

Ananda Varta

A quarterly journal dealing mainly with the divine life and teaching of MATA ANANDAMAYEE and with other religio-philosophical topics

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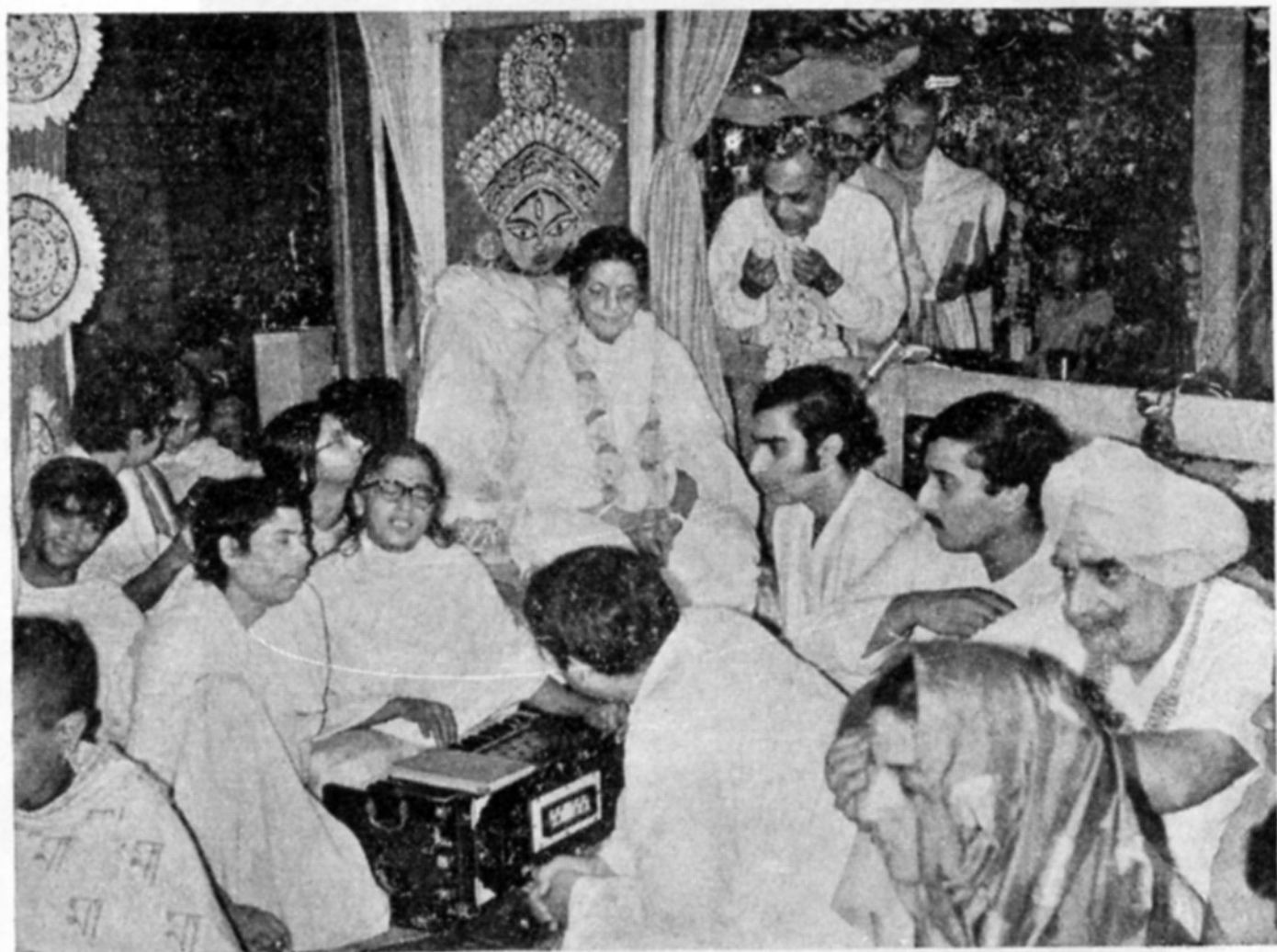
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Ma during Durga Puja at Hardwar. October '73

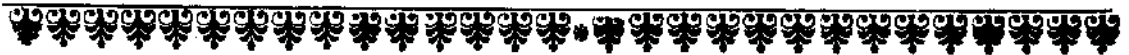
Ananda Vārtā



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[NO. 1



*“Of Him alone must be the spoken word,
All else is but futility and pain.”*

Mātri Vāni

Whenever you possibly can, sustain the flow of God's Name. To repeat His Name is to be in His presence. Just as a human friend opens his heart to you and tells you all about himself when you come to him, so, if you associate with the Supreme Friend He will reveal His true Being to you.

Do you refrain from bathing when faced with the waves of the sea? Surely, you plunge right into the midst of the waves and take your bath. Similarly, in the very thick of the tempests and difficulties of worldly life endeavour to maintain the remembrance of God, the repetition of His Name.



On the path of *sādhana* one should not allow anything bad or inauspicious to remain hidden in one's mind. The purer the mind is kept, the more it will help one to progress. When anger arises in your heart try to cast it away.

* * * *

Just as the mother cow cleans her little calf by licking up and absorbing into herself all the dirt, even so God draws unto Himself all the sins and shortcomings of His children and purifies and cleanses them. Regarding everyone as a manifestation of the One, do selfless service.

* * * *

Everything is pervaded by the Self. He Himself has permeated and is permeating the all. If you cry out for Him with genuine longing and desperate eagerness, He will be with you at that very instant. A mother knows exactly whether her child is weeping with real anguish and when she hears such sobbing she drops all her work and hastens to her dear one.

* * * *

The day that is gone returns not. To be a human being means to be Self-aware. Do not squander invaluable time. Beware of becoming a "Self-murderer"; realize that you are none other than the Immortal Self.

* * * *

Everyone without exception will have to put in strenuous effort. Men and women are equally endowed with the capacity to realize God. It is the duty of a human being to make human birth, which is such a rare boon, successful. Otherwise he has to continue in the round of births and deaths.

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Just as the same person is father, son and husband— and none of them any less than the other, so the paths of knowledge, devotion and action all lead to the One. All names are God's names and yet He is nameless and formless. Discover Him in any particular form and you will finally come to see that all forms are expressions of the One.

Form the Life of Mataji

Bithika Mukerji
Pilgrimage to Mount Kailash

(Continued from the last issue)

Wednesday, June 30st, 1937.

Our camp was set up at a place called Kalapani. We have travelled a distance of about eight miles only. The guide Sendel Singh says that although tomorrow's lap of journey will not be more than five miles, the road being extremely bad, it will be advisable to start after breakfast as the business of cooking, washing up, etc. will become increasingly difficult from now on.

Thursday, July 1st.

We started at 11 a.m. in a down pour. There is practically no road to be made out now. Only the locals seem to have a general sense of direction. We are given to understand that sometimes even the shepherds get lost. When lost in these trackless vast mountain regions the men allow their herds to lead. The sheep unerringly find their way back to their villages.

A lonely trek. We picked our way with great difficulty over the rough and rocky ground. The only people we met were some traders camping with their herds on their way down to trading posts. We were drenched and numb with cold. At about 1.30 p.m. the guide announced camp at a place where we

saw a few huts made of rough stones stuck one on top of another. These shelters were for sheep. The floor was caked with the dung of animals. Notwithstanding all this it was a haven of comfort from the chilling cold. Parvati had brought some firewood. She now managed to get a small fire going in one of the huts. Some of us crouched over this fire most of the time. The dirt and lack of ventilation did not weigh with us at all. We somehow managed to prepare a meal and eat it. The cold was really paralyzing. It seemed to penetrate through all the blankets we could use. The name of this place is Dobra.

Friday, July 2nd.

We were ready to start but it continued to rain quite heavily. The grooms brought the horses down from the hills where they had been let off to graze yesterday. But the guide decided not to travel today. The road would be too dangerous, he said.

Father and Bhaiji are not too well. The air is so rarefied that all of us are suffering from varying degrees of breathlessness. Tomorrow we are to cross Lipu. We shall climb up to a height of 18,000 ft. and again descend to 16,000 ft. We have to reach Taklakote tomorrow. Under Ma's direction I made out separate portions of the antidotes for dizziness and breathlessness. Everyone was to carry his own share of the antidotes. With amazing forethought Ma had made me bring all kinds of stuff which we now were so glad to have. She like others had no previous experience of climbing to this height. It was a constant source of surprise to me, how she had anticipated our needs under these novel and strange conditions. She

herself appeared to be her usual self, always the same, very much at home in these new surroundings and among strange people.

It is so cold that I cannot write properly. My fingers are so stiff that I can grip the pen only with the greatest difficulty.

Saturday, July 3rd.

We started in a drizzle and climbed steadily. The path that we traversed was too fearful to contemplate. We gradually came to snow-covered regions. It seemed to me that we were going over a narrow bridge through an ocean of snow. The horses picked their way stumblingly and precariously. There was nothing but snow all around. After negotiating Lipu Pass we started on a descent. We got off the horses and walked as the incline was too steep. There was many a stumble in the snow but nobody was hurt. Bholanath with undiminished enthusiasm kept track of the entire party, moving up and down the line to see if everyone was able to negotiate the path. When we arrived in Taklakote at sundown, he clapped us on the shoulders and congratulated us on our achievement.

The guide had gone ahead and had our tents pitched by the time we staggered in. The local people came and stood around silently watching our arrangements for the camp. They did not seem to welcome us as at other places.

Later we were informed by our men that they were robbers and dacoits, a constant source of threat and danger to pilgrims. The Government does nothing to suppress them and they are a very powerful community. Some of the men of our group and Sendel Singh were carrying firearms because they have

to be repeated again and again. One of the grooms said that it was the syllable "Om." All housetops were flying small pieces of coloured cloth like strings of bunting. Today's road was not too bad. We were made to keep close together all the time by the guide as a precaution against attacks from robbers. There were no trees or shrubs but we saw small stretches of cultivated land. We rode across innumerable mountains. I do not know how Sendel Singh plans the trek. To us it seems that we ride over unchartered land. A small group in the middle of sometimes a vast silent valley of snow, sometimes towering mountains on all sides. The unmarked road seems to stretch endlessly. At an appropriate time the guide declares camp at the wayside, following some sense of location which is quite incomprehensible to us. For one night this becomes home. Then it is time again to strike camp and move on through the same silent scene of beautiful mountains. There is an overwhelming impression of solitude and stillness on this journey.

Monday, July 5th.

Father suffered a little from breathlessness. Ma persuaded him to sit in her dandee today while she rode his horse. We started at 10-30 a. m. after our usual very business-like main meal for the day. At 2 p. m. Sendel Singh called halt at a place called Gouripahar. He chose this place because there was feed and water for the horses. We were glad of a longer period of rest and welcomed the early camp.

Tuesday, July 6th.

We started comparatively earlier today. We carried hot

tea in flasks. Ma was on horseback today also as father was still suffering badly from shortness of breath.

We had been meeting odd-looking riders as we travelled this lonely trek. These, we were told, were the robbers who are a menace to the pilgrims. This morning we saw two riders who came close and rode alongside. They were armed. We were surprised to see that their right hands were uncovered even in this icy cold. Later on, Sendel Singh told us that they keep them that way so that they can use firearms quickly in case of need. After some time we saw two more men on top of a hill watching our approach. The first two raised their hands and signalled with their fingers in a peculiar manner. The other two then came down to the roadside and were joined by their friends. They were collected at a spot which we would pass following our path. Sendel Singh galloped ahead and joined this group. He talked to them while we slowly rode by one by one. After we had gone a little distance, he again cantered on and caught up with us.

Probably all guides are known to the dacoits or at least some of them are. A little further on we saw a few men sitting at a small camp of two tents. Sendel Singh again went ahead, dismounted and sat talking to them while we passed by. Then, grinning broadly he rejoined us on the road once more.

We had been feeling quite apprehensive since leaving Taklakote. The sudden appearance of these unfriendly looking armed men in this unbroken solitude was very disconcerting.

However all this was forgotten when we suddenly came up to a point from where we could see the great lake Manas Sarovar. The huge sheet of water was the colour of the blue sky overhead.

The two blues merged together at the horizon. It was a truly magnificent sight.

Father's dandee was slow in coming. Ma was still obliged to ride. All of us were concerned that she should be subjected to this discomfort. But Ma herself was her usual serene self.

Bholanath, Ma, Bhaiji and I were riding ahead of the others in the party. The coolies and Sendel Singh had gone ahead to pitch camp at a suitable spot. On our way to this camp, Ma suddenly dismounted from her horse and said she would wait for father. She asked the three of us to ride on to the camp. We were very reluctant to leave Ma quite unattended in such a lonely place but her *kheyāla* was not to be gainsaid. Tunu and Dasudada had also not arrived. So our party was split into different groups. Bholanath and Bhaiji walked off towards the lake. I came to the camp and decided to write in my journal while I waited for the rest of the party to assemble.

The big blue lake rippling in sunlight, surrounded by many-hued mountains was an enchanting sight. I saw swans of various colours. The sun was very welcome but the cold sharp wind did not allow it to be too effective.

Mount Kailash is three days' journey from here. The top of the mountain which is just visible shines like a silver dome in the sunlight. The rest of the party, as they came up gave a great shout of joy, saying "jai Kailashpati !"

Bholanath, Bhaiji and Ma were still away. We started preparing a meal. There has been no firewood for the last few days. The grooms procure for me some kind of thorny

little bushes and dry dung from places where herds of animals have taken shelter. The wind is so strong that it is not possible to use oil stoves but the guide says that this wind is mild compared to the usual gale that blows here.

We bathed in the lake. Bholanath called Ma aside and talked to her for some time. Ma then went for a stroll attended by Bhaji only. Parvati received initiation from Bholanath. It was no doubt a high point of fulfilment in her life. This young girl has impressed all of us by her piety and her devotion to Ma and Bholanath.

Cooking has become a strenuous task. The weak flame has to be guarded against gusty winds. More often than not the flames would be blowing anywhere but under the cooking pot. However, we somehow accomplished the business of cooking, eating and cleaning as best as we could and retired to bed at about 10 p. m. Ma had spent most of the time near the shore of the lake. There is a second big lake near the Manas which is called Rakshas Talao. The legend is that Ravana the king of the demons, had practised austerities at this spot for propitiating his adored deity, the Lord Siva, Kailashpati.

Wednesday, July 7th.

The wind usually subsides a little in the morning. We started at about 11 a. m. Although we are now used to the routine, yet it takes all this while to make our preparations for the day's journey. The path skirted the lake and we rode slowly along, marvelling at the beauty of the scene. We saw many species of birds after a long time.

We were informed that some pilgrims go round the lakes which means another week or so as the circumference is approximately sixty miles. We did not want to attempt this, so continued our journey to Kailash. On the way we were taken to visit a cave dedicated to the worship of Lord Buddha. We had seen many caves and Buddhist Temples from time to time. This cave was quite big, clean and well maintained. Lamps were burning in front of the images. The stacks of Buddhist Scriptures looked well preserved and well cared for. We were informed that lamas are deputed to these cave shrines for a period of three years each. The lama hands over charge to his successor at the time of his transfer. We saw many musical instruments too. Our camp for the night is at a place called Ju-gompha. We could not get anything with which to light a fire. The hurricane lamps had been out of order since a long time. So we just decided to make a scrap meal of *sattu* (roasted gram flour which is edible without cooking). Much later it was discovered that Ma had been given raw wheat flour instead of *sattu*. We were so paralysed with cold that we were not even able to distinguish the one from the other. Ma, realizing our condition, did not say anything but suffered this discomfort in her usual manner of acceptance of such odd services that we more often than not render to her.

We had planned to make an early start but the cold defeated us. It began to drizzle. The coolies also are feeling the effects of this deadening cold. They are in the habit of drinking alcohol to keep warm, but even this is now ineffective it seems.

We could start a little before noon. The flowers in this remote region are a fantastic sight. The mountainous plateau that

we traverse looks like the cultivated garden of a connoisseur. Small thorny bushes are smothered in tiny flowers of all hues. They do not look wild or unkempt but as if they had been arranged and planted with a view to colours. The numbing cold distracts the mind from enjoying the marvellous beauty of this mountainside.

At about six in the evening we pitched camp at the foot of Mount Kailash. This is a big field of snow. The white dome of Kailash glittered like silver in the last rays of the sun. The name of this location is Boond.

Friday, July 9th.

Today we start on the *parikrama*. This entails going around on three sides of the holy mountain and then the *parikrama* is terminated by bathing in the holy lake called Gourikunda. This also concludes the pilgrimage.

We wanted to start early but it was almost noon before we were ready. We travelled a very short distance and passed a village called Dhanken. This is quite a big place and is probably under the jurisdiction of the King of Bhutan. After a long time we could buy some fresh milk and butter. We pitched our camp in another field of snow at 4. p. m. Everyone is suffering from shortness of breath. The cold is too overpowering.

I think I have so far not written about a very strange phenomenon. From Taklakote a black dog has joined our party, so to say. The odd thing is that he invariably trots behind Ma's horse or dandee. He takes no notice of anybody else. When we pitch camp the dog sits near Ma. He doesn't move till she is ready to start, and then goes along with her. One day

Ma put her hand on his head and stroked him. The dog doesn't look like the shaggy mountain dogs, yet he seems to be managing well in this cold climate.

We rode through a few snowfalls. It is snowing quite often now. This region is not as desolate or bare of human habitations as the tracts of lands beyond Taklakote. We often come across the camps of traders who are taking herds of sheep or yaks to trading posts. When they see us they come out of their tents and stare curiously at us. We see many different kinds of dresses, e. g. Bhutani, Nepali, Tibetan, and other types too. The coolies can talk to some of these groups because they speak the same language. There are beggars as well. They raise their thumbs which is supposed to be a gesture of supplication. It is customary to give them some food stuff.

We camped at a place called Sarsho.

Saturday, July 10 th.

We started at noon. For the last two or three days the journey has taken us through huge fields of snow, broken by steep climbs and also descents. We camped at 4 p. m. We had seen the Holy Mountain from three sides. We could hear the sound of a heavy rush of water near us. From a cave nearby Parvati brought us some incense and *vibhuti*. This *vibhuti* is from the *yajña* performed to Mount Kailash.

Tomorrow will be the hardest day of the journey. We must climb up to 22,000 ft to Gaurikunda. This will conclude the *parikrama*. And it also means the fulfilment of the object of the pilgrimage. The road by all accounts is difficult and we cannot take the dandee. This means that father also must go on horseback. He is suffering very badly from shortness of

breath. Someone suggested that he should not attempt the climb and that he and I could stay behind till the rest of the party come back. Bholanath, however would not hear of it and he put new vigour and courage in those who were feeling slightly shaken by the rigours of the journey.

Ma suggested that we each pack a ration of dry fruits, camphor and other necessities for tomorrow's journey. We would have to do without a meal. Ma herself has asked me to bring lots of camphor on this journey. We now found it to be indispensable as a measure of relief from having to struggle for breath. We made our preparations as if for a battle for the morrow and then tried to get some sleep as best as we could.

Sunday, July 11 th.

Nobody was able to sleep last night because of the cold. We made some tea to take with us and started as early as possible. Everyone wanted to keep a fast till we arrived at our destination so there was no delay due to cooking and eating.

The wind was not as fierce as it sometimes can be. The horses stumbled over the rocky path slowly. We went up in a steady incline for about three miles and were rewarded with the glimpse of our goal. Gaurikunda is simply a lake of ice. There are no temples or shrines. The pilgrims bathe in the lake and this concludes the ritual of the *parikrama* of the Holy Mountain.

We dismounted near the lake. A little is visible near the shore. The pilgrims have to break the ice and make a space to bathe in. Bholanath, Dasudada and Brahmachari Bharati bathed in the lake. The rest of us contented ourselves by touching the waters and sprinkling it on ourselves. Ma had asked

me to bring bundles of joss sticks. After the *ārati* of camphor and incense sticks we found the warmth from these tiny fires most welcome against the benumbing cold.

It is a tradition that companions should be treated to a meal on completion of the main objective. We distributed dry fruits and *halua* to all the people with us. There was nothing else that we could give them.

Mother's grace and Bholanath's great enthusiasm had enabled us to accomplish this arduous trek through the mountains. In the afternoon we started on the return journey from Gaurikunda.

(*To be continued*)

A Prayer of St. Francis of Assisi

Lord, make me an instrument of your peace.

Where there is injury, pardon.

Where there is hatred, let me sow love.

Where there is doubt, faith.

Where there is despair, hope.

Where there is darkness, light.

And where there is sadness, joy.

O Divine Master, grant that I may not so much
seek to be consoled as to console;

To be understood as to understand;

To be loved as to love;

For it is in giving that we receive—

It is in pardoning that we are pardoned;

And it is in dying that we are born to eternal life.

Matri Satsang in Solan

Swami Bhagavatananda Giri

(Translated from Bengali)

(Continued from the last issue.)

(4)

Monday, June 20th, 1955, 9 p. m.

For some days now we have been waiting with joyful anticipation for this particular time. When the evening *kirtana* and the 15 minutes of silence are over, we shall be allowed to listen to the precious words of wisdom emanating from Mataji's blessed lips. Our minds will be purified, our hearts stilled by a deep, abiding peace and our eyes feasted by the sight of Mataji's ever radiant countenance.

Mataji arrives and sits down in her usual place, winning everybody's heart by her sweet and gentle smile. For a little while there is pindrop silence. The eye cannot savour sufficiently of her appearance. We are spell-bound. No question occurs to us. We feel as if all our problems had already been solved, as if we had gone beyond the level of questions and answers, as if we had learnt what can be learnt and seen what there is to see. But have we really? Can a child ever know his mother? No, no, how can he? Let us then ask Mataji herself.

Question : Mataji, can a child ever know the true nature (*svarūpa*) of his mother?

Mataji : Why don't you reply yourselves?

Question : I have read in books that a child cannot know the true nature of his mother, nor recognize her.

Mataji : According to one's state of progress one may or may not recognize one's mother. Whatever anyone says from his own standpoint is right for him.

Question : Is "Being" (*Sat*) multiple or one ?

Mataji : Being (*Sat*) is one and one only. What you see from your point of view is different from what others perceive from their standpoints. Yet, Being is one but appears to be diverse according to different viewpoints.

Question : Why should this be so ? Why cannot everybody regard the One Thing in the same manner ?

Mataji : There is an infinite diversity of forms, of states of existence. Whatever anyone perceives at a particular state holds good for that state, for in what he sees he is not mistaken. But "There" (beyond forms and states)—there is true Sight, Realization, Enlightenment.

Question : Then, what one perceives from a position of ignorance will be rendered invalid in the state of Knowledge ?

Mataji : How beautifully expressed ! 'What an apt statement !'. (Mataji claps her hands and laughs.) Why did you omit the words : "according to his stage ?" This is a very profound matter, a very deep subject. Where there is no question of state or no state—how can this be expressed in language ?

Question : What can a child do for his mother ? He can merely call out : "Mother, oh mother !" from time to time, that's all !

Mataji : He can do as his mother bids him to do.

Question : If he does, what will happen ?

Mataji : "Nothing" will happen ! (*Mataji* laughs and everybody joins in)—or rather, one will arrive where the question of what happens or does not happen is not of the slightest importance.

Question : Can prayer absolve one from one's *prārabdhā* ?*

Mataji : To attain to such heights of prayer is difficult. Through prayer, *sādhana*, *japa* and so forth it may be possible to achieve this but it takes time. To destroy *prārabdhā* by any kind of effort or practice is not easy.

Question : Those who have attained to Supreme Knowledge, who are liberated, have they also to undergo their *prārabdhā* ?

Mataji : Not everything is understood by everyone. Questions pertain to various stages and levels. Some do not believe that anything can annihilate one's *prārabdhā* without the experience of the destined suffering or happiness. As an electric fan goes on revolving for a while by the impetus gained by its movement even after the switch has been turned off, so the liberated man undergoes his fate. Yet, it is also said that the fire of Supreme Knowledge can consume everything. The question of suffering or enjoyment arises only when one's consciousness is centred in the body. Is the sage, the liberated man identified with his body ? He is established in the realization of the

* *Prārabdhā karma* That portion of one's past actions which is bound to fructify in the present life and cannot be averted.

Ātmā, the one Self. Whether the body of the *Jivanmukta*† remains alive or not is quite immaterial to him. As far as he is concerned, there is no body. Therefore, where is the question of experiencing pleasure or pain? Now you may try to understand this !

Questioner : The *prārabdha* is not destroyed, only the body is destroyed.

Mataji : The real truth is that the existence of the body is not a hindrance. To grasp or understand this from outside is difficult. Everyone sees according to the spectacles worn over his eyes. But keep on praying ! So long as true knowledge of the Self does not supervene, how can the question of destroying one's *prārabdha* arise at all ?

Question : A doctor can surely prescribe medicine for curing diseases or advise methods for alleviating pain ?

Mataji : Manoj Babu had cancer. Drugs were used to dull his nerves. He did not feel any pain. Medicine was administered and he was thus spared from bearing pain. But was there no mental suffering ? Was his body not subjected to any other discomfort ? If one is bitten by an ant it hurts only slightly; while scorpion bite induces excruciating pain. Intense pain is unbearable. However, whether pain is severe or negligible depends on the state of one's mind. Some peoples, minds are so stable and firm that, just as the earth does not feel hurt or sore when struck, so do they experience no hardship even when

† *Jivanmukta* One who has attained to Liberation while living in the physical world.

their body is subjected to a severe blow. Prayer, the repetition of God's name, worship, the study of scriptures, all these have for purpose the realization of the Self, the revelation of the light of the Self (*ātmā jyoti*). One must strive for That which burns or melts everything—for the ultimate Goal—not for the annihilation of the *prārabdha*. When the sun rises, darkness disappears of its own accord, one does not have to try, strive or practise specially for this.

Question : A sage (*jñāni*) also falls ill. Does it not trouble him ?

Mataji : He who is bound to die is the one who sees death constantly approaching. One who is born has of necessity to die. But is there birth and death for the Enlightened-one ? For him there is neither coming nor going. Where can he go and whither can he come ? He ever remains immersed in his own Self.

Question : But people see that he is ill, that he is suffering.

Mataji : Let people see what they see. Where suffering is experienced one cannot speak of that sublime state.

Question : Do we not call *prārabdha* that portion of one's accumulated karma which, by the dispensation of the Almighty, has to be enjoyed and suffered by a person in his present body ?

Mataji : All this obviously refers to those who move within the cycle of birth and death. From their viewpoint there is the body, accumulated karma, the experience of happiness and sorrow, and all the rest. Whereas from where this

