws. Whether in the company of saints and seekers after Truth or in solitude, in whatever way it may be, you will have to invoke Him, otherwise freedom from the veil of ignorance cannot be won. Is it possible ever to bribe God? By cheating, you yourself alone will be cheated.



When one sees a stone, it cannot be called a *vigraha*;\* and seeing a *vigraha* it cannot be called a stone. Where it is regarded as a focus for the Presence of God, there He actually *is*. Just as it is said that everything is God's own *vigraha*. Once it is regarded as God's *vigraha*, it is only fitting that one should strive after the direct perception of this fact. So long as one speaks of a stone one is foolish,

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\* *Vigraha*—Concrete External Presence as Form.

An image consecrated through *mantras* or through the devotion and adoration of the worshipper becomes the Deity Itself. It is therefore incorrect to translate *vigraha* as 'idol' or 'image'.

the fact of God's immanence has not yet been grasped. The delight in the things of this world, in sense-objects is fleeting indeed. It does not last, it is impermanent. But where God and God alone stands revealed, there is no such thing as impermanence. Your attention is directed towards the world, not towards the Eternal, you are identified with that which is transient, in constant flux. What is revealed thereby? The perishable. In the perishable there is no Self-revelation. How can Reality, true Being be in that? For the destructible has not been destroyed. The perishable must perish.

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When the mind is full of worldly desires, it is their very nature to make the mind confused. This is why effort is necessary. So long as you do not become absorbed in *dhyāna* and *japa*, it has to be performed by constant endeavour. To be moderate in eating, sleeping and so forth is imperative. Look, when you go on a journey you take with you only as much as you need. You don't carry along all that is in your home. Thus, when becoming a pilgrim on the path to God, you should take only exactly as much food and sleep as will help you to live always in the presence of God. There is a saying: 'As one eats so one becomes'. Thus, withdraw the mind from outer things and make it turn within.

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## The Sad-Guru

M. M. VARMA

In a previous issue of *Ānanda Vārtā* ( Hindi Section ), some fascinating side-lights had appeared from the pen of Swami Narayanananda Tirtha on the question whether Sri Sri Mā Anandamayi herself gave 'initiation' to aspirants. A significant point made out in the article appeared to be that, though Sri Mā herself never gives formal initiation, many an aspirant have a deep personal impression of receiving initiation from her in a profound, inner sense—in different indirect ways or through her sweet, kindly gaze, etc.

Sri Mā attaches great importance to the Guru, and many of her devotees take formal initiation from different Mahātmās, some from the venerable *Didimā*. Sri Mā encourages this, although she herself does not give formal initiation. That does not mean that she can disclaim her status *vis-a-vis* the Source-Guru, so to say. The Guru is not the body; and the *Guru tattwa* is one, from which our MOTHER is inseparable. Indeed, there are many spiritual seekers who look upon her as Mother and *Sad-guru* in one. A person who has even once received her *kirpa-drishti* may be forgiven if he or she declines to differentiate it very much from 'initiation'.

So, apart from the general practice of *sādhakas* taking formal *Guru-dīkṣā*, there would appear to be a wider aspect of Sri Mā's teaching on the subject. In the light of the same, the inner significance, the higher potential of the Guru can be better understood from Sri Mā's own observations, some of which are quoted below (chiefly from certain old issues of *Ānanda Vārtā*):—

"God is the real Guru.

"It is the Beloved Himself who appears as Guru.

“The real Guru is our own *Ātmā* (Self).

“There is a state in which one realizes that one’s Guru is the World-Teacher and the World-Teacher one’s Guru. When the status of a Guru becomes revealed to one, one understands that it has nothing to do with any *person*; the Guru is none else but the World-Teacher. Guru is the name for Him who, out of deep darkness, can reveal the hidden Truth..... One’s Guru exists in many forms as the Guru of each and everyone, and everyone else’s Guru is in fact one’s Guru : now you see how the Guru is one.

“A Guru is not an ordinary preceptor—a Guru is He who has the capacity to deliver man from the sea of becoming (*bhava sāgara*).

“There are various kinds of initiation : by *mantra*, by touch, by a glance, by instruction. Contact with a Superman does bear fruit..... Then again, there is yet another possibility : without instruction, without a glance, touch or *mantra*, power may be conferred, whether the recipient be aware of it at that very moment or only very much later....

“Furthermore, just as a flood carries everything along in complete equality, so the Superman quite naturally and spontaneously makes his own what was wrongly believed to be alien. Here ‘mine’ and ‘thine’ do not exist – only the Self, Self luminous, He and He alone... A mother does not keep accounts of what she does for her children – for are they not her own ?

“Everything can be made possible through the Guru’s Grace’.

Maharshi RAMANA too did not give formal initiation to anyone. Nonetheless, many devotees would bear unflinching witness to having received initiation from Him through His benign gaze or through an inner outpouring of His grace in subtle ways. In striking similarity to Sri Mā’s utterances on the subject as regards the real import of the Guru, will be read the observations of Maharshi Ramana:—

“Guru’s silence in the loudest *updeśa*. All other *dikṣā* (initiation)\* are derived from *mauna* (silence).....They are therefore secondary. Does the Guru hold you by the hand whisper something in the ear? You imagine him to be like you yourself. Because you are with a body you think that he is also a body in order to do something tangible to you. His work lies within.”

“There is no difference between God, the Guru and the Self. God, who is immanent, in His Grace takes pity on the devotee and manifests Himself as a being according to the devotee’s standard. The devotee thinks that He is a man and expects relationship as between individuals. But the Guru who is God or the Self incarnate, works from within..... Thus, the Guru is both ‘external’ and ‘internal’. From the ‘exterior’ He gives a push to the mind to turn inward ; from ‘interior’ He pulls the mind towards the Self.

“For the *Jñāni* (Realized Soul) all are one. He sees no distinction between Guru and disciple. He knows only one Self, not a myriad selves as most people do ; so for him how can there be any distinction between persons? However, for the seeker the difference between persons is there. For him there is undoubtedly the relationship of Guru and disciple.

“Guru not being physical, his contact will continue after his form vanishes. Still, one can go to another Guru after one’s Guru passes away. After all, Gurus are one, as none of them is the form.

“The disciple’s experience of the Master’s Grace whereby he gets spiritual awakening, is likened unto that of the elephant waking up from sleep on seeing a lion in his dream. Just as the mere sight of the dream-lion wakes up the elephant from his sleep, even so the mere gracious glance of the Master dispels the disciple’s sleep of ignorance and awakens him to the Real.

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\* e.g. *sparsh* (touch), *chakshus* (sight) etc.

“Of course, coal takes time to ignite, but charcoal is comparatively, quicker, while gunpowder ignites immediately.

“However, just as what got into the jaws of a tiger never comes out, those who have come under the benign notice of a Guru would never be forsaken”.

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Such is the glory of the *Sad-Guru* ! The *Sad-Guru* is indeed a Messenger of Certainty. And it is experience of those who have taken refuge in the holy feet of a Divine Personality that, *ipso facto*, they are beneficiaries of initiation.

Jai Ma !

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## From the Diary of a European

MELITA MASCHMANN

VIII

( *Translated from German* )

*Ahmedabad, November 1963.*

A *Samyam Mahavrata*, a week of fasting and meditation is being held here. The Shree Shree Anandamayee Sangha arranges for such a function every year, usually in a famous place of pilgrimage. This time an exception has been made to this rule to fulfil the last wish of an ardent devotee of many years' standing. Shortly before passing away, about four years ago, he requested Mataji to have a *Samyam Mahavrata* performed in his compound at his expense. His family was most anxious to fulfil his desire.

From the first moment one receives the impression that the function has been organized with much generosity and efficiency. We are met at the railway station and are taken by cars to the residence of our host. In his garden he has erected a pretty little cottage made of asbestos sheets for Mataji's use. Nearby an elegant, very spacious pandal for the *satsang* has been put up. It is well constructed and equipped with lights, sixteen electric ceiling fans and loudspeakers. About two thirds of the area are roped off and reserved exclusively for the participants of the *Samyam Vrata*. Everyone of them should have sufficient space to sit comfortably and without touching his neighbour, an indispensable condition for serious spiritual exercises. In the space beyond the ropes guests from Ahmedabad are accommodated.

The participants of the *Vrata*, who have come from all over India, are put up in the houses of neighbours. For those who live a little further away, there are usually cars to take them to their place of residence.

The *vratis* are allowed to choose between two types of diet, classes A and B. On the first day all the participants observe a complete fast on Ganges water. Several tanks containing the precious liquid have been placed in the garden and we are asked to drink of it as much as possible, since it is supposed to purify both body and soul. The water has been brought specially from Hardwar in sealed tins. On the following days, those who have chosen the diet of class A partake of one simple meal at midday only and fast again on Gangeswater on the 7th day, while class B receives in addition to the repast at midday a tumbler full of hot milk every night and also a midday meal on the last day. There is of course no smoking, no chewing of betel, no tea and no coffee during the whole week.

The main programme of the morning begins with half an hour's recitation from the Vedas and *kirtana*, followed by collective silent meditation from 8-9 a. m. and that of the afternoon starts with a similar exercise from 3-4 p. m. The rest of the time is occupied by readings from the Scriptures, lectures and religious music up to 10 p. m. and sometimes longer. At midday there is a fairly large interval, during which however *kirtana* is sung by small groups taking turns. From the first day I have the impression that an elite has gathered here : people who are serious in their spiritual pursuits. One can observe that quite a number of them are not anymore beginners in the practice of meditation. The general standard of education appears to be high. Many faces of both men and women, young and old, bear witness to their spiritual heritage and self-mastery.

The evening before the actual function commences, we are asked to reserve our seats for the whole week by placing our *āsanas* somewhere within the enclosure for *vratis*. Mataji, surrounded by a varying number of Swamis, is seated on an elevated platform. At times her mother also appears there for a short while.

What Mataji achieves physically in these days is quite incomprehensible. She remains in the pandal for most of the programme. Every morning I am told that she has had hardly two or three hours of rest during the night. In front of her cottage rows of people are at all times waiting to talk to her privately. Continuously cars arrive, carrying some distinguished citizen of the country, be he a minister, a scholar, a mahatma or a business magnate. Several times daily whole families or other groups come who wish to do *arati*. Whole schools gather to have her *darśana*.

Again and again one wonders: how can any human being, and even more so one of Mataji's age, stand all this? But as soon as one sets one's eyes on her, all anxieties are allayed: she sparkles with dynamism. Often one hears her laughter from somewhere. Or one suddenly notices how she escapes people by stepping into a car. Numerous householders and institutions have solicited her visit. As soon as she enters the pandal the general attention reaches a climax which greatly helps the speakers. Suddenly even the tired people are able to concentrate again.

It is wonderful with what ease the problem: 'elite or masses' has been solved here. The actual *vratīs* have every convenience they require, while hundreds of outsiders also profit daily by the week of *sādhana* in a way that meets their needs. Many of the *vratīs* do not only strictly observe the fast, but also manage with a minimum of sleep. At 4 a. m. already some sit for their prayers in the pandal where they are able to concentrate undisturbed. Even during the interval at midday several are sitting in corners doing *japa*. One can feel that many have shut out everything else. I have met a number who observe silence for the whole week. Among them are not a few who have something very convincing in their appearance, their behaviour and the expression of their faces: maturity, kindness and wisdom.

The organization of the actual daily programme is in the hands of a young *brahmachari*, who has been with Mataji since his boyhood. He attends to his difficult task with a rare amount of skill and tact. The young man holds the reins very lightly. His voice never sounds irritated, not even loud when he gives instructions over the microphone. Occasionally he raises his hands and half laughing, half supplicating begs for cooperation in some measure that has to be taken. The remarkable thing is that he succeeds in maintaining perfect order in spite of his consistent abnegation of the use of power.

The standard of the speakers seems to be amazingly high. Everyone of them improvises freely. Not one holds even a small piece of paper with notes in his hands. The liveliness and capacity to modulate their voices, the expressiveness of their gestures, all this makes it difficult for the audience to follow their own trains of thought or to doze off. The most striking difference of the style of such religious meetings between east and west seems to be that in the west they are mostly grave, solemn and often rather stiff, whereas here one-third of the precious time is spent in laughter. All the lectures deal with serious subjects. Interpretation of sacred Scriptures, religious education, problems of religious life in the family, meditation, contemplation, etc. and yet, at times one peal of laughter is followed by another. Among the speakers are personalities revered throughout India for their wisdom and learning. Unfortunately I hardly understand any thing of their talks but the atmosphere which conveys competence, sensitiveness and profound religious experience allows me to participate to a certain degree.

The whole congregation welcomes the moment when the microphone is placed before Mataji during the last half hour of the daily programme. Then questions may be put to her. Mataji replies with the rapidity of lightning. No sooner has the question been pronounced, the answer is

already there. Sometimes just one or two words, sometimes a series of sentences. Mataji herself declares that her replies are not mind-made. One can notice that this is so. She opens her mouth, and not her reason but her '*kheyāla*' responds. Quite frequently her words make the whole pandal roar with laughter for minutes together. Mataji herself is so amused about her replies as if someone else had given them. Off and on it happens that she suddenly seems startled at a question: "I have no *kheyāla* to reply to this," she says. Occasionally she passes a question on to a Swami or Pandit. As far as I can judge it is usually a matter of some complicated or disputed interpretations of Scriptures, which are subjects for scholars. But perhaps she just wishes to make a friendly gesture towards the learned speakers. Often a voice from the audience can then be heard: "We want to hear your answer, Mataji, !"

Again and again Mataji admonishes all seekers to abandon the world. More precisely: not their worldly duties, but all worldly distractions. To pursue worldly pleasures means to tread the path of death, whereas to relinquish them is to advance towards "the death of death." Usually one imagines an apostle of world abnegation to be of a gloomy, ascetic type. I feel sure that this type also must exist in India. But I find it surprising and thought-provoking that the attitude that demands a complete breaking away from the world is lived by the most serene and joyous human beings I have ever come across. Almost all the speakers, amongst whom are many *sannyāsis*, possess a particle of the fluid of serenity and cheerfulness that is so fascinating in Mataji.

During the hours of silent meditation in the morning and early afternoon the atmosphere becomes very intense. Many of the *vratis* sit absolutely still during the whole hour. Some keep their spine very straight, others look more relaxed. Mataji sits without any effort or stiffness. Usually she starts by sitting upright and after some time leans back on