

Contents

ENGLISH SECTION

	Page No.
1. Matri Vani	1
2. Conversations with Sri Sri Ma Anandamayee — Prof. B Ganguly	5
3. What mother is not—Vijaiianand ...	11
4. Mother—D. Padmanabhan, I. C. S. (Retd.)	23
5. Mother Anandamayee : A Votary of Divine Love —Dr. Chou Hsiang Kuang, Ph. D.	27
6. In quest of God and Sad-Guru—P.M. Verma, M.A.	33
7. New Diary Leaves—Atmananda ...	40
8. From the life of Sri Sri Ma Anandamayee— Dr. Bithika Mukerjee, M. A., D. Phil.	45
9. Matri Lila	52

*Printed & Published by K. Bose for
Shree Shree Anandamayee Sangha, Varanasi,
at the Kamala Press, Godnowlia, Varanasi.*



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

MATRI VANI

It is by crying and pining for Him that the One is found.

* * *

Reliance on God can come only if He grants it to you, then alone will you be capable of it. What does self-reliance mean? What He causes to be done is called self-reliance (*puruṣakāra*).

* * *

Why do you wish to become a child of the world? Be a child that will not change into anything else anymore. Truly, the cause for failing to remain childlike is desire.

* * *

kind of action is not possible everywhere. Here, in this state, laughter, giving life and stifling it—every thing is HE—THAT; here there is no such thing as taking on oneself the tribulations of others, there is only perfect equality, identity.

• • •

“There is only one book and everything is contained in it. Once it has been mastered nothing else remains to be studied. *Sadhana* has to be practised for the sole purpose of discovering one's own true wealth.”

“Ma”

Conversations with Sri Sri Ma Anandamayi

RECORDED BY PROFESSOR B. GANGULY

(Translated by Atmananda)

(5)

Ranchi Ashram,
19/5/1958.

Question : You often advise devotees to take recourse to periods of silence (refraining from speech); does this help spiritual progress ?

Mataji : By refraining from speech energy is preserved. To keep silence (*mouna*) means that the mind has reversed its outward course, in other words, has turned towards God.

Question : Is it right to pray to God for all kinds of things ?

Mataji : The most excellent prayer is for God Himself.

Question : If God is omnipotent, why do we have to suffer so much ?

Mataji : Where you dwell, that is to say in the world, it appears thus. By invoking God all pain and suffering will be destroyed.

Question : So many people are ill with paralysis and other terrible diseases. Why does not God deliver them from their agonies ?

Mataji : Human beings are born into this world so that the results of their past actions may be enjoyed and suffered and thereby exhausted.

Question : If one's *sādhana* is the *shabda Brahman*, will a stage come when the eternal sound (*pranava*) can be heard.

Mataji : Yes, it will be heard.

Question : What happens then ?

Mataji : Ultimately there will be the revelation of the *Brahman*.

Question : Mother earth* is the Mother, is it not ? Therefore, if one can grasp or recognize what the earth intrinsically is, is it possible thereby to attain to the realization of the *Brahman* as Being-Consciousness-Bliss ?

Mataji : Yes, the earth is the mother. Whatever you grasp in its essence, in that very thing will you find Him. What is the purpose of worshipping earthen images ? The revelation of the Lord.

Question : From where do the distinctions arise that men make between high and low

* In Bengali *Mā* means mother and *māti*—earth.

Mataji : In the world of desire one perceives high and low it is therefore natural to make these distinctions.

Question : What is it that creates ignorance ?

Mataji : The individual is bound by desires and passions ; consequently it lies but in the nature of things that there should be ignorance. It is said that ignorance is created by desire and desire again by ignorance.

Question : Why do *sādhus* perceive differences ?

Mataji : This can be the case only on the way. Once the destination has been reached, the perception of difference ceases. However it is true that while on the path one should adopt what is noble and excellent and relinquish mere pleasure. This is why it is appropriate that seekers after Truth should partake of such food as will aid them in their spiritual effort. Also they will do well to avoid company that distracts. Those who believe in difference of caste should observe caste rules while practising *sādhana*. Is not caste also His Creation ? It is therefore in many cases necessary for *sādhakas* to beware of impurity communicated by touch or contact and to observe strict rules of purity, otherwise there will be obstacles on their path. The *s'āstras* have laid down what kind of work has to be done by each caste, what kind of food to be eaten and so on. While one acknowledges the *s'āstras* it is right to follow their injunctions. Whereas when one has become established in THAT, which is whole and undivided, one is free to act as one pleases. Then there will

be neither acceptance nor rejection of caste. Just as God is present in all forms without exception, so one who has realized the *Brahman* may use any form whatever. But the ordinary *sadhaka* cannot compare his conduct to the behaviour of such a Being.

Question : What is the difference between *bhakti* (devotion) *bhāva** and *uchhvas* (exaltation, rapture) ?

Mataji : There are two kinds of *bhava* : namely the one that occasionally arises in the state of constant wanting (*abhava* † and the other one which is an expression of man's true nature (*svabhava*). The latter kind alone is genuine *bhava*. The love of God is called *bhakti*. When real *bhava* occurs, which is the outcome of *bhakti*, it can be recognized by eight *satvic* signs. †† A *bhava* that is spasmodic and uncontrolled may be styled as '*uchhvas*' (exaltation or rapture). Real Knowledge (*jñāna*) and *bhakti* are one, real knowledge is synonymous with *bhakti*. In certain cases, on certain levels, the one or the other predominates.

Question : How can *bhakti* be developed ?

Mataji : By following the Guru's instructions.

* Spiritual ecstasy, generally emotional in nature.

† The state of every ordinary person.

†† These are described in *Vaisnava* literature and are *pulaka* (a scene of divine joy), *as'ru* (tears), *kampan* (trembling), *romānch* (hair standing on end), etc.

Question : If one does not feel like doing so ?

Mataji : Father, if one is ill one has to be made to go to hospital by force and to take medicine. Quinine, although very bitter, has to be taken by malaria patients. Similarly it is imperative to try and develop love and devotion for God by practising *sādhana* according to the Guru's instructions. This is how *bhakti* is kindled.

“The sovereign and universal remedy is the contemplation of God. At all times to think only of Him and to serve Him is essential for every human being.”

“Ma”

SPIRITUAL EXPERIENCES

SWAMI SIVANANDA.

The entrance into the higher meditative life depends upon the grace of God.

The higher meditative life demands tremendous humility, serenity and courage.

In higher meditative life the senses and the mind are completely subdued. There is no more use of the mind, emotions and imaginations.

In higher meditation the Yogi withdraws himself completely and enters into the state of consciousness above the mind and intellect. He is conscious only of Pure Being.

In samādhi or the superconscious state the Yogi abandons the sense of his own being and enters into the Being of God.

Spiritual experience will come to you when you are ready, but not before.

There is inner unfolding from level to level in your spiritual experience. Wait patiently. Plod on in your sādhana with purity and courage.

Like draws like on your spiritual journey. You are never really left alone. You will get help from Yogis and Saints internally, from different parts of the world. Their spiritual vibrations will elevate and inspire you.

Meditate and enter into the realm of radiant light. There are no limitations; here there is no worry, there are no obstacles. There is no time or space. In that holy realm there is no fear, no doubt, no indecision. It is all eternal joy, bliss, peace and happiness.

Samyam and Bhagavata Saptahs in Naimisharanya

K. G. AMBEGAOKAR, I.C.S. (RETD.)

For the last seven or eight years the Shree Shree Anandamayee Sangha arranges every year for a week of concentrated collective sādhanā in the presence of Sri Sri Ma Anandamayi. This is called संयम सप्ताह (*Samyam Saptah*), which literally means a week of restraint or self-control. Its object is explained as follows in the Hindi leaflet :—

अपने स्वरूप को पहिचानना, अपने स्वरूप को प्राप्त करना—सब तरह से सत्य, ब्रह्मचर्य, अहिंसा आदि के परिपालन द्वारा अपने अपने आध्यात्मिक जीवन में उन्नति सम्पादन की चेष्टा करना और संघ के सदस्य तथा अन्य भाग लेने वालों के आत्मोन्नति में सहायता पहुँचाने के लिए सेवा करना संयम सप्ताह महाव्रत का उद्देश्य है ।

(The object of the *Samyam Saptah Maha Vrata* is Self-realization, the development of one's spiritual life by the observance of truth, celibacy, non-violence, etc. in every way, and to assist the spiritual progress of members of the Sangha and other participants.)

It will thus be seen that though the name refers to one aspect only of what has to be done in order to reach God, viz. keeping in check one's unruly lower self, this week is intended to be utilized as a general introduction to or first steps in *sādhanā*, an intense pursuit of every means to realize God. It differs from the initiation which a *Guru* may give

to a particular disciple. Such initiation (*dikṣa*) is of a much more intimate nature and only meant for those who have decided to give up worldly pursuits and to dedicate themselves to God. The *Samyam Vrata* is meant for the ordinary householder who, while following his avocation in life, is at the same time acutely God-conscious and desires to reach Him, i.e. one who is not prepared to become a *Sanyasi* (recluse), yet is something more than an ordinary devotee (भक्त). He must be a *Jigyasu* (one who wants to know) or *mumukṣu* (one who seeks the path of liberation). We may therefore say that the *Samyam Vrata* is meant for a selected band of devotees. It may be compared to a training course or military exercise camp for officers of the Auxiliary Force in the old British days. These were civilian officers who offered themselves for military training in order to be able to render service in war time as officers in the army. At these camps they were toughened to be able to put up with hardships of war-fare and got intensive training in the use of various weapons and military tactics. It seems to me that something of this kind, but for a religious purpose, is sought to be achieved by the *Samyam Mahavrata*. Just as the civilian officers became, during the period of military exercise, officers of the army to all intents and purposes, devotees participating in the *Vrata* are expected to lead during that period the life of a *Sanyasi*, a life of rigour, restraint and dedication. It is a *tapasya* (penance) for the purpose of attuning oneself to the Divine. In holding this week annually Mataji seems to carry Her mission of making people God-minded a ~~step~~ further, giving them practical training in preparing themselves for Self-realization. Undoubtedly such a course is

intended for those few who are serious in their pursuit of God and many of Mataji's devotees wish that it were restricted to only such persons, so that it could be small, intimate and easily manageable. But Mataji in keeping with Her general attitude that God's door is open to everybody and that She Herself is approachable to one and all, refuses to impose restrictions as regards the attendance of these gatherings. So anyone may join in the *Samyam Mahavrata* or even be a partial participator in some of its functions. However, though there are thus many casual visitors to the *Samyam Saptah*, there is always a core of serious-minded devotees who go through the whole course.

As this was the first time I was fortunate enough to be able to attend the *Samyam Saptah* I am in no position to compare it with previous occasions. Those who have been regular participants, however, tell me that this year's *Saptah* was unique in many respects.

It took place from the 21st to the 27th of October and was immediately followed by a *Bhagavata Saptah* (the reading of the *Bhagavata* in seven days), which ended with a *pūrnahuti* (offering of oblations in sacrificial fire), on the 4th of November. Many people had entertained the wish that since they came from considerable distances so as to be with Mataji for the *Samyam Saptah*, they could stay on longer. This long-cherished desire was fulfilled by the unusual joining of the weeks which made it for the first time a holy fortnight of basking in Mataji's grace.

Secondly the fortnight chosen was eminently suited to

the occasion. It started immediately after Divali and ended on *Tripura Sundari Purnima*—a period most conducive to devotion and contemplation. Even from a worldly point of view the timing turned out to be very seasonable. The weather was pleasant—neither too hot nor too cold and there was no rain. It was therefore possible for some of the crowd that thronged to the place to live in the open and no elaborate structures had to be put up for cooking and eating.

Thirdly, the spot selected was not one of Mataji's Ashrams but an out-of-the-way place like *Naimisharanya*, and therefore most appropriate for the purpose. The legend has it that when 88000 *Rishis* (Sages) wanted to perform a prolonged penance they sought the guidance of *Brahma* (the Creator) regarding the most suitable place. He created a *chakra* (wheel) out of his mind and told them that wherever it fell on the earth that would be the spot. The *Rishis* followed the *chakra* and the area around the spot where it dropped its *nemi* (felly) came to be known as *Naimisharanya**. This region is hallowed by the penance and the 1000 year *yajña* (sacrifice) performed by the 88000 *Rishis*, by the preaching to them of *Sūtaji*, of the *Bhagavata Purana* (a Hindu religious scripture about the

* The spot where the goddess Lalita Devi stopped the Chakra is marked by an underground spring which spurted up as a result of the wheel's impact and is known as *Chakra Tirtha*. The U. P. Govt. have in recent years enclosed this spring with a circular wall and built an octagonal ghat all round it, where thousands of pilgrims come to bathe every new moon day.

Lord's glories and the greatness of devotion to Him), • by the composition of the *Puranas* by *Bhagavan Vyasa* and by the austerities practised by King *Manu* and his queen *Satarupa* after renouncing their kingdom. The effects of these past penances must still be lingering in the air for the whole place seems surcharged with spirituality. What better location could have been found for our *sadhana* ?

Fourthly, this holy spot had been recently further sanctified by the purifying flood waters of the Gomati. Only a few days before the appointed day the place was still submerged and serious doubts were entertained whether it would be possible to establish a camp there for the two functions. But as Mataji half jokingly said, the floods had been sent to wash off the dirt and impurities accumulated through the ages ; when the time of our functions came they had receded and left the place clean and dry, with sparkling white sand laid on, for the devotees. (Some of us did not fail to see Mataji's influence in the timely subsidence of flood-waters and the absence of rain).

Fifthly, even though this place is so remote from civilization, there was a record attendance. The *Samyam Mahavrata* is undoubtedly gaining in popularity every year but this time because of the lack of housing and other

- नैमिषेऽनिमिषक्षेत्रे ऋषयःशौनकादयः ।
सत्कृतं सूतमासीनं पप्रच्छुरिदमादरात् ॥
'यस्यावतारो भूतानां क्षेमाय च भवाय च ।
तस्याख्याहि हरेर्दीमन् अवतारकथाःशुभाः' ॥

In the divine region of Naimisha.

amenities, it was thought that fewer people would turn up. Strangely enough, undeterred by these handicaps, the number was larger than ever before. There were people from all parts of India and there must have been two to three hundred men and women who observed all the restrictions and rigours of the *Samyam* week. In addition, there used to be daily visitors who joined in various items of the programme including the silent meditation of one hour at a time. I have no aptitude for judging numbers and have not made any efforts to collect statistics, but I think the public Pandal was large enough to accommodate about 2000 people. Even during the meditation hours it used to be fairly full and on other occasions when *Mahatmas* spoke or Mataji answered questions it was simply packed. I was told that as many as 800/900 persons had their meals in the camp every day. During the Bhagavata Saptah the crowds were phenomenal.

Sixthly, all those who had been present in previous years were agreed that this was the grandest and best *Samyam Vrata* they had ever attended, not only in size but also in the quality and standard of the spiritual fare provided in the form of discourses by *mahatmas*. These talks were never boring—as religious discourses sometimes tend to be—but were really a treat. Some of them like those of Sri Naradananda Swami were sweet, of Swami Vishnu Ashram full of humour, of Swami Avadhutji somewhat contentious, of Swami Maheshwaranandaji measured and dignified, of Swami Akhandanandaji forceful like a sledge-hammer and yet dripping with the love of God's personification as Brijlal, of Swami Chaitanya Giri Maharaj bearing the stamp of high scholarship,

a clear analytical mind and mastery of the *Upanishads*. These great saints alternately cajoled and castigated, consoled and encouraged. The total effect was purifying and ennobling, leaving the hearts of the hearers filled with a spirit of love and devotion for God. What is most unusual and gratifying is that these words of great truth and wisdom will not be lost in the air of Naimisharanya because they have all been sedulously tape-recorded (by Sri Kamalda Brahamachari sitting unobtrusively at the back-stage in a corner). This welcome innovation will make it possible to have these talks in book form later on.

The above recital of some of the striking features which made the last *Samyam Saptah* so outstanding will not be sufficient to create a clear picture in the mind of the reader of all that happened. I shall therefore try to recapture the atmosphere and recapitulate some of the events.

In a secluded spot, at some distance from the little township of Nimsar as well as from the main places of historical and religious interest like the *Chakra-Tirtha*, *Lalita Devi* temple and *Vyasa Gaddi*, is the Ashram established by Sri Naradananda Swami who conducts there an *Adhyatma Vidyapith* (School of Divinity). In the unusually spacious grounds belonging to this Ashram were erected several rows of about seventy tents and a number of soldaries for those who came to attend the *Saptah*. One cottage of the Ashram was reserved for Mataji and some other cottages were made available for ashramites. A big pandal was erected for the main functions. In one corner was a small open kitchen with open space in front for serving meals.

In this temporary Ashram, Mata Anandamayī's devotees started arriving on the 20th Oct. by lorries, buses, cars and trains. Long before it was time for the evening *bhajan*, I found that those who had come to take part in the *Samyam Varta* were spreading out their *asanas* (little mats or rug-pieces) in the public pandal in order to secure places in front of Mataji's seat on the dais. The idea was that everyone should stick to one place throughout the week. That evening after the usual 15 minutes' silence from 8.45 to 9, the programme for the week (which had already been circulated by post) was announced by the master of ceremonies, Brahmachari Sri Kantibhai, who also explained the rules to be observed, viz. celibacy, no smoking or tea-drinking, no shaving or putting oil on one's hair, eschewing bad temper and gossip, etc. Then all present were symbolically initiated by Gurupriya Didi who put sandal-paste *Tilak* (mark) on their foreheads. This is a ceremony which takes place in the Ashram every year on the day after Divali. We retired to our tents duly impressed with the solemnity of the occasion, wondering whether we would be able to stand up to the rigorous regimen. (The diet for the week was complete fasts on the first and last days with only Ganges water to drink and one mid-day meal of one or two items only on the remaining days. For weaklings like myself a concession was allowed in the form of a *kulhad* (mud-tumblerful) of milk every night and a meal on the last day).

We were to be woken up at 4.45 A. M. by the beating of a gong so as to be ready for the early morning *kīrtan* which would start at 5.30 A. M. Afraid of over-sleeping, I was up

at 4 A. M. even before the gong sounded. One by one, through the cold and dark, men and women trooped into the pandal and exactly at 5-30 A. M. a small group started the *Bhajan*, Brahmachari Hiruda leading the chant with ॐ धृतसद्गुण समाधि, going on to भजो मां आनन्दमयी; जय शिवशङ्कर; गुरुदेव दया करो and हरि बोल and ending with the usual गुरुप्रणाम । So the day started with the sweet singing of God's names for half an hour after which, with our ears ringing and hearts filled with those names, we all went back to our tents to do our ablutions and daily prayers or meditation, etc.

The main morning session started at 7.30 A. M. with the chanting of *Vedic mantras* by Sri Batuda for 15 minutes with proper intonation and gestures. Between 7.45 and 7.55, all those who were doing the *Varta* and had not yet turned up occupied their places. The raised platform or dais was filled up with *Mahatmas* and Mataji came and took Her seat among them. The atmosphere for meditation was enhanced by the burning of incense in a large urn, which Billoji waved around all over the place and the minds of the devotees were attuned to thoughts of the all-pervading ONE by the most thrilling strains of the hymn, *Satyam Jñānam, anantam Brahman'* which Vibhuda sang with such deep feeling and intensity that the hearers felt transported.*

* The effectiveness of this hymn in putting one in tune with the Infinite can be realized only by those who have heard it being sung by Vibhuda at the *Samyam Saptah*. For the readers who have not had that good fortune, I can only quote it in full and give its meaning :—

सत्यम्, ज्ञानम्, अनन्तम् ब्रह्म ।

शांतिम्, शिवम्, अद्वैतम् ब्रह्म ।

आनन्दरूपम् अमृतम् ब्रह्म ।

एकम् एवाद्वितीयम् ब्रह्म ।

Brahman is Truth, Knowledge, Infinity,

Brahman is Peace, Goodness, Non-dual,

Brahman is Joy, Immortal,

Brahman is the One without a second.

At 7. 55 Kantibhai warned everybody that after five minutes no one would be able to go out or come in for an hour. Then the entrances were closed ; exactly at 8 A. M. a conch was blown and the whole assembly became as if petrified, all sitting erect, quiet, motionless in meditation. It was an inspiring sight. There were a stray few who could not keep still and some who had to clear their throats, cough or sneeze occasionally. But on the stage was a beautiful still picture of Mataji and the *mahatmas*, which served as a model and an inspiration, in particular Mataji's beatific face. Towards the end Mataji would be glancing all round the hall and it almost seemed as if She was seeing angels and the ancient *Rishis* hovering over us. The end of the silent meditation was announced at 9 by the blowing of the conch again and the wafting over the air of the very soft, almost inaudible words of another hymn "हे पितः हे हित हे ब्रह्मत्त्वम्", which came as a fitting end of the hour's *dhyana* (meditation) and had almost the effect of waking one up gently from a trance*. After this

* "हे पितः हे हित हे ब्रह्मत्त्वम्
हे पितः हे हित हे ब्रह्मभूतम्
हे पितः हे हित हे ब्रह्मस्वरूपम्"

'Oh Father ! Oh Benefactor ! Oh *Brahman* in truth, *Brahman* in spirit, *Brahman* in His essential Form.'

At question time one evening, Mataji was asked and told us the origin of this hymn. At the first *Samyam Vrata* in Benaras, during the meditation from 8 to 9, Mataji was half reclining and saw a small boy of about 4 or 5 years of age with long locks of hair, sitting in front of Her, facing south. He looked like the child Dhruva and was singing this tune. As soon as the meditation was over, Mataji repeated the hymn and from that time She has prescribed this to be sung at the end of the silent meditation only during the *Samyam Vrata*. This story is also given at page 8 of the collection of music called कীরत न-रस-स्वरूप "Kirtan Rasa Swarupe"—published recently by the Sangha in book form in Bengali and Hindi.

three chapters of the *Gitz*, one *Stotra* from the *Durga Sapta S'ati* and a chapter from one of the Upanishads were read by all in chorus. At 9.45 Sri Naradananda Swami gave his talk, followed by Swami Chaitanya Giri, who spoke on the Keno-panishad. The morning ended with some more *kirtan* at about 11.15 or 11-30.

After the midday meal there was a short period of rest for some of us. Even during that time the girls continued to sing *kirtan*. From 2.45 began similar preparations as in the morning for another hour of meditation from 3 to 4, followed by talks by Swami Vishnu Ashram and Sri Avadhutaji. The afternoon session ended at about 5.45 with evening prayers sung by the student Brahmacharis of Swami Naradananda Ashram.

The recess from 6 to 7 was intended for private individual evening prayers and meditation (*Sandhya*). *Kirtan* started at 7 p.m. and from 7-30 p.m. there were again talks by *mahatmas*, generally Swami Maheshwaranandaji and Swami Akhandanandaji. From 8.45 to 9 p.m. silence was observed as usual and for half an hour afterwards any questions could be put to Mataji. The refrain of most of the questions, which Dr. Panna Lal (I.C.S.) articulated most aptly (for which reason I dubbed him the *Shaunaka Rishi* of our assembly!) was a short-cut to reach or realize God, some miraculous power which would bring Him to us. Ma's reply was always suited to the questioner. To a married lady she would say: Treat your husband as Narayan, your children as Bal Gopals (the child Krishna), and devote some time to meditation. Her

specific for everybody is to repeat God's name, engage in spiritual practices, read sacred books, meet holy men. The *Mahatmas*, Akhandanandaji in particular, devoted a lot of their talks to this very subject and exhorted people to reserve some time and place for repeating God's name and doing His service. On one or two occasions Dr. Panna Lal prevailed upon Mataji to sing *bhajans*. Every night we lay down to sleep feeling uplifted by Mataji's words.

This was the prescribed routine during the *Samyam* week. There was also provision for meditation at midnight between 11. 45 and 12. 15 called *Mahanīsha dhyāna*, but this was supposed to be done by us in our tents, except on the last night when we all assembled in the pandal for this purpose. I have no doubt that even on other days, there was meditation going on in tents every night though perhaps at different times.

All this may sound very taxing, but we were all exhilarated and hardly felt the strain or even the lack of our habitual tea or cigarettes. Everybody cheerfully bore the vigour of camp life. Rich and highly-placed ladies, some of them elderly and some even Maharanis, used to a life of luxury and ease, not only lived in tents but even walked on foot early every morning a mile or so to the Gomati or Chakra Tirtha for a holy bath. Young men occupying high official positions would walk, buckets in hand and clothed in nothing more than a lungi (loin cloth) to the well or pump. On the 28th morning there was a *yajña* to celebrate the completion of the *Vrata* and we received Mataji's blessings.

