

MA ANANDAMAYEE AMRIT VARTA

A quarterly journal dealing mainly
with the divine life and sayings of
Sri Anandamayi Ma

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MATRI VANI

Wherever God may place you at any time and under whatever circumstances, recollect that it is all for the best.

* * *

All is His and whatever happens is His Will. Call to Him, because all is His. To yearn thus for Him is real prayer.

* * *

Wherever you may be placed and under whatever circumstances, let your thinking be centred in Him and in Him alone

* * *

In the measure as one loves God, detachment from sense objects ensues.

* * *

Why should there be fear and anxiety ? Solely because I imagine that He is not near me. He is holding you. Why fear ?

* * *

If you cling to the One in whom fear is not, how can there be even a question of fear ?

* * *

Pray to Him with heart and soul, to the limit of your power, using all the strength and capacity you possess. Surrender yourself at his feet.

* * *

Until and unless you have definitely realised Him you must never abandon your spiritual practice.

* * *

Spiritual affinity is undoubtedly stronger than blood relationship. The happiness it gives is very special.

* * *

By constant practice one finally achieves.

*

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The pure the mind becomes. by the remembrance of Him in everything, the more excellent will your work be.

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To live in the presence of God, who is Truth (*satya*)—this indeed is the meaning of *satsang*.

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If your desire is intense, it is quite impossible that light should not come to you.

*

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Where the search after Truth is really genuine there can be no failure.



CONVERSATION WITH WESTERN DEVOTEES

[Fifteen]

—Vijayananda

Q : *You started your sadhana during the war when your life was constantly in danger and afterwards when all the horrors which happened came to be fully known. Have you not been disturbed then?*

V : No, not even while it was happening I took it as a game, the one's running after others, it was like playing cops and robbers. And after the events, as the past has no reality, there was no reason to be disturbed either.

Q : *If past has no reality, what is left of Tradition?*

V : Tradition is indeed experienced in the present, when we follow what our guru tells or told us to do. From the relative and empirical point of view, the question of past and its heritage arises, but in sage's experience, this kind of questions does not arise. If you ask them, it means that you still are on the empirical plane.

Q : *How does one differentiate between mental and vital being ?*

V : To know the mental being of a person, one takes the help of his face and voice; to perceive his vital state, it is enough to be physically close to him or to take his hand for some time. The yogic body is realized when there is the union of the male and female forces inside. The causal body is so called because it corresponds to that part of the ego which migrates from one life to another and thus represents the cause of rebirth. There is a stage in *sadhana* where the subtle body is felt as a wonderful coat that nobody should touch; but this is pride, one should go beyond. All that is a question of experience.

Q : *Can we say that samadhi is a form of sleep ?*

V : I found a way of being completely conscious while body is as if asleep, for instance when I remain lying in the early morning or even sitting. This is nevertheless not *samadhi*, because in the latter there is intense joy. Near death experiences are not really experiences of death but give a feeling of happiness and light as we may have in deep sleep.

- Q :** *Many people came to Ma, and are now coming to Amma for physical healing. Can we say that these sages see diseases?*
- V :** They see the spiritual origin of diseases in the form of spirits which possess the body and appear in some of its parts.

BHAKTI

- Q :** *Can we live without desire?*
- V :** For most people, desire is necessary; this is what may take them out of *tāmas*. Everything depends upon people's levels. We can not live without love. Mystical love is the only one where total merging is possible. The fusion of physical love does not last.
- V :** *(To an elderly man who was suffering from glaucoma)* For you, the best is to concentrate on the heart rather than on *jnāna*; but this is only a stage, a footstep to be able to later visualize energy in the heart of every other human being and still later throughout the whole universe. At that time you merge into the Formless.
- Q :** *Is not all that eventually the result of grace ?*
- V :** It depends on how you understand the term grace. When you call what you consider to be the personal God, there is an echo which comes back to you and which is not in fact different from yourself, but it is beyond your ego.
- Q :** *Sometimes I succeed in pacifying my emotions for a little while but then they start again with full strength!*
- V :** Reaching a kind of intellectual peace is not enough. We should give to the basis of mind what it is longing for, i.e., for instance an intense *rasa*, taste of joy, so that it might really be attracted and stabilized. When we are in the emotions we are carried away. When we go beyond them, the emphasis is on pure consciousness along with bliss.
- Q :** *But is not joy an emotion too ?*
- V :** No, in this case, the joy of pure consciousness is steady, while other emotions are changing. However, there are days when we do not have emotions to direct towards the divine, then we may practice *ātma-vichāra*, the 'Who am I' for instance. If that even does not come properly, there is something that you can do to still your mind at least temporarily : stopping your breath with empty or full lungs as you feel. Gather all your energy in the heart and stay like this as long as possible. One can also perform one's usual practices of meditation with concentration on different *chakras*, but visualize

them in a kind of subtle body before oneself, at a distance of one or two meters.

JNANA

Q : *Should we see the world as an illusion, or as reality, or as Divine Mother's body?*

V : Ramakrishna had a vedantin master, called Tota Puri, who had reached *nirvikalpa samadhi*. Ramakrishna himself had not been able to get it at that time, but he could see the play of the Divine Mother in the entire world which was rejected by Tota Puri as illusion, *Maya*. Each of them taught to the other what he missed. Ramakrishna had been able to make the link, to come and go between the world, *samsāra* and *samadhi*. *Vedanta* means the culmination of Vedas. In India, this represents the metaphysics for the fourth ashrama, *sannyāsa*, which is itself the crowning of the three first ones. It is the result of a whole training of behavior and of *bhakti* practices during the stages of student, householder and *vānaprastha*, i.e., retreat in the forest. *Vedanta* does not consist of endless and somewhat psychological talks as it is believed in the West. Westerners do not like the idea that 'the world is a dream'. It should be understood that this is only a stage, afterwards we find again a reality to the world, but from another angle, in the sense that we see in it pure consciousness only. Zen says so : *In the beginning mountains are mountains, then they are no more so, and afterwards they become again mountains*. If one tries to concentrate on pure consciousness directly, he falls asleep after some time. This is why in meditation an affective element, a joy, a love are necessary.

Q : *It seems that there is a good deal of 'positive thinking' and affirmations in the Vedanta. For instance Ramana Maharshi used to advise his disciples to read the book which repeats ceaselessly 'I am the self, the infinite, the limitless'. What do you think about it ?*

V : This is for beginners. For those who are more advanced, observing mind without countering it is sufficient, this is the best way to quiet it.

KUNDALINI

Q : *What does 'opening the channels of energy' mean?*

V : When I was in Almora in 1954 I worked on the opening of *nadis*, channels, for a year continuously. Thanks to that, I knew that I could gain a perfect chastity without inner conflict and suppression and also an immunity against

diseases. The opening went in different stages. Once I heard that Ma was saying to her mother in Bengali: '*khulya gyase*' 'it has opened'. I had felt something important. It is useful to read books such as *Tibetan Yoga* by Evans-Wentz. It gives an intellectual and traditional basis to these experiences which we may get. Otherwise we interpret them in a personal way and it may lead to strange results. The advantage of very accurate methods of meditation as Tibetan gurus teach is that their disciples are secure that they are following a trodden and safe path.

Lateral *nādis* open on the side of the heart. One should first well establish their awakening, then that of the central channel will occur, corresponding to a complete silence of mind. Tradition speaks also of the awakening of *kurma nādi* which facilitates a steady and well erect posture. Generally speaking one should identify those practices which lead to the silence of mind and follow them fully. If we decide to take the energy down to the *mulādhāra*, one should already have a good purification of mind to sustain the sexual awakening which it produces, and this without regression in our *sādhanā*.

We should distinguish between left and right when we deal with *nādi* awakening. Their *rasas* tastes, are different. This is a psycho-physiological experience which is clearly felt and which corresponds to a mental state as well. Energy may also be blocked in its ascension of *nādis* When they are open, better to live in solitude. Sexual relationships become impossible.

Q : *In this case, why doesn't the guru open the same for a maximum number of people?*

V : He does not do it because if he awakens energy in a disciple who does not have the mental purity, it will be directed towards disturbing emotions.

Q : *Does this opening correspond to a conscious practice or is it spontaneous?*

V : Intense emotion is indeed the factor which pushes energy into the *nādis*. It may be anger, but the best emotion is an intense love for the Guru. Sadgurus like Ma could 'open the tunnel' like a giant would pierce a mountain in a poke of his thumb and say afterwards to the workers, *finish the small work by yourself*. As long as one has not obtained the opening of *nādis*, he is not a real *sadhaka*, he is only preparing himself to be so. In the beginning I had difficulties to open a *nādi* when the corresponding nostril was blocked, but later the two phenomena became independent. At some point I stopped to work on *nādi* opening to practice vedanta, it was more comfortable, there was less emotional intensity; but Ma reproached me with that. One day she told in satsang with a side glance at me, *nādi khulne se kitnā lābh hai*. by

opening the *nādis* how much benefit comes. Thus, I resumed my practice of *nādi* opening. All these phenomena of *nādis* are not theory, I see them as if they were in front of me. By their opening, one can experience the *rasa*, the best of every experience at will, but there, one should not be led astray, it would be an obstacle to *samadhi*, that Patanjali calls *rasavāda*. One should experience a first phase of coming back from the object of pleasure for instance to pleasure itself which is still a localized experience, and then come back to the one who feels this pleasure, and thus reach the level of pure subjectivity.

Q : *Is nādi opening necessary to obtain samadhi?*

V : Yes, *samadhi* comes from the union of the two currents of energy which we could call positive and negative. When these two currents merge, an intense bliss occurs and this is *samadhi*.

Commenting on a photo of Ma where she is young and has the head inclined on the side, in ecstasy:

V : This is not *samadhi*, it is a *bhāva* (a spiritual state, but temporary and less deep than *samadhi*). In *samadhi*, the spine is erect, following the vertical axis, it favours the passage of energy up to the *ājnā*. There is a loss of consciousness of outer world. By putting the head on the side, that is by leaning on one of the two lateral *nādis*, one keeps away from this loss of consciousness and one remains at the level of the *bhāva*.

Q : *Does the Yogi visit subtle worlds?*

V : There are seven superior worlds, *Brahmaloka*, *Satyaloka*, etc. This is linked to the *sadhana* of the seven *chakras*, at every level one gets visions, one wanders in subtle planes, to put it in a nutshell, one has good fun...However, in *Jnana*, one does not consider these subtle worlds.

Q : *Among Yogis, is there variations, rhythms of vital energy?*

V : Yes, this happens to me rather regularly There are three days in a polarity, either negative or positive and then, quickly enough, sometimes in a few minutes or hours there is an inversion. What is most interesting to notice is that there is usually an outer catalyst to this change; even in solitude you may have a visit, of a small problem, etc...If we are not conscious of this rhythm, we will project onto the outer problem the origin of the change of mood; but if we are conscious, we will just observe this phenomenon of *dvandva*, of pair of opposites, which is part of the laws of the body, or they would say in India, part of our *prārabdha karma*. By not reacting to it, we do not create a second *karma* which would compound the first.



THE LAST DAYS OF BHAIJI

—Bithika Mukerji

During Mataji's earlier visit to Almora a group of young girls, coming from a village at the foothill of the sacred Mount Kailasha became great friends with Mataji and invited Her to come to Kailasha with them. Bholanath had for long entertained the wish to undertake the most hazardous of these pilgrimages. He became so fired by enthusiasm that he was almost ready to leave the same night. He was, however, prevailed upon to abandon the scheme as roads remained unnegotiable before June. It was decided to take up the matter again after the celebration of Mataji's birthday in May in Dhaka.

Mataji returned to Almora on June 10, 1937 with Bholanath, Swami Akhandananda, Bhaiji and a few others. The girls from the Himalayas were also waiting in Almora to accompany Mataji.

At that time Kailasha (22,000 ft. above sea level) was still accessible from India. It is located in what then was independent Tibet under the rule of the Dalai Lama. It is approximately 240 miles from Almora. The journey was considered arduous because for people of the plains to walk on great heights without training and habituation was difficult in the extreme. Kailasha for all Hindus is the visible emblem of the abode of Siva. The pilgrimage consists in going round the Mountain in a *parikramā* (approximately 60 miles) and then bathing in the waters of the lake Gaurikunda (18,400 ft.). Kailasha lay 20 miles beyond, towering over the famous lake Manas-Sarovar (approx. 15,000 ft.). This beauteous site has inspired the imagination of poets and the admiration of travellers ever since the time of the ancient epics. This location is sacred to the Buddhists also; as such it has been the habitation of ascetics of both faiths for the last hundreds of centuries. Every year a few hardy and venturesome pilgrims undertook this pilgrimage to the snow-bound Himalayas for a *darsana* (sight) of the Holy Mountain.

This journey, ordinarily, would not have entered the consideration of Mataji's companions, but for the coincidence of her visits to Almora at that time. As written earlier, many young people from the hinterland of Almora came to the town every year to pursue higher studies. Some of these students had become very attached to Mataji and Bholanath. One such student, a married young woman, Parvati, was specially devoted to them and had broached the idea of a journey to Kailasha.

promising to escort them since her own home was not distant from the Holy Mountain. Other students belonging to Garbyang, a wayside station of some importance, lent their support to the scheme. The young people would be returning home in June and enthusiastically promoted the idea of the pilgrimage, so they too would have the chance to accompany Mataji for at least part of the way.

The details of this remarkable journey, made especially memorable for the devotees by the event of Bhaiji's death at the end of it, have been preserved in Didi's diary, which she contrived to write even under very trying conditions. It was a task of love and devotion with Didi to write every day regarding Mataji's activities; thus these valuable records have been made available to us.

The pilgrimage to Kailasha started on 13th June, 1937 and the party returned to Almora on 10th August with a great sense of relief. The joy of an extremely difficult journey accomplished was however tempered by the shadow of Bhaiji's illness, who had become greatly indisposed on the return journey.

The people of Almora, especially Hari Ram Joshi had grown extremely fond of Bhaiji, were stricken with grief to see him so ill. The best doctors of the town were fetched to see him and prescribe medicines. A number of other devotees from different towns came to Almora on receipt of the news of Ma's return and Bhaiji's illness. Bhaiji's wife had been informed but there was no response from her side. She had been opposed to the idea of his going on this journey. Mataji had tried to dissuade him from undertaking the pilgrimage, when she came to know about this objection, but Bhaiji's heart was set on it. He persuaded Mataji to give her permission, saying that he would write to his wife and explain everything so that she would not be anxious on his account. Nobody of course knew whether she had really been reconciled to the idea or not.

Bhaiji's condition fluctuated; it seemed to respond to treatment at times, while at other times he seemed to be sinking slowly but steadily. The doctors embarked on a struggle with imminent death, trying their best to stem the ebb of waning energies. One day, while the attendants, visitors and members of Mataji's party were sitting in a dejected group around Bhaiji's bed, they were startled by the most unexpected sound of Mataji's joyous laughter. She was sitting on a cot near the head of his bed. Even while she wiped the perspiration from his forehead, she laughed in her own inimitable fashion. Didi, Bholanath, Swamiji and others who had known her in Dhaka, were reminded that to her death was not a tragedy; moreover life and death, health and sickness were accepted by her with complete equanimity. Although they were familiar with this aspect of her personality, they nevertheless felt taken aback, because to them the recovery of Bhaiji was important. The new

members of the crowd of devotees were puzzled and awed by this phenomenon of great care and yet an obvious indifference, so to say, to the main issue. They had seen Mataji keeping almost constant vigil at the patient's bedside and knew her concern for his ease and comfort. They could not doubt her compassion and concern; and yet with a sense of awe they realized that Mataji was not at all affected by the emotions of the situation. Mataji's laughter on such an occasion was a strange experience for many of the new devotees.

Slowly the anxious attendants began to lose hope of Bhaiji's recovery. The doctors held out no assurances. Bholanath was overcome with grief and sobbed like a child at the imminent prospect of losing a dear friend. Bhaiji himself was quite aware of his own serious condition and seemed reconciled to it. He actually requested the doctors not to try any desperate means but this request naturally could not be complied with. On the eve of the days of his death, Bhaiji once looked at Didi and, perhaps in a gesture of farewell and also perhaps in acknowledgement of her devoted nursing, said clearly to her, "Khukhuni, (Didi's nick name), this is the end."

The next day Hari Ram Joshi, Didi and many others repeatedly prayed to Mataji to bring the *kheyala* towards Bhaiji's recovery; but she made a gesture indicating that no such *kheyala* seemed to occur to her. After Mataji's negative response, everyone knew that they had to prepare themselves for the inevitable end. Mataji sat quietly by the bedside of the patient, occasionally wiping the perspiration from his forehead.

Bhaiji appeared to be quite in his normal consciousness and in fact slightly more alert than on other days. At one time he began to repeat aloud the Names of God and then after a while went on repeating just, "Ma Ma Ma" After a short period of silence he suddenly remarked, "How beautiful !" (*ki sundar !*) Then again in a tone of great conviction he said, "There is One only. There is nought else except the One."

Hari Ramji thinking perhaps that already Bhaiji had removed himself to a region beyond their grasp, called out to him in a tear-choked voice. "Bhaiji ?" Bhaiji responded to him immediately saying, "Remember always, friend, that all is One, there is the One only. Ma and I are One, Baba (Bholanath) and I are One, all of us are One; there is nought else but the One."

A few minutes later the people sitting quietly around his bed heard with surprise that he was enunciating softly but clearly one of the *Samnyasa mantras*. Around 3 p. m. Mataji signalled to Didi and others to leave the room for a few moments. After a minute or so she beckoned them inside again. As they trooped back, Bhaiji

in a very calm and composed manner said to all of them, "Ma has asked me to sleep now. I shall go to sleep."

These were his last words of farewell to his devoted companions, because he died almost immediately after, at 3-30 p.m. on August 18, 1937. The serenity of the event of this ultimate departure from the world, held the crowd in thrall for some minutes. They had difficulty to realize that their great friend and guide, a pioneer to be followed on the path of religious endeavour, was with them no more.

While they were still sitting in shocked silence, they heard Mataji's soft voice recalling their attention; she was speaking again after a silence of many days. Her voice was very low and she spoke slowly :

"Arrangements will have to be made for a *samadhi* (interment) for him. He is to be regarded as an *avadhuta* (an ascetic who has not joined any specific order). Since he has attained to the renunciation required for *samnyasa*, he is to be given the status of a *samnyasi*."

Mataji's words immediately gave a new dimension to the death of this beloved companion; all of them listened with rapt attention to her words and had no opportunity for indulging in grief. She continued softly :

"They (meaning the pilgrimage party) may recall that on our way to Manas Sarovar we had become separated into different groups. I asked Khukhuni (Didi), Bholanath and Jyotish (Bhaiji) to go ahead, while I waited for Swamiji's *dandee*. A little later when I also arrived at the shore of the lake, I was met by Bholanath who took me aside and spoke in agitated tones regarding Jyotish. He told me that Jyotish after bathing in the lake had discarded his clothes and had come up to Bholanath and placed at his feet all his belongings which he was carrying on his person at the moment. Kneeling at his feet he had expressed his wish to take leave of all of us and walk off towards the mountains in the manner of an *avadhuta-samnyasi*.. His manner manifested an urgency as if he could hardly brook any delay. He only had enough thought regarding his position to seek Bholanath's permission before trekking off alone into the unkonwn regions of the mysterious Himalayas.

Bholanath, not unnaturally, was frightened by this phenomenon and did not know how to deal with it. He resorted to admonition exclaiming, "What is all this that you are saying ? Get up and put on your clothes immediately. Your Ma is not here, how can you talk like this ? What would everybody say to us if we returned without you ?"

"Thereupon Bholanath was relieved to see that Jyotish obeyed him without further protest. He put on his warm clothes and waited quietly near the tent for the rest of the party. We came up in groups. As I said, Bholanath told me about this

incident at the first opportunity. The others knew nothing about it and having at last arrived at the holy site of the lake, engaged themselves variously each in his own preferred mode of *sadhana*.

"I walked by myself for a while near the lake. Jyotish finding me alone, repeated to me in a very determined voice all that he had already said to Bholanath, and then added, 'Ma, I know I have not many more days to live in this world. I have a great yearning to spend the few days remaining to me in one such cave in the heart of the Himalayas. I wish to walk away from here just in any direction and be by myself till it is time for me to leave the world. May I take my leave of you, now. Allow me to bid farewell for ever. Please persuade Baba (father, i.e. Bholanath) to give me his permission.'

"It was obvious that he did not expect me to deny him this choice of action on his part. At that moment I saw in him the manifestation of that pure spirit of renunciation which is the aim of all *samnyasis*. He was experiencing a complete sense of non-attachment and was wholly under its influence. Indeed such a state of *vairagya* is the coveted goal of all pilgrims on the path of spiritual life. I saw all this, but what I said to him was, "Nevertheless, you must stay with us for the time being".

"Jyotish did not speak anymore but followed me in grave silence. After a while he said with an effort, 'I have one small request. Please permit that I take a vow of silence from now on.' To this I answered, 'No, that will not be possible. It will be very inconvenient while we are on this journey.' He said no more."

The listeners to this account of Bhaiji's attempt at disassociating himself from the world, felt that they had caught a glimpse of the magnitude of his total reliance on Mataji. In the most crucial moment of his life he did not fail to surrender his will to her *kheyala*. For man it is not so difficult to make up his mind toward a particular course of action, but it is rare to see this determination abandoned at the word of the Guru. At that moment no doubt Bhaiji attained to that state of realization which knows no difference between the two orders of human will and an extraordinary *kheyala*.

Mataji had resumed her narration again : "After some time, while I was walking near the lake, I heard what you call mantras come forth from my lips. This has happened on so many other occasions. Jyotish who was walking behind me, came forward and flung himself at my feet exclaiming in an exultant voice, "Ma, Ma. this is the *samnyasa-mantra* which I have heard from you. All my yearning is fulfilled". Overcome by a strong emotion, he sat by himself for a while, repeating this mantra: later I saw him perform certain *kriyas* in the lake. Since that time he had constantly

kept his mantra in remembrance. After a few days I asked him, 'How is it that you wanted to take such a radical step without previous consultation or without asking (me) ?' Tears came to his eyes and he answered in a deepened voice, 'Have you allowed me to have a will of my own ? Besides I know that you are never more pleased than when a person seeks to follow the path of renunciation. The pity is that we do not remember this always—I thought I was rendering you the greatest service I was capable of. In general I know that whatever I do, I carry out your *kheyala* only; but this mood came over me suddenly and with such force that I was completely in its grip. I did not have the power to check or control. it.'

"I saw that he was indeed relating facts. It had been thus with him. He did experience a state of complete renunciation (*purna vairagya*). At one time I said to him, 'Since you have acquired a *samnyasa mantra* in these holy mountains and wished to take a vow of silence, your ascetic name will be *Maunananda Parvat*'. Since he died while in a state of complete withdrawal from the world, he should be buried as a *samnyasi*.

"Jyotish had asked me not to disclose to anyone all that I have narrated just now but I had told him that I could not promise, and if necessary, I would tell the people concerned about these matters. I think the time has come for this disclosure, so that you may act rightly so far as he is concerned."

The listeners were deeply moved on hearing this account of the last days of Bhaiji.

Hari Ramji went away to look for a suitable site and see to the arrangements for the *samadhi*. A place called Patal Devi was chosen. It transpired that on a previous visit Bhaiji had expressed a wish to stay there. Now his body would be interred in his chosen place. To the inconsolably grieved Hari Ram, Mataji said, "All of you have loved him so well. The concurrence of events has been such that his body remains now in your part of the world." Mataji directed Swami Akhandananda as a *samnyasi* to perform the last simple rites of the burial of an ascetic.

Bhaiji's death was a major event in the life of the small group of devotees who had attached themselves to Mataji. There was nobody to take his place and mediate Mataji's *kheyala*. An exemplary identification with Mataji's *kheyala* was unique with him. Mataji herself has said that many times Jyotish would do things or deal with people according to her *kheyala*, without the necessity for her to speak to that effect. Many had found his guidance invaluable and now felt deprived of this sustaining source of encouragement.

Bhaiji was typical of the well-educated man occupying a responsible position in the world, well aware of the demands of modern times and yet firmly established in

the traditional heritage of his own culture and background. He had not found easy solutions to his questions. He had had to do the work of a pioneer breaking new ground all along the line. Mataji was not known widely or recognised as an extraordinary personality in his time. He had played a considerable role in mediating this extraordinariness for the people who were daily flocking to visit Mataji. The exemplary self-surrender seen in Bhaiji is not something which happens of itself but is also a matter of constant live effort. Bhaiji's life will always remain a source of inspiration for those, who would fain understand the phenomenon of yearning for a life of renunciation.

PARAMA GURU, PARĀ SHAKTI, PARAMESHWARI

—Antonio Eduardo Dagnino

Primordial Mother.
 Vision of beauty
 so sacred.
 it consumes awareness of everything else,
 mutating gear
 into an ineffable revelation of love.....
 No faced,
 One faced,
 Nine faced,
 Infinite faced...
 Transcending the three tenses,
 the five obscurations,
 all realms of becoming.....
 Mystic extension of light
 where the beaming spirit of the Father
 blends in ecstasy
 You come like a ray of pure being,
 unfathomably essential,
 filling the dark spaces of my ignorance.
 with the glowing
 inundation of your grace!

THIRD TRIP TO INDIA

—Shraddha Davenport

When Swami Nirmalananda came to our house between speaking engagements we invited a few people who had expressed an interest in Mother to join us for satsang.

Swami Nirmalananda told us wonderful stories from the Hindu scriptures and from Mother's lila. He also taught us some beautiful bhajans as they are sung at Mother's ashram. What joyful days those were, filled with the sweetness of God's Name and the presence of that One Who had laid claim to my heart.

Some of those who attended the satsang and had seen our movies had asked to accompany us on our next trip to Mother, which we had planned for the Samyam Saptaha in Hardwar. We would leave for India on November 1, 1972. Swami Nirmalananda was also going, but would arrive some days ahead of us. He said that he and Sharmaji would meet our party when we arrive in Delhi. (There were ten of us and Swami Nirmalananda's group numbered about seven).

Weather forced our plane to lay over one night in Bonn, Germany. The airline provided hotel accommodations which gave everyone a chance to bathe and get a good night's rest. So when we arrived in Delhi we felt pretty fresh.

Once again I experienced the exhilaration of being in India. It had been one and a half year since our second trip. But when I set foot upon that great land it was as though I had never left, and my life in the west was like a dream that is only vaguely remembered.

Swami Nirmalananda came with Sharmaji and his beautiful daughter Rekha to meet us. Rekha garlanded everyone in our group and we were all joyfully talking at the same time. Finally we managed to get two or three taxi cabs, and with the luggage piled on top of them drove to the hotel where Swami Nirmalananda had reserved rooms for everyone.

After shopping for suitable Indian dress, we enjoyed looking at shops displaying little clay images that were being sold for the Diwali festival. Among the rather crudely made forms I was astounded to find a delicately made Lakshmi-Narayan. The work was South Indian style, about one foot tall. The seated figures were the color of pale sandal wood with the faintest tint of color on their features and borders of their clothing. They were also made of clay, and the idea of carrying them as we travelled in India, much less of getting them safely back to the States.

caused me to hesitate at least a full minute before purchasing them. The merchants were so taken by my feeling for the murtis that they went to a lot of trouble to pack them in shredded paper and placed them in a good cardboard box tied with twine. We were guests of the Sharma family for dinner that evening where we enjoyed renewing our friendship.

Due to Mother's travelling schedule we would not be able to see Her until She arrived in Hardwar on November eight. So there was no rush to leave Delhi. Our whole party gathered at the Sharma's, on the fifth of November for Diwali celebration. After the Puja we all went outside as the men and children set off fireworks. Mrs. Sharma and her daughter then lovingly served a typical Indian feast which they had prepared in our honor. It was late when we returned to our hotel that night.

The next day, November sixth, we hired two cars to transport us to Hardwar. There were only eight of us as three were staying in Delhi for a few more days and Swami Nirmalananda's brahmacharis had proceeded to Hardwar before we arrived in Delhi.

Luggage filled the trunk, was stacked and tied to the racks on top, and stuffed into every open space inside the cars. There was not much room to move, but who cared? We were in India and getting closer to seeing Mother every minute.

Satya and I were in the car shared with Swami Nirmalananda and an old friend whom Mother was to give the name of 'Jyotipriya'. The other car was occupied by two girls that I worked with, one of whom Mother named 'Kripa', and the other was destined to be called 'Bhakti'. Also in that car was a young couple who were friends of Jyotipriya. In a few days their names would be 'Radhapriya' and 'Krishnadas'. Still in Delhi were Lakshmi, Gopalpriya and Mahesh, our three friends who would come to Hardwar in a few days.

On the outskirts of Delhi we crossed the holy Jamuna river where clothes were washed and laid out to dry on the sand. Multicolored saris stretched towards the shore, and on high ground there was a charming thatched hut and a man working his ox-powered gristmill. As the ox slowly walked in a circle, it seemed that time had spiraled backward to centuries past when that man's and beast's ancestors must have performed that same act on that same ancient land.

About halfway to Hardwar is the town of Modinagar, and Swami Nirmalananda was anxious that we all have the opportunity to visit the magnificent temple there. It had been constructed by the Modi family and contained murtis of the most astounding beauty. We were all filled with joy to see the living Hanuman, Narayan, and all other deities. We were given prasad of Hanumanji, and Swamiji told of his

first meeting with Mother on the spacious well-kept grounds surrounding the great red Temple.

As we continued our drive to Hardwar, we enjoyed seeing the Ganges river which flowed swiftly through a channel running parallel to the highway. At one point there were giant statues of reclining lions-one on each side of the channel-facing north toward the Himalayas. That place is called the "North Gateway to India". Since then we have seen other places called "Gateway of India,"but none more captivating than this.

At this tranquil spot our car conveniently had a flat tyre, giving us a chance to enjoy the scene as our driver changed the tyre. The foothills of the Himalayas were on the north and two farmers and an ox worked in the field near the road. The mingled sounds of rushing water and chirping birds filled the warm sunny air as we relished this unplanned break in our journey.

Upon reaching Hardwar we found accommodations at the Tourist Bungalow, a lodge for pilgrims situated between the channeled Ganges and the shallow stream of Her natural path. In the north are the majestic Himalayas, home of many great Yogi-ascetics. The Tourist Bungalow faces upon the wide, swiftly moving Ganges channel. There are chains around the lower steps of the ghat that descend into the sacred water, making it safe for the devout to bathe or take a dip without being swept away by the current. On the opposite bank are several ashrams and structures which have been painted in rust and golden hues that reflected in the rippling waters along with the clear bright blue of the sky. To feast the eyes on so much beauty at one time was almost too much for this starving child of India who had lived so long in exile.

Toward the north and across a bridge that spans the Ganges and past the myriad shop, is the most holy shrine of Gangawara and the Hari-Ka-Charan, or Harki Pauri, bathing ghat. On the stone wall of that ghat is an impression of Lord Vishnu's foot. The full Kumbha Mela is celebrated here every twelve years and multitudes of worshippers bathe in the Ganges at this spot.

We settled nicely into our rooms and filled our canteens from the Ganges for drinking. We had not yet learned to use only purified or boiled water, but by Mother's grace we were spared any serious illness.

Mother's train was due on November eight at 5:15 a.m., but was running a little late. As we stood waiting on the platform we met Mr. and Mrs. Ram Panjwani who had also come to greet Mother. The first light of day heralded Her arrival as clouds of steam from the train breathed warmth into the cold morning air. My heart raced and pounded in my ears, as the braking wheels screamed upon the steel tracks. The

coaches were slowly gliding past us. Then Swami Nirmalananda said, "That's Mother's car."

I ran as fast as I could to keep up with it, and saw Mother inside the compartment. I was at the door as She came out. Her wonderful sweet smile filled me with joy, and all of the time since last I saw Her vanished. She walked to the center of the platform and stopped as we offered sandalwood garlands to Her. I bowed, touching Her foot, then followed directly behind Her as She walked out of the station. We had taxis waiting and followed Mother's car to the ashram.

Mother's room in those days was upstairs adjoining a hall with many windows which faced the Shiva mandir and overlooked Didima's samadhi mandir. When we arrived at the ashram Mother did not go directly to Her room, but responded to our longing hearts and sat for a while in front of the Shiva mandir as we silently gathered near her feet, replenishing our souls with Her darshan.

When She arose to go upstairs we were unwilling to lose sight of Her and stood with folded hands beneath Her window-content for an occasional glance from Her, and reveling in the moment when She would sit looking down upon us with a tenderness I have never known from any other.

A dear lady ashramite called Shobhadi, whom I had met and grown fond of in 1970, came to where I stood, and looking up at Mother called in English, "Ma, Shradha has come !" Mother looked down at me and smiled, adding yet another precious gem to the mala she was winding around my heart.

We stood transfixed below that window for two hours, unaware of the time. When Mother retired we left slowly, in an intoxicated state, to return at 5 : 00 p.m.

There was kirtan at the ashram when we returned, and we could see Mother by the window above us. As we stood gazing at Her, Bhaskaranandaji came to tell us that we could go upstairs to do pronam.

With great joy we climbed the stairs that led to the long hall, to Mother.

At the top of the stairs I looked to the left. There at the north end of the porch I saw a bed covered with sheets and a white canopy above it. Upon that bed sat Infinite Reason for my being.

When in Her presence it is not as though nothing else matters, but simply that there is nothing else *to* matter.

After pronaming at Her feet, we all sat very quietly. I allowed my eyes to embrace Her and mentally I adored Her.

We were permitted to stay undisturbed in that way for some time. Then Mother arose from Her seat and we all stood as She moved towards the door to Her room. When She came to where Satya stood, She motioned for him to bow down. As he

