

Ananda Vārtā

A quarterly presenting the divine life and teaching of SRI ANANDAMAYI MA and various aspects of Universal Dharma.

Advisory Editorial Board

Swami Bhagawatananda Giri
Dr. S. C. Bhattacharya, Ph. D.
Sri R. K. Banerjee

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Ānanda Vārtā welcomes contributions, especially reflections and experiences connected with Sri MA. Also articles on the life and teaching of saints and sages of all religions, ancient and modern, anthologies of words of wisdom, etc. Articles should, as far as possible, be typed with double spacing and on one side of the page.

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*The Eternal, the Atman—
Itself pilgrim and path of Immortality,
Self-contained—THAT is all in One.*

ĀNANDA VĀRTĀ

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Mātri Vāni

(Dictated by Sri MA as letters in response to devotees' requests for personal advice and guidance.)

Speech, conduct and character should express man's inherent divinity*—at every moment let life's current flow in spotless purity. By observing to the very letter dharmic rules and regulations (as indicated in the sacred lore) *Śakti* is awakened. Only when fulfilling the purpose of his birth man becomes truly human. To reveal the real nature of the Self (*ātmā talva*)—this indeed must be the constant aim.

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Priceless moments are speeding away. Why waste time in letting thoughts wander here and there? The endeavour to accomplish one's pilgrimage is all-important. Without the search after Truth there is no expedient for a human being to destroy obstacles. Self-realisation, to go out in quest of one's Self — is not this the one thing to be attempted?

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* Mataji says : "*Sat katha, sat vyavahāra, sat charitra.*" In the Bhagavad Gita XVII, 26-27 it says. "*Sat* is used in the sense of reality and goodness, in the sense of a righteous deed. Steadfastness in sacrifice, austerity and gift is also called '*Sat*' and action for the sake of THAT is also named '*Sat*'."

The merciful Lord has certainly made provision for mercy in His empire. He bestows it, pours it out, in fact He showers it down in torrents. If the vessel is kept open in the right direction it will be filled. But if turned upside down it will float on the surface and get entangled. Who accepts mercy? Who is keen to catch it, to grasp at it? There is lamentation and aridity—in the condition in which dryness exists one feels dry.

* * *

Due to the karma and the inclinations accumulated in so many lives man is born. The Supreme Being, the conqueror of danger and calamity, the mitigator of sorrow—He Himself manifests as this unbearable suffering. In the midst of misery and affliction it is difficult for the ordinary person to keep his faith in divine dispensation in tact. But for God's devotee, He, the One and no other is present in all conditions whatever. The man in whom the Lord's name has taken root is definitely heading in the direction of his ultimate Good.

* * *

If truly established, the relationship between Guru and disciple is eternal. Where the Guru wields divine power, even if the disciple is temporarily assailed by doubts, these are likely to give way to faith by the Guru's power functioning within the disciple.

* * *

Why should one be mad with worldly cares and considerations? Rather must one become mad on the contemplation of the supreme goal of human existence. A special current (of inspiration) cannot always be felt, nevertheless one must remain in the stream where it is natural for that current to surge in. Why be submerged in the perplexing agitating affairs of the world? On the contrary, one has to be carried away by the flood of the supreme quest !

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Action aiming at Reality (*satanusthān kriyā*) has to be performed for the purpose of the revelation of the intrinsic nature of action (*kriyā svarūpa*)—a revelation in which non-revelation is abrogated. One must endeavour to convert the body's outward-turned activities into activity directed inward. Try to keep the body ever engrossed in action dedicated to God (*Bhagavat kriyā*). The stream of thoughts and feelings that relegates God to a distance is the cause of the distressed condition of the mind. In order to be delivered from the agony of want and emptiness a human being must aspire to become established in his innate Fulness (*svabhāva*).

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In the ashram one does not serve anyone out of personal attachment. Rather, regarding everyone as a manifestation of the Supreme Being, all render loving service to the One in divine aspiration (*sadbhāva*). Those

who are travellers on the path to Divinity come to the ashram and stay there; seeing the worth of the ashram they select the best, trying to appreciate the merits and virtues of other inmates. So long as one is not established in Supreme Being (*parama sthiti*) it is best not to notice the faults of others. Shortcomings and defects are natural with human beings. To become free from imperfections, for this very purpose one takes to ashram life.

Song on a Light

Dr. Vikram Marya

Traversing all barriers
 And fulfilling all aspirations
 A Light has brightened our lives
 Since innumerable generations.

Life would have been dark
 And we would have felt helpless
 If in times of frustration and despair
 This Light from heaven had not blessed us.

Feel blessed everybody and rejoice
 For witnessing a miracle in this birth
 A Light from heaven like a "Mother"
 Has blessed us on this earth.

Mātri Satsang

Swami Bhagavatananda Giri

(*Translated from Bengali*)

(18)

From May 2nd to 17th, 1957 Mataji's birthday was celebrated in Ahmedabad at the invitation of late Sri Kantilal Munshaw and late Sri Mukundbhai Thakore. Every night Mātri Satsang was the last item and climax of the daily programme. The large congregation used to listen to Mataji's replies to questions with rapt attention. I have tried to reproduce Ma's words to the best of my ability.

May 3rd, 1957.

Question : What is the significance of *mouna* (observance of silence of speech) and how can it be achieved ?

Mataji : *Mouna* means to become mindless; in other words, there is no place for the mind to go to. It is through the mind that joy and sorrow are experienced. To transcend the mind with its fluctuations, to go beyond the mind is the significance of *mouna*. Speech, sound always create; So if you have to speak, talk of godly matters; this will be beneficial. If you speak of worldly affairs you will also reap the result of it. One cannot always speak of divine things, therefore as long as silence is observed at least worldly topics are avoided. After all this is a device to keep one's thought centred in God. When controlling speech one should let the mind dwell on God. Whether you practise japa or meditation, it is right to concentrate on the

Eternal. *Mouna* is observed in order to proceed beyond the wandering mind.

Question : How can this stage be reached ?

Mataji : Suppose you are digging a well. In the process of digging you arrive at a stage where water is struck. Thus, the result of digging a well is to find water. Likewise, the result of the prolonged observance of *mouna* is to become mindless (*a-mana*). It is the mind that causes all your actions, the mind keeps on wandering from one thing to another. *Mouna* is a state in which no words are produced. In order to keep the mind devoted to the Divine it is necessary to practise strict control of speech and language. There are two kinds of *mouna*—one is called *go* (cow) *mouna*, the other *kāṣṭha* (wood) *mōuna*. *Go-mouna* : Just as a cow indicates what she wants by signs, so a human being may express his needs by signs and gestures. *Kāṣṭha mouna* : as a piece of wood is inert, so no signs or gestures whatever are made.

Mataji continues : There are endless variations of observing *mouna*. The way *mouna* is practised will depend on one's particular state of achievement. In order to realise your Self you must invoke your Self. This body (*Ma*) is merely a small child, calling you 'father'. You are father, mother, friend—all in all. Questions arise so that one may be revealed to oneself. Divine Grace alone bestows immediate results. Control of speech is the starting point on the spiritual path. Start your lessons, that is, engage in *sāadhanā*. You know what is written in the sacred books. By studying them you will be able to understand.

There are two types of individuals to whom questions do

not occur : He who has passed his examinations has nothing to ask; on the other hand, the ignorant person also has no questions. He who studies is the one who has problems. The essential element in observing *mouna* is to become mindless, to make the ever wandering mind one-pointed and fix it in God. All without exception can practise *mouna*, regardless of the particular sect or creed to which they belong. But keeping silent after getting angry with members of one's family, this is not real *mouna*. The object of observing *mouna* is to open up the road to Self-realisation.

Action by its very nature generates a sequence of further actions. The sequence of actions that will lead beyond—a sequence leading to the supreme Object of human life—this is to be adopted.

Mataji stops for a short while and then continues :

Mataji : Where "something" is, there God is not. If Śiva's presence is felt, it cannot be a stone and if it is a stone, it cannot be Śiva. Likewise, if the Guru is perceived as what He really is, He is no longer a human being; but if looked upon as a person, he is no longer a Guru.

Question : What exactly is my essential Being (*Svarūpa*) ?

Mataji : The one *Ātmā*, Truth Itself.

Question : Then why do I not feel the impact of this Truth according to which I alone exist ?

Mataji : Due to the ego. This is why Truth is not intuited. Where God is and God alone, there is no room for further questions.

Question : From where does “something” emanate ?

Mataji : ‘Where the play of the ego is, there and there alone’ mine” and “yours” exist. Where everything is a manifestation of the Supreme Being, there, whatever you behold represents God Himself.

Question : Then do you mean to say that God is all in all ?

Mataji : Yes, everything is God. As you play so exactly will you hear. God’s law is so wonderful. He is everything you imagine Him to be. Avadhutaji tells the following story : There was a woman whose Guru gave her a mantra which contained her revered husband’s name. How could she utter her husband’s name ?* So she started doing japa by reciting : “Champa’s uncle is my refuge.” Nevertheless, God was quite pleased with this. The whole universe is indeed the Lord’s *vigraha* (concrete physical presence).

Question : How can this become first-hand knowledge ?

Mataji : By whom can it be known ? One’s own essential Being has to be realised.

Question : Mataji has now turned into a Vedantist !

Mataji : As I am questioned so I reply—in a higgledy-piggledy manner.

Question : Is God in a state beyond discrimination ?

Mataji : God alone exists. Where He is concerned, how can one speak of state or non-state ? The One alone exists. This is the exact Truth.

* This is prohibited in orthodox Hindu circles,

Question :--How can I get rid of the idea that I am a separate individual ?

Mataji : Obey the precepts of your Guru. Practise *sādhana* as your Guru directs and also take recourse to the society of Mahātmās.

Question : By engaging in the repetition of a sacred name or mantra and by regulating one's diet extraneous deficiencies can be overcome, but inner shortcomings tend to persist. What should one do ?

Mataji : Avadhutaji says, if you purify your diet your mind will also become pure.

Question : Even though I remain absorbed in God all day, unhealthy tendencies appear in dreams at night.

Mataji : So long as inner weaknesses have not been overcome, endeavour to partake of pure food, to seek the company of mahātmās, to read religious books, to spend your time in japa, meditation and worship. Further, when for example, you go to sleep think that you are lying in the Lord's lap. In this manner maintain purity in thought and feeling. Your spiritual practice has not yet matured, this is why there is a tendency to revert to worldliness. But do not be frightened; it is natural for God to cleanse His devotees of all impurities. Just as the mother cow licks off the dirt from the body of her calf, so does God consume all taints and blemishes of His *bhaktas*. Shed your fears and keep on treading the path to the supreme Goal of human existence.

May 4th, 1957

Question : Speech can be controlled but to discipline the mind is most difficult.

Mataji : Here something has to be explained. It lies in the nature of the mind to accept, to react in a particular way. Some events make the mind happy, others render it disconsolate. For instance, two people who have never known each other happen to meet, and when they get acquainted their minds get attuned. Thus when a boy and a girl meet out of the blue and get married, each shares the joys and sorrows of the other. All this is just the play of the mind.

(Mataji now gives a concrete example.) When the daughter of Didi's cousin was to be married, this body said : "Do not let this girl enter wedlock as there is a likelihood of her becoming a widow." But they did not listen and the girl's wedding was performed. The couple were together for only thirteen days, when the bride developed T. B. and gradually was nearing death. The young husband committed suicide and his widow passed away the same evening. From where did the boy originate and from where the girl ? They knew each other for such a short time only. All this is merely the play of the mind. As a rule the mind conceives physical attraction, true love does not exist between individuals. When a human being (*jīva*) is consumed by true love for Śiva (God) then his essential Being becomes revealed. The Self (*Ātmā*) alone exists. Just as a son is looked upon as having originated from one's Self, so also is a true disciple. This body (Mataji) says that the mind constantly roams about everywhere; therefore sit under a tree, in other words, at the feet of a Mahātmā. Just as you find shelter and peace when sitting under a tree and the tree gives of itself in the shape of the fruit, so when you take refuge at the feet of a Mahātmā he bestows on you peace of mind and the realisation of the Self. God is what you ima-

gine Him to be. What does mere physical attraction lead to from the worldly point of view ? To death. While if you fix your mind on God's lotus feet you become a conqueror of death, you receive the nectar of true love and God's living Presence will be revealed in its effulgence. What is death ? Merely the play of the mind. Are you not constantly dying innumerable deaths ? You were a child, then you became a youth, now you are an old man; this continuous change of atomic composition means death. As an infant you had no teeth, then your teeth grew and subsequently again fell out. You became toothless—“*bedānti*.”* That is to say: through the instrumentality of the mind the various joys and sorrows of worldly life are experienced. Why proceed on the sure road to death ? Become a pilgrim on the path of Immortality ! Each person should choose whatever line or method appeals to him most. You may follow the path of devotion or that of Advaita where there is but “One-Brahman-without-a-second.” Carry out the precepts of your Guru. Engage in *sādhanā* in order to attain Self-realisation. Your real Self, the essential nature of your Self, Supreme Knowledge will be revealed.

In this world everything depends on how one looks at it. For instance, after Mahātma Gandhi's death, Seth Birla took us to the spot where Gandhiji met his end. He showed us everything : how the first attack took place, how the shot was fired, and even pointed out the exact spot where the words “*He Ran*” were inscribed. He also explained that there were two parties. Gandhiji's death caused extreme anguish to one party. It was even heard that some people died of heart

* A play upon Words : “*be-danti*” means toothless and “*Vedanti*” a student of Vedanta philosophy.

failure on hearing the sad news. The other party was overjoyed. Thus, although there was one single event, its effect was twofold. What is the reason for this? All depends on how the mind interprets the incident. Some considered him their friend, others their enemy. Let this very mind cling to the Eternal and your mind will be stilled—you will become mindless. You will have no further questions. Then there will be no place for the mind to go to. Just as the same person is father, son and husband, so all God's names and forms are one, and at the same time He is also without name and form. When the mind is stilled your true Self will shine forth.

Question : At times a devotee is moved to tears by his deep devotion for God. Some people say, this is a weakness of the mind. Is this correct?

Mataji : In this world, grief-stricken people do have a tendency to weep. But if someone cries for God then you should understand that he is fortunate indeed. To shed tears because the Supreme Being has not yet been realised is certainly beneficial.

Question : The restlessness of the mind is very troublesome. What should I do?

Mataji : Genuine restlessness has yet to come. If you restlessly yearn for God-realisation, then peace will ensue. Remember, there are many hurdles on the path of devotion for God. When the mind is fickle and thoughts keep on arising you should understand : "God is pointing out to me where exactly my mind is fettered." If you cannot free yourself from this bondage, how can you possibly realise God?

It is good to proceed towards Him. Pray that you may be liberated from your shackles. Sit daily in contemplation of the One. He is the Life of your life, the Heart of your heart. To realise God means to realise your Self and to realise your Self is the same as to realise God. One must become entirely engrossed in *sādhana*. If you really yearn for God restlessly your yearning will be fulfilled. Try your utmost to find Him. The actual truth is, if you cry out to Him in earnest this prayer will be fruitful. The entire universe is in continuous flux - *māyā* (illusion). World (*jagat*) means something in motion - transitory. And that which is in bondage is the *jīva* (individual). Thus where *jagat* and *jīva* are, there the results of action will certainly be reaped. God will definitely bestow precisely what is the fruit of every single action.

Question : Is it good to perform selfless service, that is, without hope for any gain ?

Mataji : Yes, to perform selfless service is very good indeed.

From The Life of Mataji

Bithika Mukerji

(*Continued from the last issue.*)

Mataji spent the last month of 1941 in Varanasi. Sometimes She would stay on a boat on the Ganges or in one of the temples on the ghats of the river. She remained for a length of time at Nirmal Chatterji's house in Ramapura. The house had an extensive garden. In its center was a small hut with a thatched roof. Nirmal Babu was in the habit of using it for his *sādhana*. This little mud hut had the distinction of housing Mataji for many days. The devotees of Varanasi would assemble in the evenings and gradually a pattern took shape regulating the proceedings of these impromptu gatherings. After a period of silence, some prayers in Sanskrit would be recited. The main participants were the four brothers from Chaukhamba who came to be known in the Ashram as Ajitda, Habulda, Patalda and Neruda. After this, there would be general conversation on various topics. Mataji answered questions put to Her by the visitors. During these weeks, Mahendra Nath Sirkar came regularly, engaging Mataji in many philosophical discussions. At the beginning of January 1942, Mataji left for Vindhyachala; the very rewarding quiet evenings for the people of Varanasi came to an end.

From Vindhyachala Mataji returned to Varanasi on Her way to Allahabad. This was the year of *pūrṇa-kumbha* at Prayag; Mataji acceding to the requests of many, visited the

site of the confluence of the holy rivers but remained in the car while Her companions went to bathe at the sangam.

Mataji next went to Pundari, a village near Mainpuri, the home of the daughter of Sher Singh of Doonga. Sher Singh's son-in-law, Nauratan Singh was performing the consecration ceremony of a temple built in his village. He had made very elaborate arrangements for the celebrations and for Mataji's reception. Some of the people were waiting at Etawah and escorted Mataji to Pundari. Mataji and Her party started off in two cars to cover a distance of about 36 miles. After an hour, when they had travelled about halfway, the car came to a stop. The driver on investigation was staggered to find that the petrol tank was empty. This was an unlooked for predicament. The other car with Swami Paramanandaji had gone ahead and was nowhere to be seen. There was no hope of immediate help because the road was quite unfrequented and devoid of any kind of traffic. Mataji descended from the car and cheerfully remarked to Didi and Abhaya, Her two companions, "Never mind, what has happened is all to the good. Let us walk. We are sure to come across a village, where we can ask for food and shelter if necessary."

Perforce Didi and Abhaya started walking with Mataji along a road which did not seem to be close to any human habitations whatsoever. The driver abandoned the car and trudged along with them, hoping to find a cycle somewhere so that he could send a message to Pundari. After a mile or so they came to the village of Kimni. There was no bicycle in the village but the travellers were informed that at a brahmin's cottage, sadhus could get food and shelter for the asking. On

being approached, the kind villager provided them with some simple refreshments. Thereafter they rested in the shade of a tree by the roadside. The month being January, the cold was severe and it was raining now and then. Mataji seemed to be enjoying the contretemps but Didi could not help thinking of the preparations underway for Mataji at Pundari and the concern which must be consuming the hosts at Her delay. Didi, however, was soon relieved to see a car approaching them. Paramanandaji's car, also short of petrol, had just reached the outskirts of the village from where a message had fetched the greatly mortified host. Nauratanji hastened to the rescue in another car and was prostrate with self-condemnation at being the cause of Mataji's discomfort, no matter how little She made of it. Mataji arrived at the village before the commencement of the festivities and all was again happiness and rejoicing.

In the evening Mataji sat surrounded by a throng of people, conversing with them and answering their questions;

“Mataji, are you an orthodox Hindu or an Aryasamāji?”

“What do you think I am?”

“If you countenance the installation of images in temples then you must be called orthodox.”

“Whatever you say, Pitaji, and also anybody else, *that* is what I am.”

“Mataji, there are so many creeds, it is bewildering when everybody starts preaching his own faith and decrying those of others.”

“To denounce another man's way of worship is quite uncalled for and profitless. Imagine a man on a pilgrimage. If he

repeatedly interrupts his journey to enter into disputes regarding the value of it, the inevitable result will be great delay in achieving his own goal. It is best to advance with steadfastness in one direction."

Mataji delighted the family of Sher Singh by remaining with them for about a fortnight. The villagers who had come to regard Her with great love and reverence within this short period of time, stood with folded hands and tearful eyes around Her car when She was about to leave. Mataji took a smiling farewell from Her saddened hosts and came to Lucknow at the beginning of February, 1942. For a few days the devotees of Lucknow experienced the unspeakable joy of Mataji's presence amongst them. Dr. Pannalal was in Lucknow at that time. He, Seetalprasadji, Hari Ram Joshi and others hoped that Mataji would remain in their midst for some time, but on February 10, Mataji expressed the *kkeyāla* to leave the same day. On enquiry it was ascertained that the last train started for Jhansi at 10 p. m. Mataji did not specify Her destination so tickets were purchased for Kanpur. At the station, while waiting for the train to start, they came to know about the sudden death of Jammalal Bajaj that very afternoon at Wardha. His son Kamalnayan was travelling by the same train to Jhansi. He thought it was providential that Mataji was already on the train and tried to persuade Her to accompany him to Wardha so that his father's last great wish could be fulfilled. But Mataji, gently dissuaded him from insisting upon it at that time. It will be recalled that Bajajji had repeatedly requested Her to visit Wardha and had his invitation endorsed by Mahatma Gandhi as well, but so far all this had been to no purpose. Didi and others who had

come to love and respect Bajajji as a brother, were grieved at the news of his death and were not a little hurt at Mataji's aloofness. Mataji said later, "Why are you so sad at this event? Has he gone away somewhere out of reach? To me he is not lost at all, so I see no occasion for sorrow." Hari Ram Joshi, Didi and others, however, could not share Mataji's equanimity and continued to regret the fact that Mataji had not gone to Wardha while he was alive.

At Kanpur, at Mataji's *kheyāla* Hari Ramji extended their tickets upto Jhansi. After a few days there, Mataji at last gave Her consent for proceeding to Wardha. Hari Ram Joshi came from Lucknow to escort Her. They arrived at the station on February 16, almost a week after Bajajji's death.

On reaching Wardha, Mataji had the *kheyāla* to go quietly to Gopuri and stay there for a while without making any public announcement of Her visit. She disclosed the fact that at their last meeting Bajaj had told Her about some of his future projects. On that occasion She had said to him that nobody knew how long he would be permitted to live in this world. It may be six months or it may be six years. The future is ever uncertain and it is best not to plan too far ahead. Bajaj had evidently understood Mataji to mean that he had not very much longer to live because on his return to Wardha, he had shifted to Gopuri, where he stayed alone in a small hut following such instructions as Mataji may have given him. In a letter written to Hari Ram he had expressed the wish that Mataji should occupy this hut when She visited Wardha. So Mataji now proceeded to Gopuri with Kamal-

