

Ananda Vārtā

A quaterly journal dealing mainly with the divine life and teaching of Shree Shree Ma Anandamayee and with other religio-philosophical topics



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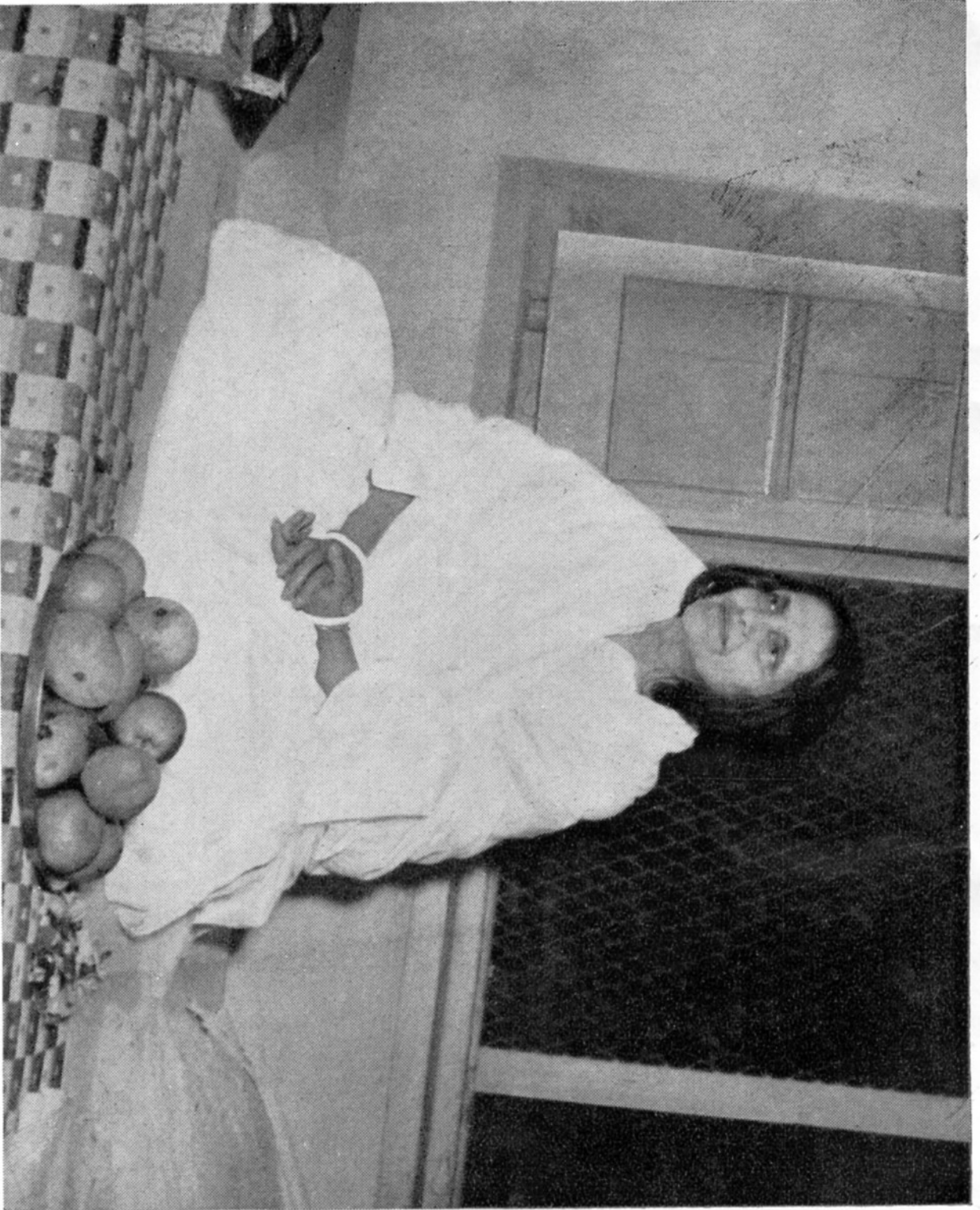


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CONTENTS

English Section

	Page No.
1. Matrivani	51
2. Conversations with Sri Sri Anandamayi Ma (Ranchi Ashram)—Professor B. Ganguli (Translated by Atmananda)	53
3. With Mataji at the Hardwar Kumbh—by Krishna nath	57
4. Beatitude By Accent—Elwood Decker ...	72
5. Talk with Mataji at Sukhtal—A. Devotee ...	77
6. The Background of our Letters—U. C. Dutt (III)	87
7. Matri Lila—(April 6th—July 15th 1962) ...	96



—Dehradun, May, 1962.

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

MATRI VANI

Svayam Bhagavān † is nameless and formless ; again, when viewed in His other aspect, He is of infinite names and forms. Always bear this in mind !

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Whatever comes to pass by the will of Him who is Will Itself, is beneficent. In a life that moves within worldly considerations, conflict is natural. To persevere with steadiness in the movement that ends in Self-realization is man's duty.‡ A glimpse of one's own essential nature

† *Svayam Bhagavān* The supreme Ātman Itself, conceived as the Supreme Lord, endowed with infinite power, boundless compassion, unlimited knowledge, love and beauty, The term *Svayam Bhagavān* occurs for the first time in the *Srimad Bhāgavata*, in connection with *Sri Krishna*.

‡ On another occasion *Mataji* said : "...it is said that there are two kinds of currents in human life : the one pertaining to the world, in which

gives bliss. The mind that aspires after bliss is really aspiring to its own Self, which is its mother—even though the view that the mind is the child of its own Self may be imaginary. Whose, after all, are the movements of the mind? Mine of course—in fact, I myself. If one remains ever steeped in the rhythm of one's true nature,* how can one possibly go wrong, or experience misfortune, or lose one's way? Where is the chance to even think of these possibilities? When one treads the path, in other words practises *sādhana*, is it not one's duty to keep one's gaze constantly fixed on one's chosen ideal? It has to be admitted that without the taste, the experience of inner joy, one does not find the energy to forge ahead; yet, if *sādhana* is one's purpose in life, one must not allow it to become shrivelled and emaciated: to keep it well sustained by nourishing food is man's unceasing duty. It is interruption that produces ill-health. Although it is true that without His touch the child *sādhana* cannot reveal itself, nevertheless one must keep one's winkless gaze fixed on the light one has obtained so far. Every moment is pervaded by Him, by His contact, His touch, His advent, His acceptance, His victory.

want follow upon want; the other of one's true Being. It is characteristic of the former that it can never end in fulfilment—on the contrary, the sense of want is perpetually stimulated anew. Whereas by entering the latter man will become established in his true nature and bring to completion the striving which is its expression. Thus, if he endeavours to fulfil himself by entering this current, it will eventually bring him to the perfect poise of his own true Being." (Words of Shri Anandamayi Ma, p. 30.)

*"...man's true nature flows towards God alone." (Words of Sri Anandamayi Ma, p. 67),

a mother behaves according to the needs of her child. Just as a mischievous boy has at times to be taught by punishments, similarly men of demonic nature have to be improved by making them afraid. A mother does exactly what is best for her children. The Great Mother manifests in all guises and appearances. She is both with attributes (*saguṇa*) and beyond (*nirguṇa*).

Question : When God is invoked as the mother, why is there no response ?

Mataji : There surely is ! Great souls have shown this by their experiences. Invoke Her in any way that will make Her respond. When a child, absorbed in his play, weeps, the mother does not come to console him. But if the child cries disconsolately, she will certainly hasten to her darling's side. At times, even when the child does not cry, but leaves his play and stands aside, the mother comes to him. By play is meant the play of life in the world (*saṁsāra*).

Question : Is the Mother more compassionate towards an ill-natured child ?

Mataji : The Mother's compassion is equal for all. Your own nature will dictate you what to do. A "Mother" is called one who forgives, and apportions to her child exactly what is most beneficent to him. The great Mother is all-pervading and full of goodness.

Question : Suppose an atheist lives an ethical and righteous life ; is he nevertheless on a lower level than the faithful devotee ?

Mataji : An ethical life purifies the mind. Even though one may have no faith in God, if one believes in some Superior Power or has a high ideal, this also will serve one's purpose. By living an ethical life one progresses towards the realization of the Divine. If one believes in supermen, can it be said that one does not believe in God ? To believe in God under a particular name is also a way.

Question : In the age of science it is difficult to believe in God.

Mataji : By studying science the thirst for knowledge is aroused, and thus one will awaken to the search after Truth. But the truth that denies God and all deities, is a partial, one-sided point of view—it is not comprehensive vision. An integral, complete vision unites the point of view of science with that of faith. In a full vision, the standpoints of the believer and of the non-believer meet. To lay stress on righteousness and ethics will educate your character and eventually lead to perfection. A complete, unobstructed vision will open out. By accepting your own line wholly and with all its implications, you will finally realize all lines of approach.

Question : Having accepted something as an axiom, why should questions still arise ?

Mataji : So long as one has not attained to direct knowledge, questions are bound to crop up. As long as you dwell in the realm of the mind, there will be questions. Here, there is time and death. Time and death are of the mind, of that which can be taught and learnt. Beyond the

mind there is neither space nor time or death. On attaining to final equilibrium, the axiom will become irrefutable truth.

Question : If I live depending on God's Grace, what will happen. ?

Mataji : At every instant you are changing. As you go on being transformed more and more, you will reach a state where there are no more questions, no more change, only Grace and Grace alone.

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“When thinking, think of Him, when working, do His service. Pilgrims must keep on advancing on their journey. To spend one's days practising the presence of God means to progress on the pilgrim's path.”

—Sri Anādamayi Ma

With Mataji at the Hardwar Kumbh

BY KRISHNANATH

The *Samyam* and *Bhāgavata Saptahs* at Shuktal last year were not succeeded by Mataji's stay at some quiet retreat where one could follow Her as on the Gomati Bank after Naimisharanya.* Back in the worldly atmosphere, the hurly-burly of life in Bombay and Poona, whatever spiritual strength one had acquired at Shuktal was soon dissipated. As one friend put it, the battery got exhausted and was in sore need of being recharged. Swami Akhandanandaji in his final exhortation at Shuktal had told us, in his inimitable way, that God's name 'Narayana' was the clue to His address ; it means 'one who resides in the heart of man' and certainly one must always try to search for Him there. But intellectual understanding of this truth is not enough ; there has to be actual realization and this is an achievement possible only for a few rare souls. Ordinary mortals need spiritual nourishment at the feet of saints from time to time. Where could I seek such sustenance better than in the presence of Mataji ? Where was She ? Could I go and be with Her for a few days ?

With these thoughts in my mind I happened to visit Mataji's Ashram in Poona one evening towards the end of March 1962. There I learnt that Mataji was at Hardwar for the holy festival of Kumbh, which is celebrated there

* Vide the article 'With Mataji on the Bank of the Gomati River' in Nov. 1961 and Feb. 1962 issues of *Ananda Varta*.

once in twelve years ; that Sadhus from most of Her Ashrams had flocked to join Her there to be present on the great day, the 13th of April, on which it was most auspicious to have a dip at Har-ki-pawari. I had heard of the great sanctity attached to *Kumbh snān* (bathing in the Ganges during Kumbh), but had never attended it. It had also unfortunately become associated with the great tragedy that had taken place at Allahabad some years ago, when four or five hundred people got trampled under foot in a stampede, and had thus acquired the character of a dangerous adventure. But with Mataji there could be no risk and I felt a strong urge to go.

As I was revolving in my mind how to set about this project, I got help from all sorts of unexpected quarters. This is worth relating as an illustration of what I have always looked upon as assistance, which invariably comes from Mataji when you desire a good thing ardently. A notice came announcing that an official meeting which I had to attend was to be held in Delhi on the 2nd of April. This would bring me close to Hardwar at the right time. On its heels followed a letter from Dr. Pannalal offering to share with me a room in Hardwar, which he had rented from the first of April in a dharmasāla next to Raja Solon's of Śiv Temple where Mataji was staying. That was a god-send because accomodation was most difficult to get in Hardwar at this time. Dr. P. had stated that it was necessary to get inoculated against cholera before entry into Hardwar would be permitted. Someone mentioned a Municipal Dispensary close-by and I had only to walk in there to get the prick. Thus the trip to Hardwar for Mataji's *darśana*,

of which I had not even thought a few days before, was arranged for me.

Even so, everything was not such smooth sailing as I had expected. The first shock came in Delhi when Dr. P. expressed his inability to keep the Hardwar tryst as, not being too well, he was feeling unequal to braving the dangers of infection inevitable in a place invaded by a horde of pilgrims. I had relied on his company and local knowledge to take me safely to my destination, but now I had to go all by myself ! The next hurdle was to get reservation on the night train. Here there was a complete block for several days. There was no alternative but to pull strings and a high railway official managed to get me a reservation for the fifth of April.

My good luck followed me to Hardwar where, but for it, I would have found myself stranded right in the beginning. Not realizing that Hardwar is the home of temples, I had thought that the Rajah of Solon's Śiva Temple would be so well-known that anybody could direct me. But Dr. P. had taken the precaution of giving me full instructions and even drawing a sketch map for locating the place where I was to stay.

In Mataji's Ashram I traced Swami Paramanandaji who showed me Dr. P's room in the Champadevi Dharmaśala next door. The room was occupied by two Swamis who vacated it for me. Thus I found myself the sole occupant of a fair sized room and an adjacent bathroom. This was indeed a luxury because all the other rooms were filled to capacity and pilgrims were occupying every available space

outside. It was only during the last three days that Dr. P. and three other members of his family joined me but then, though I had less space, I had more comforts because of their company and the servants they brought with them. What made Dr. P. change his mind? When I went to offer my *pranāms* to Mataji, She enquired about him and I told Her that he was afraid to come. "What is there to fear in this place?" She said, and asked me to write to him to come. Who can resist when Mataji calls like this?

I must apologize for making myself the central figure of this long introduction when one of our main objects in going to Mataji is to forget our ego and cease to think about 'I' and 'mine'. My object, however, is to show how, when one desires to be with Ma, help comes unsolicited from everywhere. I experienced this again and again during my stay as will be seen from the later part of this narrative.

The Śiva Temple in which Mataji and Her entourage were accomodated was built by the Rajah of Solon in fulfilment of his father's long cherished ambition to erect a temple of Lord Śiva at Hardwar. Its frontage consisted of small rooms on both sides, just like those in the *dharma-sala* next-door in which I was staying. In the middle was a porch-like passage which had to its right a two storied building, on the top of which the Raja himself stayed. One of the lower rooms was occupied by Dr. Gopinath Kaviraj. The porch led on to a court-yard. On the right was a fountain and a platform, behind it the cook-house. The space on the right, which was open, had been enclosed to serve as a dining place. Next to the platform was the Śiva Temple with a corrider all round for circumambulation.

Beyond the temple was a fairly big hall for *kīrtana* and religious discourses. It had two stories of rooms all around. Above the hall were over-looking balconies on three sides. Mataji and her mother, Didima, were staying in two adjoining rooms upstairs, just behind the balcony on the left.

This temporary Ashram of Mataji was all agog with activity, not so much in connection with the Kumbh mela, as with the celebration of Didima's *Sannyāsa Utsava*. It appears that Didima had been initiated into *Sannyāsa* at the last but one Kumbh, in Hardwar, i.e., 23 years ago, and I had unwittingly come to participate in these celebrations, which were starting the next day, the 7th of April, ending on the 13th. These were of special significance to those inmates of the Ashram who had received *dīkṣa* (initiation) from Didima, and so they were carried out with great enthusiasm. Hiruda officiated as the priest. What a contrast to the mechanical, lifeless, laboured worship which one usually sees performed by professional priests! Every morning at 5-30 A. M. there used to be an *āratī* in Didima's room, which Hiruda performed with great devotion. We would then all troop in and do *praṇām* to her. As Ma's room was next door, we were privileged to go in and offer our *praṇāms* to Her also. After this we all came down to the hall for the daily morning *kīrtanas*. Here Hiruda had introduced an exciting innovation. After the *Mātrikā-dhyāna*, when we came to the "*Jai Śiva Śankara*" *kīrtana*, he would spring up with the harmonium slung round his shoulders, and start moving or rather dancing, round the Śiva Temple. We all followed in procession, singing and keeping time, with Munindra playing the drum, Dasu the

gong and some others the cymbals. The remaining *kīrtana* and the *Guru pranām* would be finished in the hall by 6-15 A. M. We were then free to do our morning ablutions.

At 7-50 A. M. the soul-inspiring chant of *Satyam Jñānam Anantam Brahman* would be sung by Vibhuda, as during the *Samyam Saptahs*, in preparation for the silent meditation from 8 to 8-30 A. M. This was followed by the chanting of the *Gita*, *Chandi*, *Upanishads* and a discourse on the *Bhāgavata*. Then from about 9-30 A. M. for an hour was performed a very elaborate puja of Didima in the corridor of the Śiva Temple. Vibhuda or Chhabi Banerjee generally sang melodious *bhajans* during the ceremony. But what enthralled me most was the statuesque pose in which Didima sat throughout and the extreme fervour and meticulous attention to detail with which the whole ritual was performed. The *mudras* (signs that the priest made from time to time, the delicate gestures with which he offered flowers, water, etc., the loving care and tenderness with which he washed Didima's feet and dried them, gave her sweets and fruit to taste and then delicately wiped her mouth, the abandon and elaborateness with which he did the *ārati*, all was carried out with such exquisite grace and devotion that made a deep impression on everybody. The memory of it will ever be treasured by me as the ideal way of doing worship. Mataji usually watched from the balcony or the hall and came in towards the end to offer a garland. *Prasāda* consisting of fruit and sweets would then be distributed. On the last day i.e., the 13th, Didima gave everyone a handkerchief with some dried fruits tied in it.

In the afternoon, from 4-30 to 5 p.m., Narayana Swami explained the *Yoga-Vasishtha*, and from 5 to 6 or sometimes till later, visiting Mahatmas spoke on various spiritual topics. The blind Swami Sharananandaji, in answer to a question, exhorted us smilingly to cease worrying about the difficulties of others in realizing God and to concentrate on our own efforts. He explained how the loss of his eyesight had been beneficial to him. Sri Krishnananda Avadhutaji spoke on *Sannyāsa*, which meant not only giving up all possessions but also the ego, which was most difficult. One Swami from the Bombay Sannyāsashram, who had come in place of Mahamandaleshwar Maheshwaranandji, told us the story of *Ghantakarna*, the monkey who had stolen a temple bell with which he frightened all those who went to the jungle. Being hidden in the trees and invisible to them he was believed to be a terrible ghost. In order to exorcise him, all sorts of rites, *yajñas*, etc. had been performed without avail, till a fearless *sādhu* spotted and caught him by enticing him to the ground with gram and jaggery.

Another Mahatma spoke about God in our heart playing hide and seek because we search for him outside. He told the story of a disciple who was instructed about this truth by a fish that complained of thirst though it was in water and had its mouth open, till the disciple asked him to turn over which enabled it to drink water. He was told by the fish to do the same (turn his gaze inwards) to realize God. He also said that when we feel impatience at not realizing God after a few years of effort (*sādhana*), we must not forget the millions of lives we have spent without *sādhana*. He exhorted us not to pull out the seed from

the ground every now and then in order to see if it had taken root, but to give it sufficient time and chance. One day, Tapan, who is now Nirmalananda, spoke about the efficacy of taking God's name, how reciting the name brings enlightenment about its meaning by cleansing your mind, leads you to Supreme Knowledge and Bliss. He brought out graphically the need for persevering in the method of approach once adopted, instead of shifting to ever new ways. He illustrated this by the simile of how water is struck if one keeps on digging at the same place, but not if one goes on moving to different spots after digging only one foot deep. Swami Vishnuashramji elaborated on the meaning of the verse in the Gita about the relationship of objects, senses, mind, intelligence and God. He explained the three things we should aim at in this life, namely : (1) to look on another man's wife as our mother, (2) at other persons wealth as dust, and (3) at other peoples pains and pleasures as our own. The three things which we should know : Brahman is Truth, this world is ephemeral and the individual is in actual fact nothing but Brahman.

Sri Mahamandaleshwara Chaitanya Giri gave a series of discourses in the mornings which were greatly appreciated by everybody. He had given similar illuminating addresses on the Kathopanishad at Naimisharanya. The first day he spoke on *Brahma Vidyā*. His talk was full of humour. He started by pointing out how in this world the ability to live in luxury without doing any physical work is considered a sign of greatness, but how the so-called great men have neither peace nor happiness, but are constantly haunted by fear. He gave the example of Hitler whose food had to be tasted by

several persons before he could eat, who could not sleep in the same place for two successive nights, and whom nobody was allowed to see until first examined and screened by a host of his officers. Whereas a person who has mastered *Brahma Vidyā* is fearless and leads an impersonal life. In *Nirvikalpa Samādhi* he does not even move an eyelid and is filled with bliss. In the second discourse he explained the nature of *kevala anubhāva* and *kevala ānanda* (pure experience and unadulterated bliss), by pointing out how the pleasure we get from sense enjoyment is not on account of the external objects but due to our *Ātmā*. If we had the knowledge of the object without its physical presence then it would be its *kevala jñāna*, and the joy we get from our *Ātmā* is *kevala ānanda*. In the third discourse he explained how by the realization of God all our sorrows vanish. When we can withdraw our mind from outer objects then we can realize our Self *Ātmā*. That Self is even subtler than the sky, which is never affected by heat, dust, etc. It is the mind through which our soul comes in contact with *samsāra*. To wean it away from things of this world we have to realize that they are perishable and only lead to sorrow. Once we know that what we mistake for a serpent is actually a rope, it has no longer any dread for us. It is all a mental condition—आत्मैव ह्यात्मनो बन्धुगत्मैव रिपुरात्मनः। As an illustration of how the feeling of enmity creates enmity, he told the story of a man sleeping by a fire in the jungle in mid-winter. A lion comes attracted by the warmth and sleeps peacefully by his side, but the man on waking up, is terrified, hits it with his tongs and as a result the lion kills him. Our prayer should be that we should look upon all creatures as our friends. We must also realize that everything is ephemeral and must follow its own course,

like passengers in a train who get down at different stations and cannot be with us till the end. Do not get attached and you will not feel sorrow. In his last discourse Shri Chaitanya Giri explained how the *Bhāgavata* is an allegory, particularly how *Vrindāvana* stood for our own mind and *Rāsalīlā* was symbolical of the play constantly going on between our proclivities (वृत्तिः = गोपीः) and our self (जीवात्मा). *Krishna* as reflection of *Paramātmā*, thus forming one *Gopī* and one *Krishna* in the *rāsa* dance, with one *Krishna* = *Paramātmā* in the centre reflected in hundreds of mirrors all around as *jivātmās*. The main story of the *Bhāgavata* was itself symbolical : the serpent Takshaka is the worldly life (*samsāra*), the king Parikshita is the *jīva* whose fear of the dream snake is sought to be removed by the *Yogī* Shuka Deva by awakening him to the truth of *Advaita* (non-dualism). He related how Kabir cried when he saw grain being ground between two grinding stones, but was reassured when it was pointed out to him that the grain which stuck close to the pin in the middle was unharmed, signifying that those who take refuge in God remain safe. We must therefore always be anchored to God with one hand. This is what *Bhagavān* has said in the *Gītā*: तस्मात्सर्वेषु कालेषु मामनुस्मर युद्ध च । To forget Him is to go away from Him. He is always in the *Vrindāvana* of our heart. He is all-powerful. To illustrate how even death has to obey God's behests, the story was told of several workers in a forest being caught in a storm taking refuge in a deserted house. Finding that the lightning would every now and then almost fall on the house but recede at the last minute, they thought that one of them was doomed to die and the lightning was trying to save the others; in order that every one should not share his fate, they decided that one person at

