

## **C O N T E N T S**

1. Mātri Vāni	...	... 217
2. Mātri Satsang in Solan — Swami Bhagavatananda Giri		... 221
3. Some Sayings of Maharshi Raman On Surrender — M. M. V.		... 227
4. The Nectar of Mataji's Words — Nilmoni		... 230
5. Holy Reminiscences — Jainath Kaul		... 235
6. Thoughts on Mataji — Jyotipriya ( Lynn Dalton )..		242
7. Swami Vivekananda's Vision : Synthesis of Opposites — Dr. Janardan Upadhyaya		... 252
8. Mātri Līla	—	... 256



# Ānanda Vārtā

VOL. XXI |

OCTOBER, 1974

| NO. 4

*The One who is the Eternal, the Atman,  
He Himself is the pilgrim on the path of Immortality.  
He is all in all, He alone is.*

## Mātri Vāni

In God's empire in this world there is creation, preservation and dissolution—continuous coming and going, age after age. When subjected to the agonizing grief of the departure of a loved-one there is no way except to resort to fortitude and patience. It is His dispensation. Pray for the salvation of your dear-one. Being plunged into that ocean of sorrow you will have to cross over it. Try to engage in the reading of sacred books, in japa and meditation, even if you are not in a mood for it. Do not make your loved-one miserable by your tears and your longing for him. Taking refuge in God is the one and only road to peace. In this material world keep up the remembrance of God even if there is no desire for it. Those who have been taken away are indeed in Him.

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That you have become aware of not knowing is also God's grace; and your aspiration is equally God's grace. The desire for Reality leads to the annihilation of all desire. If a person's intelligence is bent on the discovery of Truth and he is constantly engaged in religious acts, he cannot know at what moment the revelation of the One may supervene, crowning his efforts. Thus, whether you feel like it or not, so long as Enlightenment does not come, continue your pilgrimage on the Supreme Path with tenacious perseverance.

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For ages and ages you have already enjoyed so much of eating and sleeping, of worldly pleasures and comforts. The more one indulges in them the more prominent they grow. One must not give in to them. Man does not know at what particular time the Divine Power (*Śakti*) may manifest. Make up your mind never to abandon your spiritual practices until you have reached your Goal. You must keep on practising, binding every minute of the twenty-four hours. The more the mind remains absorbed in the thought of God, the stronger will that Power grow—and this Power is your companion on the path to the Supreme; remember this.

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Pray for God's mercy. Under no circumstances must you allow yourself to be knocked down. It is God's law to end suffering by suffering. Your pre-

sent condition is God's gift of the fruits of your past actions. Bear in mind that it is because God will take you into Himself that He is purifying and cleansing you.

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By the talk and the dealings of the people all round distraction and agitation are produced in the mind due to the clash of different kinds of atmosphere. Therefore one has been advised to eat pure food, to cultivate elevating thoughts and feelings and gentle, benevolent behaviour, to read books of wisdom. In order to avoid distraction and agitation, advance towards That which has brought you into being. Even now devote yourself to what will provide you with the capacity to remain undisturbed under all circumstances.

\* \* \* \*

What Ma says is for the good in every respect. Though the inclination may be lacking and one forces oneself to attend to one's religious exercises, then also God will most certainly grant the fruit of one's labours. The result of the action (*kriyā*) will be reaped as well as the result of the concentration of the mind; remember this! To complain that one has practised for a long time without any effect, will not do. In that realm bargaining has no place. In order that practice may become one's second nature, it is man's duty to remain ever yoked to it.

\* \* \* \*

God alone is concealed within all beings. So as to get first-hand knowledge of this one devotes oneself to religious exercises—to one's japa and meditation. To practise concentration for the sake of finding God is incumbent on man. In whatever direction one causes the mind to move, in that direction it becomes engrossed. Therefore, if one tries again and again to turn the mind towards God, if one persistently aspires to realize that one is eternally united with Him, then there is hope of finding the way that leads to His touch.

\*                     \*                     \*                     \*

That God has saved you from the attack of a poisonous snake is a great good fortune. Call this to mind whenever anger arises in you. Increase the number of your japa. Try to purify yourself. At the slightest indication of anger drink a sufficient quantity of cold water. Anger harms a human being in every respect. It produces the action of poison in the body. Pray to God to preserve you from this mood. To criticize people or to feel hostile towards anyone harms oneself and puts obstacles into one's path to the Supreme. If someone does something bad, you should feel nothing but affection and benevolence towards him or her. Think : "God, this is also one of your manifestations !" The more kindly and friendly you can feel and behave towards everybody, the more will the way to God, who is Goodness Itself, open out.



## **Mātri Satsang in Solan**

**Swami Bhagavatananda Giri**

( Translated from Bengali )

( Continued from the last issue )

(7)

Solan, June 12th, 1955.

Thanks to the hospitality of the Raja Durga Singh of Solan, we are spending this summer most enjoyably in the close vicinity of Mataji in the peaceful surroundings of mountainous regions. It is our utmost good fortune that Mataji is constantly near us. There is practically no distance between Mataji's room and the long, wide veranda assigned for satsang. Abiding as She is in this Himalayan country, Mataji appears to be the very embodiment of the Goddess Parvati Herself. Her eyes and Her countenance are ever radiant with an inner divine light. It is as if the Goddess Haimavati were continually pouring out Her infinite mercy on everyone in Her own courtyard. The door is ever open. The fountain of unbounded love is always spouting forth.

It is 9.30 p. m. Satsang commences as usual. A devotee asks : "I have heard that the observance of hospitality to guests is the bounden duty of all householders. It is said that the guest has to be looked upon as a manifestation of Narayana, the Lord of the Universe. Thus if he goes away unattended from the door of a householder, he takes away with him the merits acquired by the latter from previous

good deeds. On the other hand I have also heard that if gifts are misused by an unworthy recipient then the giver has to suffer the results of the evil use. So householders are torn between the devil and the deep sea ! If they are not generous to the guest their merits become annulled; again if they are charitable to an evil-doer, they have to suffer the consequences. Would Mataji kindly elaborate on this subject !

*Mataji* : Are you giving in charity ?

*Questioner* : I try to give as much as I can.

*Mataji* : If somebody bestows a gift and by means of this gift God is served, then the benefits of this good deed are bound to follow. Again, if someone receives a gift and spends the proceeds on drinking alcohol or the like, the donor will also reap the consequences. In God's kingdom justice is hair-splitting. Try your utmost to choose a worthy recipient for any gift. You must display your charity in such a way as if you were performing an obeisance to the Divinity residing in all sentient beings—be they even birds or beasts—regarding them as guises of God Himself. If your *pranāma* (obeisance) is not done in this spirit then an interchange of power (*śakti*) between the one who offers obeisance and the one who receives it takes place unavoidably, and the consequences of your gift, good or bad, have to be reaped. But if you regard everyone as a manifestation of the Supreme Being and are mindful of His presence, then there is no relationship of giving and taking in the act. While engaging in charity you must try to be wide awake to the fact that



you are merely giving away to the Lord in that particular guise what already belongs to Him. In this way the door is opened to receiving the fruit of the Supreme Offering. You all know the story of King Bali.\* Service to a guest is considered to be service to Narayana. A guest is the embodiment of Narayana. If Narayana is served, then sorrow and sin take to their heels.

*Question* : If one perceives that one's donation is likely to be misused, what is one to do ?

*Mataji* : The donation must not be made to the evil-doer as such; the gift must be to Narayana.

*Question* : Nowadays few guests come to partake of food. On the other hand they crowd in when there is a chance of taking something with them.

*Mataji* : Give only to Narayana. Don't look to see where your gift is being taken. In this way both you and the receiver benefit. You must serve your guests as if they were the personifications of your own *Iṣṭa* (Supreme Beloved).

*Questioner* : But, I have no *Iṣṭa*.

*Mataji* : Oh, you have no *Iṣṭa* ? He who has no *Iṣṭa* (Supreme Deity to be worshipped) is *aniṣṭa*, *an-iṣṭa* (evil). Pitaji, can you be evil ? Do you not love this little daughter of yours ? You come to her and still consider yourself

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\* The demon king Bali was a great devotee of the Lord, at whose mere asking he gave away the whole of his kingdom in heaven and earth, to be rewarded by the Lord's permanent Grace thereafter.

evil? (Subdued laughter). Mataji is silent for a few moments and then continues: "Pitaji, you are your own *Iṣṭa*. (Everybody now laughs loudly).\* The *Iṣṭa* never does *aṛiṣṭa* (harm) to anybody. Even though He may cause some suffering, this is entirely for your ultimate good and welfare. God removes sorrow by sorrow. He saves you from adversity through adversity. This is why He is called the Saviour from all pain and distress."

There is silence for some time. Mataji's words are being pondered over in everyone's mind. After a while another devotee asks "What is a simple course to be followed in order to become "anandamayi", filled with overwhelming joy?

*Mataji* : By entering the shelter of the Lord, by trying to take complete refuge in Him.

*Questioner* : I am always living in the shelter of the Lord's lotusfeet. There is no limit to His Love and Mercy, I am constantly aware of this. (The questioner's reference here is pointedly to the divine person of Mataji Herself). Mataji, realizing this, yet feigning to be ignorant, observes: "You yourself are indeed *ānandamayi*, it is your true nature, your own *Ātmā* (Self). Do you understand? Your own *Ātmā*—there is only one Brahman without a second. The eternal bliss of the Brahman is your own. The straight, simple path is the one which the Guru points out to you. With unshakable faith and unbounded love you must

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\* In reality there is only the One Brahman, the one Atman.

indefatigably proceed as a pilgrim along this Supreme Path.

*Question* : The Veda Sāstras may be considered to be the Guru of all. A Guru is he whose advice is acceptable and who takes you by the hand and leads you along the path of life. The Sāstras say : Satsang is a simple sādhana. The potency of a moment's satsang can wash away the sins of a million births.

*Mataji* : The love of satsang awakens only as a result of the Guru's grace.

*Question* : Can supreme ānanda come through satsang ?

*Mataji* : The effect of satsang is to open the entrance to the road leading to param ānanda (supreme bliss).

*Question* : Does one reach the goal ?

*Mataji* : First let the road be opened. Later only arises the question of reaching the goal or not, of receiving or not receiving Enlightenment. Eternal Realization, reposing in one's Self—such a state also exists.

*Question* : Even though one has discovered the road why does the door not open ?

*Mataji* : Can the same scabbard hold two swords ? Can there be worldliness and Godliness all at once ? How is this possible ? Just as sickness follows after a surfeit of enjoyment so does grief follow attachment. On the other hand, where God is, where life is lived in the shelter of one's Guru or *Ista*, in satsang and all the rest—can there be room for grief, delusion or joyless-

ness? When one has truly realized that one has found the road, then there is no trouble in proceeding along it, because He whose job it is to open the road for you, does so at the right juncture. He is not far off. He is constantly with you : all you have to do is to endeavour to go forward with firm resolve.

(To be continued)

**“He who has experienced the magic of prayer may do without food for days together but not for a single moment without prayer. For without prayer there is no inward peace.”**

*Mahatma Gandhi*

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## Some Sayings of Maharshi Ramana On Surrender

[ It is well known that Maharshi Ramana prescribed Self-enquiry—“Who am I”—in the first place. But if devotees complained that they had not the strength to do this, he recommended the path of self-surrender. Below are collected some sayings of the Maharshi on the same.—M.M.V. ]

“The indefinable power of the Lord ordains, moves and controls everything that happens……Knowing full well that the train carries all the weight, why indeed should we, the passengers travelling on it, carry the small articles of luggage on our laps to our great discomfort, instead of putting them aside and sitting at perfect ease?”

\*

To a devotee who asked how to obtain Divine Grace, the Maharshi said : “By surrender.”

\*

“Surrender is to give oneself to the original cause of one's being.”

\*

“Surrender to Him and abide by His Will…If you ask Him to do as *you* please, it is not surrender but command

to Him. You cannot have Him obey you and yet think you have surrendered. He knows what is best and when and how to do it. Leave everything entirely to Him. His is the burden; you have no longer any cares. All your cares are His. Such is surrender. That is bhakti."

\*

"Surrender can never be regarded as complete so long as the devotee wants this or that from the Lord. True surrender is the love of God for the sake of love and nothing else, not even for the sake of salvation."

\*

To a devotee who complained that complete surrender was impossible, the Maharshi said : "Yes, complete surrender is impossible in the beginning. Partial surrender is certainly possible for all. In course of time it will lead to complete surrender."

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"Instructions are necessary only so long as one has not surrendered oneself."

\*

"Surrender consists in giving oneself and one's possessions to the Lord of Mercy... Thus the Self is realized and Bliss results."

\*

“Surrender should not be verbal or conditional.”

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“Complete surrender to God means giving up all other thoughts and concentrating the mind on Him. To the extent we can concentrate on Him other thoughts disappear.”

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To a devotee who complained that, though he had surrendered himself, he was not making any spiritual progress, the Maharshi said: “If you have surrendered yourself, who are you to examine your spiritual progress? Leave that also to the Master.”

\*

“There is no difference between *Jñāna* and absolute surrender to the Lord, that is, in thought, word and deed. To be complete, surrender must be unquestioning. The devotee cannot bargain with the Lord or demand favours at His hands. Such total surrender comprises all; it is *Jñāna* and *vairāgya*, devotion and love.”

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# **The Nectar of Mataji's Words**

## **Informal Conversation with Ma**

Nilmani

( Translated from Bengali )

Varanasi, December 8th, 1972.

After a long time Sri Sri Ma has come to the Kashi Ashram to grace the occasion of the Bhagavata Saptah. Learning from Panuda's letter that Mataji would stay there for a week, I came to pay my homage at her lotusfeet. Recently, after about a year, Ma has broken Her silence. We were so eager to hear Her speak. Her sweet smiles and Her darśana were not enough for us, our hearts were thirsting for Her honeyed words. Mataji is now showering words on us like the first welcome rain of the season.

After the evening talk on the Bhagavata, I was standing on the veranda next to Mataji's room, waiting to be called by Her. Last year, during the Xmas holidays in 1971 at the Kanpur Bhagavata fortnight, I had waited in vain for such a call. Not for a "private" (an individual opening of the heart to Her about our own problems) but with the desire to have Her darśana and hear Her sweet conversation to my heart's content. The call came after some time. Nirvanda also entered Her room to take care of Her correspondence.

Ma asked me : How do you like the exposition of the Bhagavata here? I said : "It is very nice, easy to understand



and yet full of learning. The difficulty is that the pandit is speaking Hindi too fluently for many to grasp the meaning." Nirvanda said : "He has given some new ideas also." When asked what these new ideas were, I said : "One of them is that God's three great powers of creation, preservation and dissolution are vested in Mahasarasvati, Mahalakshmi and Mahakali. Mahakali is again split into Siva and Kali or Har Gouri. Mahalakshmi into Narayana and Lakshmi, and Mahasarasvati into Brahma and Sarasvati. The Paramātmā (God Almighty) has his work done through these six divine powers. The One who is the *Bhagavan* (Lord) of the bhakta, is the *Parameshwara* (Almighty) of the karmayogin and the Brahman of the *jñāni*. A true bhakta is not interested in the great powers of God, he wants to relish the *lilā* of the Lord. Therefore the Lord has discarded His power at the transcendental playground of Vrindaban and enacts His divine love play with Rādhā, his *hlādinī śakti*. Only by the grace of Rādhā does devotion awaken in the heart of the bhakta. *Parābhakti*\* has its place above *jñāna* (Knowledge), karma and yoga. Therefore the power of Rādhā is the loftiest and most sublime."

On hearing this, Gurupriya Didi remarked : "This is the philosophy concerning Krishna."

Sri Sri Ma said : 'You call it a new theory because you have not studied all the Sāstras. Have you gone through the eighteen Purānas ? Read and find out whether or not

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\* *Parābhakti* Supreme bhakti. It is said to accompany or follow the highest Knowledge. It is supposed to be an eternal state that is self-contained.

such an idea can be found in any of them. Anyhow, note down what you have heard and understood.”

A little later, while replying to a letter, Mataji asked Nirvanda to write: “Man must endeavour to remember God at every moment.” She went on explaining these words from all angles.

Afterwards in another context Ma said: “If you fix your mind on the thought of God, then cat-like inclinations will not arise in you.” She further elaborated. “The chief tendency of a cat is greed, its nature is to steal. It is always on the lookout, when and where milk or fish can be snatched away and eaten. This is its evil tendency, although it must be admitted that the kitten’s surrender to its mother is superb.”

“When a person serves God and always thinks of Him, evil tendencies such as greed, hypocrisy and so forth find no place in his heart. After these explanations Mataji again commented: “Does greed mean, greed for food only? Greed begets infatuation and infatuation, disaster. For instance: a man sees a beautiful woman and starts contemplating her. He reflects: “How lovely is her smile, how soulful are her eyes. Then he thinks about the colour of her sari, her ear-rings and so on and on. He is unable to put his mind to anything else. He is absolutely engrossed in these thoughts. This is the predilection of a cat. The attraction between man and woman is a cat-like propensity. Where is the place of God in such a heart?”

“On the other hand, a person who is living in the contemplation of the Lord, thinks of Him all the time. He

imagines His form from head to foot, and is ever devising ways and means of serving and pleasing Him. It is natural for him to meditate on the beauty, the qualities and the essential nature of God. Can he, like the cat, become enslaved by greed and delusion? This is why this body tells you to concentrate on God and not to imitate the behaviour of a cat."

On hearing all this, Nirvanda and I passed some remarks. Mataji broke out into hearty laughter and wanted to know the difference between analysis, commentary and criticism – as if She knew nothing !

I asked : "Ma, should a worshipper of Sri Krishna picture Him as having two arms and playing the flute or with four arms, holding the conch, discus, mace and lotus ?" Ma asked : "Why ? What do the Sāstras say ?" I replied : Both the descriptions are given in the Gitā and the Bhagavata : तेनैव रूपेण चतुर्भुजेन' ('Thy four-armed shape, O Lord)' and also 'दृष्ट्वेदं मानुषं रूपं तव सौम्यं जनार्दन' ('Beholding again Thy gentle human form'). Arjuna spoke thus after beholding the awe-inspiring, all-pervading form of Krishna. It is mentioned in the Bhagavata that in the prison of Kansa, Krishna after his birth first appeared to his parents Vasudeva and Devaki as Viṣṇu with four arms and then took on a human form with two arms. I have asked a number of learned men and sādhus, but none could give me a clear answer that would not leave any doubt. However, last year at Kanpur, I asked Swami Akhandanandaji. He replied : "Though we find both the descriptions in the Sāstras, my opinion is that a devotee who worships with the hope of some gain should concentrate on the powerful four-armed Lord. Whereas a

desireless (*niṣkāma*) bhakta should contemplate the ever-loving two-armed human form of Krishna playing the flute." On hearing this, Mataji expressed Her agreement with Akhandanandaji's version and then said: "It may be said of God that He is ever Himself poised within Himself; He is in all forms; everything is possible for Him."

Just then the bell rang for silence and we sat in meditation. While doing japa, I contemplated God as poised within Himself, in all forms, in many different forms, two-armed, four-armed, thousand-armed, armless, Jagannath and the limbless Narayana *Sila*. On opening my eyes in the dim light, I perceived Mataji lying down, covered with a white sheet, in deep absorption, limbless, in the luminous form of Narayani.

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"Knowing that one is but an actor on the stage of the world, one lives happily. Those who are dressed up in various disguises, must not forget their real nature. Verily, you are the offspring of the Immortal. Your real being is Truth, Goodness and Beauty."

*Ma Anandamayi*

# **Holy Reminiscences**

## **1. My First Darshan of Ma**

**Jainath Kaul, M. Sc.**

In the last week of November, 1955, I had my first darshan of Ma. The place was Kali Bari, near Birla Temple in New Delhi in a shamiana (large tent) that had been put up specially for the Samyam Saptah which was held there from 22nd to 29th November, 1955.

I had been interested in spiritual things right from my college days, the lives of saints, the speeches and writings of Swami Vivekananda and Swami Rama Tirtha being my favourite subjects of study. This interest had grown with the passage of time and in 1951, when a new job brought me to Delhi, I found better opportunities for *satsang*.

### **Prayer for Darshan of a Realized Soul**

By 1954, that is just a year before my darshan of Ma, the Unseen had begun to attract me so much that mere studies failed to satisfy me. I, therefore, started praying to God to give me a chance to meet someone in flesh and blood who had actually seen Him. In those days I would often sit alone and pray fervently somewhat as follows :—

“O Lord, I wish to see you, but I realize that I am totally unfit to have your darshan, as I do not possess the right quality of purity for it. In the circumstances, since I cannot have direct communion with you, please let me

have an indirect experience by meeting someone who may have seen you."

I did not know then what I was praying for, as God is not seen and known by anyone other than Himself. It is only when the ego dies that God is seen and when the ego is not there, he who sees Him is He Himself.

### **Meeting an Intermediary**

Anyway, determined to pursue my objective, I began meeting mahatmas and saintly people more frequently than before, but nobody made me feel that he had seen God, until one day chance took me to an Ashram, then called 'Nirbhay Dham' near the banks of the river Jamuna in Delhi. There I met a white-haired man dressed in a loin cloth whose name was Biharananda. His talks and looks impressed me much and I began visiting him almost daily in the evenings after office hours.

In the course of my close association with him, I learnt that he had been a very wealthy man with a flourishing cloth business in Chandni Chowk, Delhi, and that his son Balkishan Das was still carrying on that business. Biharananda, who is no more now, was Seth Biharilal when he met and took *dikṣā* (initiation) from a great mahatma—the son and disciple of the famous late saint Nirbhayananda of Nirbhay Ashram, Barot (Meerut), whose compositions, as recorded in "Nirbhay Vani" are well-known in that area.

### **I hear about Ma**

Biharananda, whom I called Swamiji, had travelled extensively all over India, and had for some time, as he told

me, even stayed with the outstanding sage of Uttar Kashi, the late Swami Tapovanam. After several months of *satsang* at Nirbhay Dham, I happened to ask Swamiji one day, "Sir, you have seen almost the whole country and met many great mahatmas. Who in your opinion, is today the foremost among them all in India?" He replied that he had not moved out of the Ashram (Nirbhay Dham) for some 10 to 15 years, but when still a wandering sadhu, he had found that the consensus among the leading mahatmas then was that in the spiritual hierarchy in India there were four sages on the top. Anxious to know who they were, Swamiji satisfied my curiosity by mentioning their names as Mata Anandamayi, Sri Aurobindo, Maharshi Ramana and Swami Tapovanam. At the time I had put the question (early in 1955), Sri Aurobindo and Maharshi Ramana had already taken mahāsamādhi, and so there were only two left, namely Mata Anandamayi and Swami Tapovanam.

After I had learnt this, a keen desire seized me to have the darshan of at least one of them. Swami Tapovanam, I was told, never came down below Uttar Kashi, and to a man so such immersed in the world like myself, Uttar Kashi, in those days appeared too distant. On the whereabouts of Mataji, Swamiji was unable to throw any light. And so several months passed and I continued visiting Nirbhay Dham as usual and having Swamiji's *Satsang*.

Then one day, in the fourth week of November, 1955, I learnt, I do not remember how, that Mataji was in town and I could have Her darshan in Kali Bari in New Delhi. I was naturally thrilled to know this and decided to go there with all the members of my family.

### **I go for Ma's Darshan**

It was around 11 a.m., I believe, when we arrived at Kali Bari and found Ma seated on the right of a raised platform at the far end in a shamiana, the right half of which was filled with women and the left half with men. We at once went right up to where Mother was seated and paid our respects individually by *pranāmas*. Although I did avail myself of the opportunity to look straight at Mother's face, I failed to notice anything extraordinary in it, despite my great expectations. Fortunately, however, we did not leave the place immediately after the *pranāma*, but sat down among the assembled devotees, my wife and children in the women's section and myself among men.

My thoughts, after I had sat down there, were somewhat as follows: 'Kaul, you are lucky to have had the darshan of one of the two greatest living sages of India. Of course, you have not noticed anything miraculous in Mother, but that does not really matter much. You wanted to see such a big saint and God has graciously fulfilled your keen desire. So you are now one of the privileged among the seekers in the country.' Just when thoughts of this kind were coming to me, I noticed that someone near Mother was requesting Her to say something, and as far as I recollect, She was replying that "this body" (meaning Herself) does not say anything, that is, does not make speeches. However, it soon became clear that Mataji was going to sing a *bhajan* or do some *Kirtan*.

### **Ma Reveals Her Divinity**

What Mother sang that day I could not make out, as



it was in Bengali and I was then a total stranger to that language. But the effect which Her voice produced on me was utterly unexpected and of a most extraordinary nature. As the words of the devotional composition, which came out of Her '*Srimukh*' (lotus mouth), reached my ears, they purified my entire being. Tears began to flow freely and my physical frame began to tremble. This reaction, which continued unabated while the singing lasted, made me feel that the voice I had heard was not a human voice, and, therefore, Ma was not only the greatest among the living Indian sages, but also a Being of another dimension.

I was then 48 years old and had heard many a devotional piece, including highly uplifting recorded music, but never in my whole life had any vocal programme produced such a spontaneous reaction in me as I had experienced that morning. And so I found myself saying again and again in my mind that Ma was superhuman and that Her darshan, which I had had a few minutes earlier, although from very close quarters, had really been no darshan at all, for I had failed to catch the Divine in Her.

Just then the *bhajan* stopped and I noticed that Ma was preparing to leave the place. As I saw Her getting down from the dais and covering the short distance to the narrow passage between the shamiana and the compound wall of Kali Bari on the right, I rushed out from where I was seated and took up a position just outside the entrance to the shamiana and at a distance of some 15 feet from the passage (between the front right corner of the shamiana and the compound wall) out of which Mataji was shortly to emerge, accompanied as usual by a few girls in white.

I was still trembling and my eyes were wet with tears when I had planted myself in that position, with my entire being awaiting with hundred percent concentration the moment when Ma would again become visible and I would have Her darshan with my new faith about Her divinity firmly planted by Her in my heart and mind.

And when She did emerge from that passage, Her eyes met mine, and this time the effect was even more pronounced than what Her voice had produced a little earlier. I found myself quivering as I had never experienced before, with tears flowing spontaneously and without a break, as the divine vision passed before my eyes, leaving me speechless and spell-bound. I kept on turning in the direction in which the party was moving till the never-to-be forgotten sight disappeared from my view.

### **Ma as Mt. Everest, I, a grain of sand**

After gradually calming down, I began to take stock of the astounding situation in which I found myself. First of all, I felt completely convinced that I had, for the first time in my life, come face to face with someone, who, though moving about in the world like human beings was certainly not an individual like anyone of us. Secondly, the inexplicable experience, which I had gone through, made me feel that I was like a grain of sand at the foot of Mount Everest which Mataji was in the spiritual field. From this I concluded that there was nothing in common whatsoever between Her and myself and therefore the question of my entertaining any thoughts of coming nearer to Her just did not arise. Any attempt on my part at seeking Her company, I clearly felt-

then, would be as absurd as that of an unskilled and useless village urchin wanting to have acquaintance with, say, the President of India.

And, therefore, I did not stay back at Kali Bari to enquire as to who Ma was, where She lived and whether it was possible to spend some time in Her blessed presence. My thoughts went back to Nirbhay Dham, and Swamiji appeared in my eyes as one functioning on the human level and therefore, as someone with whom I could mix freely. Firmly convinced of the unbridgeable and hopeless inequality between Ma and me, and considering myself as a miserably insignificant creature when compared to the divine Being that Ma was, I returned, with my wife and children to our world of ordinary human beings to which I belonged, with absolutely no plan or hope or even a thought of ever attempting to meet Mother again in this life.

(To be continued)

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“At all times keep your mind immersed in the thought of God, so that there may be no possibility of straying into a path that leads to misery.”

*Ma Anandamayi*

## Thoughts on Mataji

Jyotipriya (Lynn Dalton)

My recollections of when I first heard about Anandamayi Ma converge in what most people would call a series of "co-incidences". Those of us who have some small degree of familiarity with Mataji's ways are more fond of saying, "it was all Mother."

I cannot remember if I first read about Mataji in Sri Yogananda's "Autobiography of a Yogi", or if I first heard Her name through my friend Haripriya Capy, who by 1963, when I first became interested in yoga, had already been to see Mataji.

Although I felt attracted to Mother, I was still in my teens at the time, and the idea of India seemed remote. I became very involved in the teachings of Sri Yogananda, not realizing at the time how Mataji was paving the way to Her feet. At the back of my mind I always held and nurtured the idea that some day I would go to India and see Mataji; I used to think, "perhaps by the time I reach forty."

Little could I have dreamt that shortly after my twenty-ninth birthday I would be jetting to the Land of my dreams, Mother India.

Through the '60's, Mataji's reality was periodically brought home to me. Every so often I would meet Haripriya. She would bring things that Mother had touched and blessed, and although I could not appreciate them at the time

( can I truly appreciate them even now ? ), I received them gratefully.

I recall one meeting with Haripriya and Shraddha Davenport just after Haripriya's second or third trip to India. Haripriya was a "live wire". I can never forget how she radiated Mataji's pure vibration, the quality of Light around Her. It impressed me deeply; yet when she suggested that I write to Mother, something held me back; I wasn't ready.

It was not until 1970 that Mataji made Herself felt beyond any doubt. I had been wearing a set of beads ( which Mother had blessed ) that had been given to me by Haripriya many months back. One day as I was preparing to bathe, I was taking the beads off; suddenly, I thought of Mother.....or I should say, She filled my entire being. Waves of bliss surged through me and I cried for joy. At that instant, Mataji had taken over.

It was barely two weeks later that I received a phone call from Shraddha. We had not talked or seen one another for years; yet, she had felt intuitively the urge to contact me and tell me that at long last she was going to India to see Mother. Apart from being very thrilled for her, I was suddenly extremely anxious to write a letter to Mataji and have Shraddha take it with her on the chance it might be read to Ma. It all seemed entirely spontaneous and "unplanned"; and as is often the way with Mataji, right down to the last minute. I mailed my letter to Shraddha and it arrived the very day before her departure.

Shraddha returned late in 1970 with a reply from

Mother, and immediately Her blessings were felt. Some objects that She had blessed were passed on to me; and there were wonderful films which Shraddha and her husband Satya had brought back with them. Mother must know that in America we need all these gadgets because we do not have Her physical presence here. So we are endlessly exchanging pictures, viewing films, and making tapes of Her voice. This is how a very close friendship between Shraddha and me began to develop.

In May 1971, Shraddha was again on her way to Mother, this time for Her Jayanti celebrations in Benares. Again on the spur of the moment, I wrote a letter to Mother, pouring out my feelings to Her, and asking for a spiritual name.

The day I received my reply from Mother about my name is one I can never forget. Again She was making Herself felt beyond all doubt. As I attempted to meditate with a void mind, as She had instructed in Her reply, suddenly I perceived a wondrous white light radiating from the solar plexus; then the light moved upward to my heart and my heart seemed to explode with joy and love; then the light moved upward again and for an instant my head was bursting with it. It all happened in only a moment; when it was over, I knew that my name was "Jyotipriya", Beloved of Light. I later marvelled, and still do, when I read Mother's words about my name. She said, "see whether a name comes spontaneously from within your heart of hearts", and "meditate on *Jyoti*". Some say that Mataji will not give an exact answer to anything; yet She is utterly precise. I believe, whether we are aware of it or not. To those who

really have faith in Her, She will give answers in remarkable detail, and about the most mundane things of life.

My experience of Mother in the form of Light left me thinking for hours. It lifted a great deal off of me, too. I felt that many emotional problems, originating in the solar plexus area, had been resolved at that moment.

I wrote again to Mother right after this. I was anxious to have my name confirmed, and also to ask Mother for a mantra. Haripriya was in India at the time on a lengthy stay. So I wrote to her, enclosing a message for Mataji.

In June 1971 I received a letter from Haripriya, with a nice long reply from Mother. I heard later that my friend Atmananda had broken her silence to see that my letter was properly translated to Mataji. For this I am eternally grateful.

The reply was long and loving. Mataji said, "That

God has opened your heart is a great good fortune". As if She had nothing to do with it! Since the explosion in my heart, the world was a different place. Suddenly I could feel, and in many ways it began to take the place of thinking, and has surely proved far more reliable and accurate. Confirming my name, She said, "That you received the name Jyotipriya is a matter of great joy!"

Haripriya said that She smiled a great deal about my name and said to some people nearby, "Jyotipriya, beautiful." Then concerning a mantra, She said, "Try to keep up the remembrance of God's Name". From this I surmised that I was to receive my mantra from within.

Haripriya told me other wonderful details about when

the letter was read to Mataji. She looked most intensely at a picture of my daughter and me, then smiled. She laughed a lot during the interview. Naturally, Haripriya was thrilled to have a good excuse to get near Mataji. Later, she told me that "Jyotishi" means "astrologer"; since this is my profession, my name seemed all the more fitting.

In March 72, Atmananda wrote me that Mataji had given Her permission for me to come for the Samyam Saptah in November 1972. After this I did not write to Mother, but began to prepare for my trip.

There is one other experience that stands out in my mind. As yet I did not know what my mantra was, so I would do mental japa of "Om Ma", hoping to attune myself to Her. Then one day during the summer of 72, I was reading a book which mentioned the name of a certain deity, and gave the basic meaning of the Name. Instantly, something struck my heart, the mind was stilled, and I sat as though transfixed, gazing out of the window. What I saw was changeless, eternal, with people, plants, animals, buildings, all apparently in motion within a great silence. At that moment God became truly alive for me, and from that time on I felt that Mother was my Guru. Only many months later did I learn what an *Istha* is, and that the Guru brings the *Istha* to life, makes the Beloved real.

My diary begins on November 1, 1972, as I am on the aeroplane, on the way to Mataji's feet. We are a group of Americans, including Shraddha and Satya, and when we land in Delhi we are to meet Swami Nirmalananda Giri.

I am already enthralled with things Indian, even the



commercialized attitudes and ways of our stewardesses. Several times I have the vision that Mataji is flying the plane; either She is piloting it, or She is holding it up in the air with a finger; it is Her "celestial barge".

I write in my little notebook of many fears and unusual sensations; already Mataji is tearing away old feelings of security—false security that was never there to begin with. I am going halfway around the world. I have injured my foot badly shortly before leaving, and before we land in Delhi, I have one of the worst colds I can ever remember. What will become of me? For lack of faith in Ma, I weep and feel She has forsaken me. I am in pain and heading for a totally unfamiliar situation. This was my first conscious experience of Mother as Kali; already Her sword of Truth was operating on the "I".

A stop-over in Bonn, Germany, meant sleep and this raised the spirits of everyone. Several in the group said that Mother just wanted to give Jyotipriya's foot some ease. After this, my cold was worse but the foot was greatly improved. It was as though Mother had transferred the pain from one part of the body to another. Later I wondered how much She was actually lifting off by putting me through this. I shall probably never know. Once Mother enters our lives, we cannot say to what extent Her "beatings" are blessings, since we do not know what life would be like without Her.

It seems that we often regress once we know Mataji. Habits, urges, various sins which we thought we had under control, or which we had unconsciously repressed, come

forth with horrendous force and seem to take us over for a while. This must be because Mataji is rooting out our falsehoods and making us face up to them squarely; because She is Reality Itself. She does not deal in half-way measures. She takes these things out by the roots; Her love is total, unconditional, a hundred thousand times greater than our petty love for Her. Though we scream for mercy when the pain comes, we do not know how many lifetimes of pain She may be lifting off at that very moment.

By the time we landed in Delhi, I was calling my foot, "Mother's foot." And after all my worries and fears, it was the least of my problems while I was in India !

We rested at a hotel in Delhi for a couple of days, and the Indian fruit did much for my cold (which nonetheless turned into a kind of walking pneumonia once we arrived in Hardwar). On Nov. 6, we motored to Hardwar and procured excellent accommodations at the Tourist Bungalow. Mataji was scheduled to arrive on Nov. 8th by train.

I had already fallen in love with India. Everything about Hardwar seemed holy to me. The Ganges rolling swiftly by under my window, the Himalayas on three sides, the snow-peaks in the distance; the lilting of the temple bells; the fact that no meat or eggs are allowed in the town; the vibrations of the cows roaming about freely and without danger of being slaughtered. Here in the west we miss those things; the personal experience of India brings home all the more the sterility of our country.

Gratefully I soaked my foot in the Ganges and sat for

long hours on its banks, with a feeling of indescribable happiness. For the first time in my life, Time had finally stopped. It meant nothing. One just knew that Mother was taking care of us in the grandest style.

At last I am to meet Her. We are at the Hardwar railway station at 5:30 A.M. Although exhausted, I feel no tiredness; I am very much on edge. It seemed wonderful to me that I was standing on the very platform where many years ago, Sri Yogananda had been arrested while trying to run away to the Himalayas.

A strange fear gripped me as I stood there waiting. It occurred to me that my whole life (and who can say how many lifetimes?) was culminating at this moment; suddenly it seemed unreal to me that I was about to see Mataji in the flesh. What if I did not recognize Her when I saw Her? Would She look and seem different from Her photos? These were the thoughts that occurred to me. But I think there was a deeper fear behind these thoughts; what if I had come all this way and endured so much only to find that I did not belong to Her?

Then the train windows were flashing before me. Shraddha, having spotted Mother in one of them, was running alongside the train, and we were all following her. It was just a moment's wait, and then Mother alighted on the platform.

My fears dissolved immediately and forever. In my mind, I said, "Yes, there's Mother", with a ring of complete familiarity. Never had anything seemed so completely real to me as Her very presence. My recognition was instantaneous.

