

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

ĀNANDA VĀRTĀ

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Matri Vani

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

A human being must be vowed to the pilgrimage on which he becomes possessed of the Supreme Wealth. One who is constantly yearning for attainment of the Goal—when his love becomes undivided, perfect—at that very instant the Divine Touch occurs; this cannot be explained in any language.

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For a mind not turned towards God restlessness is but natural. Don't allow the mind to be idle all day long. Whether inclined or not, endeavour to let your thought dwell at Bhagavān's holy feet by staying immersed in japa, meditation or the study of sacred books.

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All this does happen in the beginning : when no result is noticed, not only is there pain but one's faith also weakens. Keep in mind : The Lord is doing and will ever do what is for my real good. As the result of sustained practice one progresses towards attainment of the Goal. For all these reasons invoke Him under all circumstances by any Name, in any way that

appeals to you so as to realize the Divine. Finding Him all is found.

* * *

For the revelation of one's true Being (*Svarupa*) one has to keep the eleven senses* (or faculties) under control, with gaze focussed on That. The purpose of observing a fast on *Ekādasi* (the eleventh day of each phase of the moon) is to keep up the remembrance of Him.

* * *

The path leading to the acquisition of own's own true Wealth (*sva dhana*) is called *sādhana*. By recovering the Supreme Treasure is revealed *Bhagavān* Who is Truth Itself, Who IS—eternal, unmasked Reality.

* * *

When the heart's desire awakens truly and fully its object manifests. Search out a *Sadguru* with all the insight and power at your command—then accept Him.

* * *

Tendencies and inclinations brought over from the past sometimes lead into error. The mind must

* Eleven senses : Five organs of perception : eye, ear, nose, tongue skin; five organs of action : hands, feet, voice, reproductive organs, anus ; and mind (the inner sense) the eleventh,

cling to God uninterruptedly. Otherwise, how can the road to liberation possibly open out? Whether you feel like it or not, concentrate on divine things. Mind and body must be occupied with aspirations and actions aiming at THAT.

* * *

The Pilgrimage in this world of coming and going is beset with many difficulties—they differ from person to person. However much pain and anguish you may experience, consider: “This trouble will not come to me anymore—*tapasyā* is being performed, it takes me nearer to God.”

* * *

To be able to get into a state of ecstasy by engaging in religious songs and kirtana with heart and soul is a matter of rejoicing. Those who are dedicated to the supreme path must at every moment be engrossed exclusively in activities that keep the mind at the feet of their Beloved so that their pilgrimage may be crowned with success.

* * *

To someone who wanted to commit suicide, Mataji said in reply: “Only to exhaust your karma accumulated in former lives has your birth occurred. Anchored in patience endeavour to discover where and how God’s compassion is working within all this trouble. Surrender

your mind at His lotus feet. Genuine, sincere search after Truth is never fruitless. Nobody has the right to do away with his God-given body—even to think of doing so is a sin. While suffering the consequences of your own past actions invoke Him with your whole being. Never give up God.”

* * *

You are aware of the Guru's grace—what more do you want? By the Guru's grace every aspiration is fulfilled. Carry out His instructions to the minutest detail.

* * *

If she really wants to listen to this body, then this body again repeats: she should try to devote the maximum time to *japa* and *dhyāna*, remaining where she now is. The mind should be engrossed also in the study of Sceptures. No scope is to be given to the mind to indulge in mundane thoughts of any kind. If one intermingles one's own desires with the instructions by which one wants to guide oneself, then obstacles are sure to arise. Whatever she happens to experience on this path may gladly be written to this body.

Some Glimpses of Ma Anandamayi

(Delhi : 1973-1976)

ANIL GANGULI

Ma Anandamayi's sweet voice regaled my ears for the first time in Delhi in the year 1947.* It has since been my good fortune to come in contact with Her in various surroundings--on the heights of the Himalayas, before the expanse of the Bay of Bengal and the Arabian Sea, in quiet villages such as Raipur, Vindhyachal, and Naimisharanya and in crowded cities like Calcutta, Bombay, Kanpur, Allahabad, Ranchi. From 1973 to 1976 I was destined to reside in Delhi and this period offered me excellent opportunities for having glimpses of Ma from time to time; also for coming in close contact with the inner circle of Her devotees.

There is a saying in Buddhist literature that when an Enlightened-one touches a dry twig, it begins to blossom. Delhi, apparently unconcerned with religion and avowedly secular in outlook, has been "blossoming" at the touch of Ma for about four decades. More ancient than Rome, Delhi was also not built in a day. The site of this metropolis, together with the areas in its neighbourhood, has for thousands of years provided an arena for political duels and military confrontations. Now the seat of our Central Government, Delhi is busy, beautiful and prosperous. It has the most

* See "Ananda Varta" January, 1977, P. 16.

attractive places of entertainment and originates the latest fashions in social life. True, Delhi has also quite a few centres of religious organisations, some with great traditions. However, the social atmosphere of Delhi today does not seem to be congenial to the development of religious fervour in her citizens. But the touch of Ma Anandamayi has worked wonders out of material none too promising.

In Kalkaji at the south-eastern end of New Delhi, far from the madding crowd, stands Sri Sri Anandamayee Ashram, with a vast expanse of rocky wilderness to its east and a newly planted green belt to its west. The Ashram includes temples of Siva and Mahavira, a satsang hall and an artistically constructed abode for Ma. The extensive garden is attractive for its rich collection of flowering plants and shrubs, also as a haunt for stray peacocks reminding Vaisnavas of the peacock feathers adorning the coronet of Sri Krishna. In the close vicinity of the Ashram there is the temple of Goddess Kali, called Kalikaji (or Kalkaji from which the colony derives its name), dating back to hoary antiquity. The story goes that Sri Krishna and the five Pandava brothers once worshipped Kalikaji in this temple.

Usually the inmates of Sri Sri Anandamayee Ashram Delhi consist of a few *sadhakas* who delight in seclusion. On Sundays and certain festivals there are programmes of *kirtana* and *satsanga* (religious gathering) open to the public. On other days the special charm of the Ashram lies in its brooding solitude and profound stillness, interrupted only by the occasional chirping of birds. When, however, Ma comes to Delhi, the set-up of the Ashram undergoes a drastic, almost miraculous change. Let us see how the transformation takes place.

One evening a message comes floating, as it were, in the air that Ma is expected in Delhi the next morning. The news immediately spreads like wild fire and a big gathering collects in the Ashram in anticipation of Ma's arrival. It is simply amazing how such an assemblage is possible at such short notice. Delhi is a sprawling city of formidable distances, not specially noted for transport or telephone facilities; besides, the Ashram is situated a mile away from the main bus route. Yet, so long as Ma stays in Delhi there is an unending stream of visitors for Her *darśana*, day and night, leaving hardly any interval even for Her frugal meals.

On festive occasions the Delhi Ashram witnesses a wonderful congregation of men, women and children hailing from different parts of India and other countries and belonging to all classes and walks of life. Thus, there are the ascetic and the householder, the rich and the poor, the learned and the ignorant, the political leader and the common citizen, the industrial magnate and the daily worker, the wayward teenager and the reckless youth. The assemblage represents a cross section of the capital's population and includes, from time to time, foreign diplomats and tourists. Some serious-minded westerners deserve special mention among the regular visitors to the Ashram during Ma's presence. Their devotion to Ma makes it possible for them to adjust themselves to strange surroundings and changed conditions of life.

Deserving persons, particularly those who have renounced the world and dedicated themselves to spiritual pursuits and are also pandits well-versed in *Śāstras* (scriptures) usually receive special recognition from Ma. But what is remarkable

is that She bestows Her gracious benediction even on people of questionable ways of life, who seemingly have no moral or spiritual moorings. Critics, ignorant of the universal nature of Ma's motherliness, often thoughtlessly and in a detracting spirit wonder why this should be so. Ma's simple answer is given in the form of a question : "Should the doors of a hospital be banged shut against persons suffering from serious maladies ?" In fact, Ma is the refuge of the fallen and the saviour of the sinful. She is nothing less than a mother even to a moral leper. And a penitent moral leper enjoys priority in receiving Her kind attention and special encouragement. "I want those very persons", She once said, "who have no prop to support them on their path to good life".

Inscrutable are the ways of Ma. She seems to be full of sympathy not only for persons of questionable character, but even for "diseases" of a virulent nature. In August 1976, Ma was taken seriously ill in Delhi. Very high temperature and other distressing symptoms shook Her apparently frail frame. Naturally, there was concern and consternation among Ma's devotees. According to the physicians Ma's body was passing through a crisis. I had no doubt that She must have been in the grip of excruciating pain. But there was no expression of suffering or discomfort on Ma's face. She assured me, in all seriousness, that She did not feel any pain whatsoever. She observed with a radiant smile and complete detachment that even "diseases" were Her guests, enjoying *kirtana* centred in Her body. I told Her that it was our common belief that She could drive away all Her ailments if only She chose to do so. She said unequivocally that if there was *kheyāla* (a spontaneous upsurge of Divine will), everything was possible and added

that there was no such *kheyāla* at that particular moment. I do not know what "*kheyāla*" means. But the implication of Ma's words seemed to be : whether the illness should continue or not was purely a matter of Her choice, but there was no occasion for the exercise of any choice either way at that particular moment. I enquired what was the point in not immediately putting an end to a malady so distressing and so undesirable. She denied that the illness was distressing to Her and would not admit that it was undesirable. The illness, She added, had not been invited by Her and was not going to be driven away by Her. She is never troubled by any sorrow nor has She any longing for pleasure, being above both.

Ma often repeats that "diseases" are beings with definite shapes like every one of us. "I do not", She says, "send you away when you come to me, but welcome everybody and everything as forms of Him. Why should I make an exception in the case of those of His guises which are illnesses ? It is all His play. He is in all forms, be they pleasing or painful. Everything is He alone. This body welcomes Him in whatever shape He chooses to come. I can assure you that I feel no discomfort; all conditions are the same to me. I am always well."

Fortunately, Ma came round within a few days even without any scientifically approved treatment worth the name. The crisis was tided over by what may be called nature cure. Ma's recovery in this manner was amazing to most of us; but not to those who knew that it was Ma's *kheyāla* of vicarious suffering in order to cure some ailing devotee or other. In what circumstances does such *kheyāla* come to play its part ?

And why? These are questions on which nobody could give me any light.

Was Ma's sudden recovery a miracle or just a coincidence? I do not know. Let me now narrate a miracle which I do know. One day in October, 1953, my wife, Sati, saw Ma in the hall of the Dehradun Ashram and heard Her sing kirtana. The same day, at the same time, I saw Ma in the garden of the Ashram, not visible from the hall, and I also heard Her talk to me. I was then recording in my diary the gist of a conversation I had had with Ma the previous evening. I was in doubt as to the exact words used by Ma. Her unexpected visit to the garden was, therefore, very welcome to me. I placed my difficulty before Her and She made certain additions and alterations in my original draft. And then Ma disappeared. After the kirtana was over, my wife declared that Ma had not left the hall during the kirtana. How could Sati disbelieve Her eyes and ears? But it was during the kirtana that I saw Ma in the garden. How could I, in my turn, disbelieve my eyes and ears? I thought Sati had been too much engrossed in the *kirtana* to notice Ma's departure from the hall for a few minutes. And Sati assumed I had been misled by my watch. The matter remained an enigma. After the lapse of twenty-two years Ma explained the mystery in 1975 during one of Her flying visits to Delhi. One day She was pleased to send for Sati and me and granted us a private interview. We had nothing to say in private and preferred silent *Matri-Sanga*. Suddenly it occurred to me that the Dehradun incident called for clarification and I narrated it to Her. She then asked me; "Now, what is your question?" I said with diffidence: "Do such things

happen?" Ma's reply was: "Why ask? It has happened; and I told you a few words, did I not?"

What Sati and I had witnessed on that occasion was a manifestation of Ma's yogic power of bilocation. The impression left on one's mind by a miracle like that may in course of time pass into nothingness. But Ma surpasses all miracles—She is beatitude, She is Joy eternal.

One day Ma "touched some dry twigs" in Delhi and they did begin to "blossom" in my presence. Some young men, aggrieved, as they alleged, by the high-handedness of a certain political leader, wanted Ma to speak to Mrs. Indira Gandhi, on their behalf. Ma said that Her conversations with the Prime Minister were exclusively on spiritual topics. Obviously the young men were disappointed, but they were more than reconciled by Ma's words that followed. She kindled in their minds the 'kindly light' that showed them the way to follow in life. Whatever God gives, She said, should be accepted with a smile. If we want anything, She added, we must approach Him and not any human being. Sincere prayer to God, She concluded, would be granted by Him in some form or other, at times through some unforeseen human agency. Then She narrated a parable in Her inimitable manner.

"A starving little boy," said Ma, "had been told by his mother that God alone could solve their problem of daily bread. In simple faith the boy scribbled a letter addressed to God asking for daily bread, but could not drop it into the the postal letter box, the slot being too high for him. Again and again he tried his best but every time he missed the mark which was beyond his reach. Yet the boy had no

doubt that his letter would reach God. Physically it did not. But the boy's prayer was granted by God in a mysterious manner. His perseverance attracted the notice of a wealthy neighbour who in the end volunteered to provide daily bread for the boy and his family."

The moral of the parable is easy to understand. But it is impossible to describe the magic effect of Ma's narration on the frustrated young men for whom it was primarily meant. They had entered the hall bitter and desparate. When they left, they seemed to be at peace with themselves. These "Dry twigs" showed promise of "blossoming". Incidentally, the politician considered at the root of their misery has since proved to be :

"A poor player that struts and frets
His hour upon the stage
And then is heard no more !"

While narrating the parable, Ma had used different names of God such as Rama, Krishna and Śiva. A smart middle-aged man suddenly stood up and asked Ma, in a rather melodramatic manner, "Rama, Krishna and Śiva-- what's the difference?" Instantaneously Ma replied, with a disarming smile on Her face, "Are you not at the same time son, husband and father? What then is the difference?"

The essence of Ma's teaching is that God is one but appears different to different persons. Each one, She says, is right from his point of view; and She gives light and guidance to all, irrespective of their race, colour or creed. She lays special emphasis on single-minded devotion to God.

Indeed, one who gives God a second place gives Him no place at all.

During my stay in Delhi I once received from Ma a gentle admonition in public because I had given God a second place. Ma was staying in the house of Sri Gopal Swarup Pathak, the former Vice-President of India, to whom I was then a stranger. I quietly entered the hall unnoticed and took my seat in a corner at some distance from Ma. Suddenly to my surprise, I heard Ma's voice inviting me to sit by Her side and give a talk on the *Bhāgavata*. I welcomed the opportunity. The next moment, however, I had to face an ordeal. Ma wanted me to speak in Hindi. I pleaded that Hindi was Greek to me and begged to be excused as nobody would listen to my talk in Hindi. Ma said smilingly, "At least I will." So, I ventured beyond my depths and started in my broken Hindi with bad grammar and worse pronunciation. Quite justifiably my speech fell flat on the Hindi-speaking listeners. Some of them may have thought that I was speaking in Bengali which was Greek to them. I commenced with the recitation of a passage from the *Srimad Bhāgavata* which I happened to know by heart. But, unfortunately, I could not complete it—I suffered from lapse of memory at the crucial moment. I then turned to the book for refreshing my memory, but I was badly let down by the Bombay Devnagari script which I could not read. I clearly saw that my performance had been all too poor. My suppressed grievance was against Ma Herself. Did She not stand in the way of my speaking in English? In my mind I held Her responsible for my discomfiture. I noticed that the audience was not at all interested in my Hindi. Ma had

assured me that She would listen to my speech. But in order to save my prestige, I stopped abruptly. Then Ma said, to my surprise, "You have done well!". This remark put me to shame; I knew too well that I had in fact miserably failed. Ma seemed to want to console me by saying "Well, you were asked to talk on the *Bhāgavata* in Hindi and you did your best." I was not at all happy about this left-handed compliment. Ma then pulled me up short : "Of course, you were not fishing for compliments from the audience when you were called upon to talk on the *Bhāgavata* !" This observation at last set me thinking and I discovered that my love of prestige had prevailed over my love for God. Such seems to be the subtle method of Ma's guidance. She, however, does not admit that She teaches or that She has any method in particular.

As I was taking leave of Ma, I met a remarkable girl, invested with the sacred thread, who has adopted the life of brahmacārini and is attached to the Sri Sri Anandamayee Ashram. She is a daughter of Sri Gopal Swarup Pathak. One of her sisters also is an Ashramite. This kind of idealism on the part of girls belonging to an aristocratic family of Delhi can only be due to their association with Ma.

Let me cite one more instance to illustrate the subtle method by which Ma once dealt with the treacherous "I"-ness in me. One day I told Her how a revered Mahātmā had advised me not to pray for anything but to remain satisfied with whatever had been given to me. Then I added : "Ma, I am in the habit of mentally praying for your special attention whenever I happen to have your *darśana*; is this not a weakness on my part ? Would it not be good for me to rise

above that weakness ?” Ma put a simple but embarrassing question: “Have you already risen above all other weaknesses ?” Those who were present laughed at my cost. My question had, perhaps, been appreciated by them. But Ma’s counter-question put me on the spot. Then Ma encouraged me: “There is no risk in that weakness of yours. Let it remain.” Thereafter Ma presented me with a piece of cloth that had been worn by Her the previous day. Was this a consolation prize ? The cloth emitted a delicate scent the like of which I have never smelled anywhere in any part of the world. The scent lasted for several weeks.

The Durga Puja in the New Delhi Ashram in 1976 revealed what a tremendous attraction Ma exerts on all sections of the capital’s population. The number of “dry twigs” earnestly praying for initiation from Her was amazing. She readily gave them spiritual guidance, coupled with motherly affection. Durga Pūjā is the most popular annual religious festival in Bengal and in all other parts of India where Bengalis preponderate. An image of the Goddess Durga, prepared for the occasion, is worshipped as the symbol of the Divine Mother, for three days (some times four) in the autumn and thereafter immersed into a river or pond on the following day known as *Vijaya Dasami*. Ma’s presence during Durga Puja in 1976 in the Delhi Ashram immensely added to the joyousness, sanctity and solemnity of the function. Throughout the festival Ma’s face beamed with a special glow. Again, notwithstanding Her advanced age and indifferent health, She suddenly became unusually dynamic and kept on moving all over the Ashram from one centre of ritualistic performance to another. Thus, She would now visit the Pūjā-Māṇḍap (the

was seated on a platform with eyes half-closed and hands uplifted, chanting God's name, radiating a divine luster and inspiring the whole assembly with an ecstasy of joy and devotion.

All of a sudden Ma stood up, Her eyes still half-closed and hands raised up as before, chanting God's name incessantly. Ma appeared to stand only on Her toes, and She was swaying in unison with the rhythm of the cymbals and drums. Ma's body seemed to have been transformed into an ethereal substance. As She continued in Her rhythmic dance keeping Herself erect on Her toes just like a fairy, Her body gradually began to collapse and fell flat on the platform. It seemed as if She had ceased to possess a body of bone and flesh. What happened then was stranger still—Ma's body began to roll on the platform like a dry leaf wafted by the wind not in a wayward manner but in unison with the rhythm of the music. The gathering was electrified and the music reached a crescendo. A few minutes later Ma became calm and composed and then resumed Her normal posture as if nothing had happened.

Glimpses of Ma in Delhi have made my life worth living even after I have crossed the biblical age of three score and ten.

* Jai Ma *

From the Life of Mataji

Bithika Mukerji

(Continued from the last issue)

December 10th, 1939-1941

The next day Mataji and Didi had to stop over at Bandel junction for their train to Navadveep. Didi, wanting to procure a little milk for Mataji, spoke to a young officer at the Railway Station to get directions about local shops. He eagerly came forward and offered to get milk from his own house nearby. A little later the young man returned with the milk and spent some time with Mataji and Didi talking about his own life. He told Mataji that he had had the good fortune to be initiated at a very young age by a much revered guru, but frankly he had not been observing any of the injunctions. He remorsefully recalled that when once his guru had paid him a visit, he had not even bothered to cook specially for him but had given him food in the ordinary way. He reflected wonderingly : "Now, I don't know why, I took off my shoes when I was bringing the milk. This had not occurred to me when my guru was with me. I am a brahmin but have long discarded the sacred thread and do not observe the daily practice of the gāyatrī-mantra."

Mataji said gently, "you should adopt the thread again and also take up the daily recitation of the mantra."

"It is a bothersome restriction on one's way of life."

“The clothes you wear, and many other ordinary things are also restrictive.”

“That is true. I shall think about it.”

Mataji later said to Didi : “You went in search of milk but received the rich gift of a mind turning towards Supreme Felicity. The milk will not last long, but the change of heart will remain for a while.”

After a few days in Navadvēp Mataji came to Calcutta. Her health was causing concern to everyone. Although nobody knew better than the devotees that Mataji was not suffering from any ‘disease’, Her quiescent mood was unusual enough to cause anxiety. People, after all, can use only their own health as a standard of measurement. Mataji’s pulse rate at times would be highly feverish, or again slow down to an imperceptible level, both at variance with Her tranquil appearance. Mataji never looked ill or indisposed, but sometimes She would be very quiet and unlike Her radiant self. In any case it was very difficult for the devotees to make any coherent statements regarding Her health to the public who thronged to see Her. Their attempts at regulating the visiting hours or the number of people who could approach Mataji, created the expected misunderstanding. The devotees, however, were determined this time that Mataji should be examined by some of the most eminent medical men of Calcutta. Mataji acquiesced, remarking with a smile, I shall have *darśana* of many *pitājis* this time, who are renowned *kavirājs*¹ and doctors !”

The medical experts, eastern as well as western, how-

1. *Kaviraj* Ayurvedic doctor.

ever, did not prove to be of great help to the devotees in their concern for Mataji. The *kavirāj* who studied Her pulse rate, desisted after a while, saying that he could not make any sense of a pulse which would be racing for one minute and slow down to a dead stop the next. Adding to his bewilderment, Mataji extended Her wrist again, saying, "Now you will find it quite normal." Dr. Devendra Mukherji, was equally puzzled by the erratic appearance and disappearance of a few clinical symptoms. After a few days of this anxious activity, Mataji one day, spoke to the medical people regarding Her physical condition, saying gently : "The fact of the matter is, that this body does not follow the usual rules of good or bad health. Sometimes it so happens that its activities, due to lack of *kheyāla* slow down; at such times the intake of food merely acts as an impediment; this is why, at times, you see symptoms of "liver" or "stomach" troubles. The reason why these 'symptoms' disappear suddenly is that the body, in its own time, returns to its normal rhythm. This body does not suffer from diseases which can be "diagnosed" or "cured" by the usual methods."

The doctors had realized as much already and now with humility acknowledged the correctness of Mataji's explanation. In a lighter vein She added, "You may have given rise to another problem. People have seen so many doctors being consulted that they will think Mataji is suffering from some terrible disease and that Her attendants are trying to keep it secret from the public !"

Mataji never shows any other than Her usual mode of acceptance towards such disorders in Her body as may take

place from time to time. Her invariable answer in effect amounts to this that as She does not reprimand anybody for wrong behaviour, or chooses only a particular type of person for approval, but uniformly accepts whatsoever may come to Her, why then should She single out bodily discomforts for eradication. These also are allowed to come and go in their own time. It will be readily agreed that Mataji's range of tolerance cannot be adopted even partially by ordinary people. The devotees, naturally enough, thought it their duty to take care of Mataji's health and tried to arrange for long hours of quiet and rest for Her till such time as it would be Her *kheyāla* to resume Her normal activity. The difficulty about this attempt lay in Mataji Herself. She, whatever the state of Her bodily discomfort (it may be a severe backache, a putrid sore throat, or a stomach disorder, or simply long hours of public *darśana*) never looked ill or fatigued. This made it very difficult for the devotees to make any coherent announcements to the public who thronged to see Her. Mataji's gracious presence and winsome smile would keep the hordes of people from dispersing even a moment earlier than was absolutely necessary. Much misunderstanding was created when Her guardians told the visitors that Mataji needed rest and that they should leave as early as possible. People would rush in for *darśana*, but go out in thin trickles, leaving the odious task of forcibly closing Mataji's doors to a few hardy souls. People do not realize that Mataji Herself never makes any schedules about public *darśana* and unless somebody tries to organize these meetings it would be more chaotic than it already is. Moreover, there is no centralized authoritarian structure near Mataji. Whoever wants to

assume charge may do so and many people aghast at the spectacle of disorder around Mataji, have tried their hands from time to time, but no satisfactory solutions have been found so far. Regarding Mataji's *darśana* the feature of public dissatisfaction and chagrin remains almost constant.

As far as Mataji is concerned, She is ready every minute of the day or night to give of Herself to whoever may have need of Her. It must be also said that, somehow or other, seemingly under impossible conditions, no one who comes to Her for help goes away disappointed. Hundreds of people will know what is meant by saying that Mataji has many ways of acknowledging the presence of those who come to see Her. Now that the number of visitors is legion, this aspect of Her all encompassing welcome may well stagger one's imagination. It would seem that one misses the point of Mataji's presence if one expects an atmosphere which is contrived and controlled, rather the atmosphere is as natural and realistic as life itself. With Mataji one is prepared for an experience which is not to be had in the ordinary world. Mataji opens for everyone a new dimension, which ordinarily one does not even know, exists. This supreme gift She bestows on people in spite of any number of difficulties created by large crowds, tight schedules or programmes of festivities, last but not least, Her own state of physical discomfort.

In Calcutta, therefore, Mataji continued to meet thousands; the devotees, in spite of their best efforts, not being able to dissuade visitors from crowding in upon Her. This time She stayed in Calcutta for more than two months, that is over the Christmas holidays and well into the New Year

1940. In February, accompanied by Paramanandaji, Rumadevi, Jogesh Brahmachari, Keshavbhai and Abhaya, She paid short visits to Puri and Bhuvaneshwar. The middle of March saw Her travelling right across North India to Delhi, via Vindhyachala. For the next few months of the year Mataji was constantly on the move to various places near Delhi and around that part of the country : Dehradun, Hardwar, Vrindaban, Mathura, Solon. She stayed often at Doonga, in Dehradun district, the country-seat of Chaudhury Sher Singh, who, along with his family was well-known for his devotion to Mataji. She also went to Jullundur at the insistent invitation of Sri Sadhu Singh. She paid a visit to Meerut as well after a gap of six or seven years at the end of the year. At each place, the devotees would welcome Her with kirtan and other festivities. They would entreat Her to stay a few days longer, or at least just one more day ! Mataji would gently dissuade them from pleading with Her and smilingly take leave of one disconsolate crowd to arrive in the midst of another jubilant one. Many times these roles were reversed, but every time it was a fresh pain of parting from and a real joy of meeting the most beloved person.

At the request of the devotees of Dehradun, Durga Puja or Lakshmi Puja celebrations were held in that town. Although these *Pūjās* are mostly observed by Bengalis, due to Mataji's presence everyone, Bengalis as well as non-Bengalis, joyfully participated in the festivities. At the request of Hari Ram Joshi Kali-Pūjā was also celebrated in Dehradun.

At the end of the year, Mataji, leaving this part of the

country, travelled south to Bhimpura in Gujrat. She kept moving from place to place : Chandod, Rajpipla, Omkareshwar and also Ujjain, Baroda and Ahmedabad. Mataji had become quite well known at these places and was made welcome everywhere by the local people. The shores of the holy river Narmada are always peaceful and naturally conducive to meditation. Mataji seemed to have recovered Her normal ways of activity inspite of Her busy travelling programmes. Some time in the middle of March 1941, She returned to the district of Dehradun again via Delhi. She kept moving from Raipur to Kishenpur and again to Doonga. The people of Dehradun trekked across dry river-beds to Rajpur and to remote Doonga. Kishenpur was comparatively easier of access.

During this time, the Great War had begun to affect the entire world. In this context, Mataji was asked one day, "Who will win this war? Is it going to have an adverse effect on India?" Mataji burst out into Her joyous, spontaneous laughter : "Is there a war ! How can there be war without an enemy? Is there more than 'one', that there should be two contestants? The war you talk of is like the clapping of one's two hands; so where is the question of defeat or victory? There is naught else, except He. It is His Will that you see displayed in this form : Pitaji, why do you worry? Try to accept whatever happens as a manifestation of the Divine."

It must be said here that Mataji's words were spoken to a particular person, who evidently must have been capable of understanding and appreciating the profound ideas thus

expressed. It goes without saying that Mataji's words can never be construed to mean an apathetic acceptance of the vicissitudes of destiny. Actually She always gives Her ready attention to the affairs of men, the state of the country and similar matters when brought to Her notice. It has been recorded elsewhere that Her appreciation of all aspects of a problem, trivial as well as global, is instant and complete. If the person involved did not know Mataji well, he or she would justifiably think that Mataji had been briefed about his problem; this is not so. When She has the *kheyāla*, She knows whatever has to be known at that particular time. Mataji was not trivializing the enormity of the war situation, but giving expression to what She always says. In the context of a global war, this could only assume profounder meaning and significance.

Mataji's ceaseless travels created the feeling in every township that it was the most suited for Her sojourn. The inhabitants, with great confidence, would invite Her to stay permanently with them; but inevitably and relentlessly the day of parting would arrive. Once at New Delhi Railway Station, when the devotees were disconsolately waiting to say good-bye to Her, one person, voicing the thoughts of many, asked, "Ma, say that you belong to us." Mataji with one of Her enchanting, inimitable smiles, said, "I belong everywhere and to everybody." In this statement, perhaps, lies the clue to the mystery of Her constant movement from place to place.

(To be continued)

Questions and Answers

Sanat Kumar Sen

(*Translated from Bengali*)

Varanasi, April 1974

Question : Mataji, in non-dualistic Vedanta it is said : “Brahman is Truth, the world is illusory, the individual (*jīva*) is actually Brahman and nothing else.” What does “the world is illusory” mean ? We do not understand this. please explain !

Mataji : Oh, how beautiful ! “Brahman is Truth, the world illusory and the *jīva* actually Brahman and no other.” World (*jagat*) means that which slips away, which has no stability. What changes continuously cannot have permanent existence and is therefore illusory. However, there is a state where the question of permanence or transitoriness, of yes or no does not arise at all, a state beyond everything,

The one goal of sādhus and Truth-seekers is the Supreme. If they get entangled in ashrams and similar ties they fall away from their ideal.

Dibrugarh, Assam,
14-6-75

Question : Mataji, we are pining for God-realisation. Will our yearning be fulfilled ?

Mataji : The One who causes you to yearn, He Himself will fulfil it—in His own time.

Question : Ma, please talk to us about God—about His essential nature (*svarūpa*), His grace, His beneficent attributes, His bounty, how He can be realized. You are inseparable from Him, one *Ātmā*, to hear you speak about God is of immeasurable value.

Mataji : God has created the universe by a mere stroke of His imagination. We are told it is His play. This body also affirms this. God says “all are tools in my hand.” All are but instruments wielded by Him, whether within this world or beyond. God alone really exists. In order to find Him one must take shelter in the Guru. He appears in the form of *Riṣis* and Sages; He appears as Mother, He is all-pervading. Every Sage devises his own doctrine, his own path, creates his own sect. God Himself is in division, in the many. Butter may be cut into innumerable small pieces, it still remains butter.

According to the tenet of non-duality (*advaita*) there is one-Brahman-without-a-second. According to the *Vaiṣṇavas* God is the master and the devotee His server. Without the *Ātmā* the relationship of the whole with its part, of the Lord with His server, could not exist at all. “Wherever my glance falls, there Sri Kṛṣṇa takes shape.” When Sri Kṛṣṇa appears there is only He and He alone.

God assumes form for the sake of the devotee. Form—His own essential form, His own essential Nature (*svarūpa*). Just like water and ice. In ice water is contained. Ice means formed : it takes on the shape of the vessel in which it is kept. God is present in all shapes and forms. Everyone treads his

own path. There are innumerable lines of approach, countless states.

After much wandering, after numberless experiences a human body is obtained. Man (and woman) alone is endowed with the capacity to realize God. Although steeped in ignorance, there is also a door to Knowledge for the human being.

It is desire that causes coming and going. When the One becomes the sole target of desire there will be Enlightenment. One must enter that current, that stream. You are God's own tool, you have to dedicate yourself to Him. Just studying the timetable is not enough, one has to go to the station, one has to purchase a ticket. With heart and soul one must try to pursue the path of a *Riṣi*.

"My wife is the Goddess of the home (*Griha Lakṣmi*) let me serve her"—in this spirit. "My son is Gopal, the child Kṛṣṇa." This kind of attitude is to be fostered in the householder's *āśrama*. Arrange a shrine-room. Morning and evening meditate on God. Where is He not? Wherever you may be, from that very place and condition you must endeavour to find your Self. You are the descendant of a *Riṣi*—try to realize this!

Agarpara Ashram,
May, 1975

Question: Mā, many Brahmins have left Bangladesh and settled in India. Due to scarcity of brahmins it is now extremely difficult to continue the worship of deities in the temples. What is the right thing to do? Should the worship be suspended or performed by non-brahmins?

Mataji : If God is truly present in the *vigraha*, He Himself will arrange for the worship to be performed in the proper manner.

On the platform of New-Bangaigaon Railway Station, 19-20-6-1975

Question : The wise keep on declaring that everything happens by God's will. Not even a leaf falls against His will. If this is so, why then should man suffer as a result of his actions? Why is it said : "As one sows so one reaps"? If God is the originator of all action, why should man suffer for it?

Mataji : Everything that takes place is God's dispensation. Nothing happens against the Almighty's will. This is correct. All the same, is man actually aware of this fact? When the realization that *Bhagavān* is the sole actor becomes firmly rooted, then there is no more problem; then the question you have asked cannot possibly arise. It is true that *Iśvara* is the sole controller of everything; but it is also true that He has given man the freedom to discriminate between good and bad, between right and wrong, and to act accordingly. A human being reaps the fruit of his or her own actions.

Question : In the Bhagavad Gītā Śri Kṛṣṇa says, *niṣkama* karma (action free from desire) is man's duty. Please elaborate on this!

Mataji : Unselfish work, action directed towards God, this is *niṣkāma* karma. What is done from selfish motives

is called *sakāma* karma (action performed with a desire for its result).

Samyam Saptah, Kanpur,
10-11-1975.

Question : How can one attain to direct experience ?

Mataji : What do you mean by direct experience ?

Question : Self-realization - direct experience of the *Ātmā*.

Mataji : Follow precisely the Guru's instructions. This will bring it about.

Question : The Guru's instructions are concerned with actions. Whereas the *Ātman* or Brahman are beyond action, are the essence of Supreme Knowledge. Can one reach the realm beyond action while engrossed in action ?

Mataji : Action is indeed the means to reach beyond action. The *Ātmā* is self - effulgent. It shines forth constantly, at every instant. Yet it is covered by a screen which has to be removed, and this is accomplished by action. Just as the sun always shines but at times is hidden by clouds. So long as there is ignorance, so long as there is *sādhana*, action is imperative. When Revelation supervenes, the state beyond action is reached. There the question of action or inaction is non-existent; but until then action has to be performed.

Question : What is sin and virtue, dharma and adharma ? Who decides about this ? What exactly is sin and what virtue ? Who solves this problem ?

Mataji : Action that aims at God is virtuous and beneficial. While action that leads to degradation is sinful.

11-11-1975

Question : What is the result of practising *samyam* (self-restraint) ?

Mataji : If the rules of *samyam* are observed carefully, *Śakti* will be awakened. And then you will yourself find the answer to your question.

13-11-75

Question : How does one develop faith in God ? Please tell me how I can find my Self.

Mataji : All the discourses you are listening to, the ideals that are placed before you, these can give birth to faith. Try to grasp what is said, make an effort to understand. Learn to ask questions. If faith and devotion were not deep within you, this question could not arise. The question itself is a sign that faith is concealed within you. Just as good and bad are within you, so also faith and devotion. The desire for God-realization is begotten by faith.

Question : How can I come to know my true nature (*svarūpa*) ?

Mataji : Have you obtained a Guru ?

Questiones : I love the name of Rāma. Today itself it has occurred to me again and again that you indeed are my Guru.

Mataji : By obeying the Guru's instructions, by carrying out the injunctions of the *Śāstras* your question will find its

solution. Seek satsang. By the Guru's grace achievement comes.

Questioner : I look upon you as my Guru. I pray for the blessing of the Guru's touch for everyone taking part in the *Samyam Vrata*, since it is forbidden to touch your feet and there are hardly a few minutes available for personal questions and advice. Your gate-keepers do not allow us to go near you.

Mataji : God alone is the one Guru. If you pray inwardly God will respond to your prayer and grant it.

Question : Does God's grace operate according to laws ? Does He consider how much *sādhana* anyone has performed and accordingly bestows His grace ? Or is grace without cause and reason ? Is it lavished without strict relation to one's worthiness and entirely dependent on God's Will ?

Mataji : In God's kingdom everything is possible. Listen to a story. Lord Narayan was having his meal. Suddenly he got up and hurried away, saying : "One of my devotees is being beaten. I have to go and rescue him." But after a little while he returned leisurely without having gone to his destination. On being asked why he had rushed away in the middle of his meal and then returned so quickly, the Lord replied : "My devotee was invoking me in dire distress. I hastened to his help. But when I saw that he had started defending himself, there was no need for me to save him and so I returned." A lesson can be learnt from this. One has to invoke Him and, to the very

end, depend on Him alone. Remembrance of His name, forbearance, seeking His shelter, and complete self-dedication are man's duty. Although grace has this motive, it still remains without cause and reason. When a devotee receives divine grace he realizes that it is infinitely greater than what he could have deserved by his devotion and the conscientious performance of his duties. Thus grace is unmerited divine favour—without motive, cause or reason. God's whole creation is such. But unless one has attained to a certain state of achievement one will not be able to understand the complete causelessness of Grace.

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There are two kinds of sorrow : The suffering due to the want of some worldly commodity and the pain of separation from God. The latter kind of sorrow ultimately leads to real happiness, while the former only goes on augmenting sorrow. Although of course, this sorrow also, in time, induces man to go out in search of Truth.

14-11-75

Question : God Himself abides in Bliss while He keeps the world immersed in sorrow. Moreover He says : "Repeat my name and sing my praises !" Why has he created a world of this kind ?

Mataji : God is Himself within the world. All are God's manifestations. Nothing except God exists at all. According to His pleasure He plays in an endless variety of

