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# Ānanda Vārtā

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## Mātri Vāni

Every living being by its very nature longs for happiness. Only because this happiness lies hidden within him, is he able to long for it. If it were not already there, he would not desire it. Yet it is a fact that he cannot help desiring it. A deep yearning for peace and happiness can be observed in every living being without exception. Even insignificant creatures such as insects, spiders and the like try to avoid pain. They are after well-being, safety and peace. Animals, when exposed to the scorching rays of the sun, seek shade and cold water. Similarly, when man is afflicted by all kinds of suffering, he goes out in search of God, the haven of peace, the fountain of bliss. In order to be rescued from the three-fold suffering of the world, one has to take recourse to another type of suffering. By pain, pain has to be conquered. This is called *tapasyā*. To be able to bear hardships and troubles is called *tapasyā* by this body (Mātāji). Just as the suffering of the world is irksome,

so in the beginning one finds it difficult to concentrate on God's name. But although it may seem arduous, by this very exertion one will be liberated from all suffering. Thus, what is wanted is effort, sustained practice, action. Among animals and birds there is no desire to be liberated from suffering and to find God who is eternal Bliss, eternal Beauty; this aspiration is reserved exclusively for human beings. Although God has enveloped man by the veil of ignorance, He has also provided a door to Knowledge for him. By passing through that door man can attain to liberation. This is why he must be determined to realize the Supreme, to find God, to transcend ignorance as well as knowledge. So long as there are the opposites of knowledge and ignorance, in other words distinction and the idea of difference, the Brahman cannot be realized. By merging in the Brahman, all differences dissolve into IT and one is for ever established in one's true Being.

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At all times the repetition of God's name should be sustained. Through the practice of the Name enjoyment, liberation, peace—all of these will blossom forth. With firm faith, implicit confidence and devotion, casting away pride, adhere to the Name and you will see that all your work will be done, as it were, of itself. When this body was engaged in the play of *sādhana*, this kind of thing

used to happen and this is why so much stress is laid on it. Do not take anything lightly in order to test God, for by doing this you will not advance towards God-realization. Surrender your all to Him ! Your burden, the burden of the world is ever carried by Him, the One Who sustains the universe, remember this !

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You say, the mind will not concentrate on the Name; what do you gain by feeling upset when your mind wanders here and there ? Rather reflect in this manner : the mind does not obey me; very well, I shall not obey the mind either, I shall continue to repeat the Lord's name. Have you never watched children flying kites ? How very high the kites rise up, yet they are limited by the length of the string to which they are tied. The kite can be compared to the mind and the sense objects to the air. Keep the mind tied by the string of God's name ; some day or other it will become still.

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Such terrible calamities on all sides bring forth the black cloud of despair and darkness. It is natural that your mind should be terror stricken and harassed by all kinds of worries. What is to be done ? The only refuge of the helpless is God. Do not allow yourself to be broken. The very ground to which one has fallen,

receiving a blow, has to be used as a lever in the effort to rise up again. This is God's law. He whose tool you are, His indeed is everything. HE IS. You are in the arms of the Great Mother. As She keeps you, so you have to live. Keep mind and body healthy. Rather than allowing yourself unresistingly to be consumed by the fire of worry and anxiety, ever try to keep awake the conviction that everything happens according to His Will. Truly, the contemplation of Reality is the Path.

\*                     \*                     \*

Knowing that one is but an actor on the stage of the world, one lives happily. Those who mistake the pantomime for reality, are of the world (*samsāri*) where there is constant movement and change, ceaseless going and coming, the oscillation between happiness and sorrow. Those who are dressed up in various disguises, must not forget their real nature. Verily, you are the offspring of the Immortal. Your real Being is Truth, Goodness and Beauty.

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God's true Being cannot be described, for when speaking of 'being' there is the opposite of "non-being." When trying to express Him by language, He becomes imperfect. All the same, in order to use words, He is spoken of as *Sat-Chit-Ānanda* (Being-Consciousness-Bliss). Because HE IS, there is Being; and because He is Knowledge Itself, there is Consciousness; and to become conscious of that Being is indeed Bliss. To know the essence of Truth is Bliss; this is why He is called *Sat-Chit-Ānanda*—but in Reality He is beyond Bliss and non-bliss.

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# From the Life of Mataji

Bithika Mukerji

*(Continued from the last issue.)*

(1935-1936.)

Mataji left Dacca after a short stay of seven days only. The devotees of the town and nearby places had hardly had time to assimilate the reality of her presence among them. She had all the time been surrounded by a huge crowd of men, women and children. Many of the women had not returned home at night but stayed on with Mataji at the Ashram. The small Ashram had not been able to contain the swelling crowds, so that Mataji had again and again come out to sit in the open fields of Ramnā.

From Dacca, Mataji accompanied by about sixty to seventy people went to Paruldia, the village home of Jogesh C. Ghosh.<sup>1</sup> Elaborate arrangements had been made for Mataji's reception. The devotees were in a happy and festive mood. But this mood was short-lived. On arrival at Calcutta, they were saddened to learn of the serious illness of Kshitish Chandra Guha, who with his two brothers and their families, was strongly attached to Mataji. Their house in Ballygunje served as a meeting place for the devotees of Calcutta.

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1. The trustee of Shahbagh Gardens in Dacca, where Mataji and Bholanath had lived for four years.

The day before Mataji was to leave Calcutta, Kshitish Chandra passed away, plunging his own family and the bigger family of devotees in great sorrow. The calamity, however, was robbed of its poignant tragedy by Mataji's presence in town at the time.

From Calcutta, Mataji went back to Tarapeeth. As written earlier, Tarapeeth is famous for its cremation ground of great sanctity. Mataji stayed there for some time, while Bholanath went on a pilgrimage to Gangasagar. The sacred thread ceremony for Didi and Maroni was performed at Tarapeeth during that time.<sup>1</sup>

On Bholanath's return, Maroni was married to Chinu and went away with him and his family to Calcutta. Although no special arrangements had been made for festivities, yet all rituals connected with Indian marriages were performed with considerable pomp and ceremony. This came about because the ladies who were visiting Tarapeeth at the time, enthusiastically participated in the function and made it a great success. Maroni was like a daughter to Bholanath. He was considerably saddened at the inevitable parting. Many of Bholanath's relations had arrived for the occasion. For a few days, the desolation of Tarapeeth was overcome by the atmosphere of auspicious ceremonies.

Mataji had become quite well known in Tarapeeth. The Hindu as well as Muslim villagers crowded round her, wherever she would be. An old Muslim peasant seemed specially close to her. Mataji used to address him as *baba* ( father ). Whenever she visited his hut he would call out his two wives, saying.,

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1. January 1936, probably January 14th.

“Come out and receive my daughter.” The family with great satisfaction and pleasure would make arrangements for Mataji to sit with them for some time.

One Maulvi Sahib from Calcutta used to visit Mataji sometimes. Mataji called him “Prem Gopal”. Some of the Muslim population of Tarapeeth did not approve of the Maulvi Sahib’s devotion to a Hindu Mataji. On one of his visits to Tarapeeth, the Maulvi Sahib addressed a gathering of Muslims in the Masjid, explaining to them that no Islamic tenets were broken by listening to the words of Mataji and that she belonged to the peoples of all religions.

At Tarapeeth, Mataji would walk along the footpaths of the cultivated ground for long hours. Small shops came into existence overnight and began to flourish, catering to the unusual influx of visitors. The precincts of the temple came alive and did not appear to be as deserted and uncared for as they usually were.

In February, however, Mataji again left Tarapeeth to its silent contemplation of death and departed with her devotees in a convoy of fifteen to twenty bullock-carts, to the nearest railway station of Rampurhat. The slow journey through the moonlit night was made memorable by the melodious singing of Bhramara. Mataji herself joined in the *kirtan* at times. At Rampurhat Mataji and her companions boarded the train for Serampore.

After Serampore, Mataji visited Navadweep, Bahrampur and Tatanagar. From Tatanagar, Mataji started for Vindhya-chal. They stopped for a few hours at Howrah Railway

Station. Calcutta was already notorious for its unmanageable crowds and now that Mataji was not staying in the city, everyone had come to the station. Only Jatish Guha<sup>1</sup> (the elder brother of Kshitish) was conspicuous by his absence although the rest of the family were there. His grief over the untimely death of his brother had alienated him a little from Mataji. Just before the train started he came up to Mataji and after doing *pranāma*, walked away in a very uncharacteristic grave and aloof manner. Mataji looked at him with great understanding and said gently, "Don't forget that Jyotish (Bhaiji) at least is your friend. Continue to write to him and give him news of yourself and your family."

Jatish Guha could not nurse his hurt after this and came and wept near Mataji like a child and thus perhaps was able to lighten the burden of his grief.

Before coming to Vindhyachal, Mataji spent a couple of days at Bethia, the village home of Dr. Girin Mitra. At Vindhyachal, she met a gentleman who had donned the robes of a sannyāsi. On enquiry Mataji elicited from him the fact that he had left home in anger and not because he had any religious aspirations. Mataji persuaded him to resume his former style of apparel, saying that the saffron clothes were sanctified and were not to be made use of for resolving one's own personal problems. However, with Mataji's permission, the gentleman stayed on in Vindhyachal for quite some time before returning to his home.

Mataji started on a course of ceaseless wanderings. On leaving Vindhyachal she visited Allahabad, Chitrakut, Agra,

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1. Many devotees will know him better as Bunidi's father.

Mathura, Vrindaban and Delhi before coming to Dehra Dun. In Dehra Dun also she went from the city to Raipur and then again back to the Manohar temple. Occasionally she would leave her companions and accept the escort of one or two of the local people.

In the meantime an Ashram for Mataji was being constructed in Kishenpur, about five miles away from the city, by the devotees of that region. Hari Ram Joshi was the moving spirit of this enterprise, and was ably supported by the people of Dehra Dun. Mataji's birthday celebrations were performed with great enthusiasm in the new Ashram. Mataji and Bholanath were received at the Kishenpur Ashram in May, 1936 (25th Vaishakh, 1343) amidst a festival of great rejoicings. Manmatha Nath Chatterji, a very devout and respected resident of Dehra Dun performed the *tithi-puja* on the occasion.

The people of Dehra Dun had a taste of the experience of the devotees of Dacca, when Mataji announced her *kheyāla* to go to Solon, almost before they had time to congratulate themselves on the success of the function.

Raja Durga Singh of Solon, who exemplifies by his life, what we understand of the ideal of *rājarṣi*, received Mataji and made suitable arrangements for her. After a fortnight Mataji expressed her *kheyāla* to go on to Simla, a distance of about thirty-four miles from Solon.

This was Mataji's first visit to Simla, where subsequently she became so well known. Raja Durga Singh made arrangements for her to stay at the Kali-Bari<sup>1</sup> at Simla. Mataji

1. Temple of Kali. Generally all such temples have accommodation for pilgrims.

arrived at the beautiful hill-station of Simla in the evening, and went straight to the Kali-Bari. They were met by some unusual activities at the temple. Mataji was told that a sadhu, known as "Dayāl bābā", had just passed away. As a matter of fact, Dayāl bābā had enquired, only a short while back if Mataji had arrived. Mataji now went to the room of the sadhu and stood near his body for some time. Dayāl bābā was held in great esteem by the Bengali population of Simla. Groups of officers<sup>1</sup> came to pay their respects to the departed soul and thus learnt of Mataji's arrival at Kali-Bari. Some of them came to her room and told her about Dayāl bābā.

The next morning, Mataji went for a walk. Small groups of people came up to her and introduced themselves. More gathered in her room in the evening. One of them said, "Ma, we were greatly attached to Dayāl bābā. We should have been plunged in sorrow, but somehow, now that you are here, we are not suffering from a sense of bereavement."

Mataji behaved as if she were amidst people well known to her. Within a few days Mataji's small room began to overflow with visitors. Many of the new acquaintances came to the Kali-Bari straight from their offices. Much fun and enjoyment was occasioned by this because some of them would find their wives already with Mataji instead of awaiting them at home. Household routines were thrown overboard. Men, women and children began to crowd round Mataji. One lady, expressing the views of her companions said, "Ma, every day

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1. Simla used to be the Summer Head Quarters of the Central Secretariat at New Delhi.

