

I AM EVER WITH YOU



MATRI LILA

Volume II



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MATRILILA

Volume II
1962 – 1972



SHREE SHREE ANANDAMAYEE CHARITABLE SOCIETY
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CONTENTS

	<i>Page No.</i>
Preface	v
ELEVEN (October 1962 – October 1963)	1–21
TWELVE (October 1963 – October 1964)	22–37
THIRTEEN (October 1964 – October 1965)	38–66
FOURTEEN (October 1965 – October 1966)	67–101
FIFTEEN (October 1966 – October 1967)	102–128
SIXTEEN (October 1967 – October 1968)	129–155
SEVENTEEN (October 1968 – October 1969)	156–182
EIGHTEEN (October 1969 – October 1970)	183–212
NINETEEN (October 1970 – October 1971)	213–237
TWENTY (October 1971 – October 1972)	238–264

PREFACE

Divine Light-Love-Bliss-Compassion crystalized into a human being in the body of a woman who walked the earth for eighty-six years, (1896-1982), blessing, awakening, inspiring, enlightening. We called Her Sri Anandamayi MA : the Uncreated in peerless manifestation — a breath-taking miracle.

By Her very Being and by Her words, She directed our gaze towards God, towards the ONE who alone IS.

"*Bhagavat smaran*" — remember Him with every breath, become aware of what you are in Reality. And if you can't remember Him constantly, being absorbed in your work, at least fix definite times for *Bhagavat smaran*. Let the Divine be your first thought on waking in the morning and your last thought before you fall asleep at night. Consecrate to Him everything that you eat and drink, do all your work as His service, regard whomsoever you meet as His manifestation, His messenger. Worship the ONE in any form that expresses Divinity to you, invoke His presence by any of His Names that is most dear to you, abide in complete reliance upon Him in all matters of life.

What is perceived by the senses is the surface play of the ONE, ever in movement, ever changing, with its opposites of joy and sorrow, sunshine and rain, attraction and repulsion, ceaseless coming and going. Play your part well, but don't mistake your role for the Real, don't look upon the temporary disguise as your true Nature — "man's true Nature flows towards God alone."

This book is the 2nd volume of an account of Sri Ma's *lila* during Her last thirty years on earth. This volume covers the years 1962 — 1972. It has come into existence by the joint efforts of several devotees, Indian and Western.

In *Matri Lila* every place Mataji visited with the correct dates is mentioned and every festival and function She graced with Her presence. Details about significant incidents, a few striking sayings of Mataji, mention of some people who contacted Her, biographical sketches of some of Her close associates, the history of some of Mataji's Ashrams and Temples will be found in these reports. When Mataji terminated Her *lila* on earth in 1982, it was felt that compiled

into books, these narrations would be valuable and interesting records. Therefore they have now been edited, joined together and compiled into three volumes. On some occasions, such as Sri Ma's birthday celebrations, *Samyam Mahavrata*, *Kumbh Mela*, etc. special articles by various writers describing these functions in detail had appeared in *Ananda Varta*. Portions of such articles have been included in this book. *Matri Lila* was not always written by the same person. The reader will notice the difference of style, but this we feel only enhances the beauty of the narration and makes it more interesting.

By concluding Her *lila* on earth, Mataji has withdrawn from the grasp of our senses, but She has certainly not left us. We only have to turn our attention to Her to become aware of Her tangible, undeniable Presence. To contemplate the *lila* of the Bliss-permeated Mother and Her enlightening words and to try to put them into practice is certainly most rewarding. *Bhagavat smaran* — live in the Presence of God, of the ONE who alone IS.

"I AM EVER WITH YOU" .

ATMANANDA

M A T R I L I L A

ELEVEN

(October 1962 – October 1963)

13th Samyam Mahavrata at Pilani

After gracing with Her presence the consecration of a new Kali Temple and Kali Puja on *Divali* night at Ranchi, Mataji left on October 30th and alighted in New Delhi on the night of the 31st, bringing with Her a large party. Sri Gurupriya Devi, whose health was indifferent, had reached Delhi already earlier and remained there while Mataji, Didima and others proceeded to Pilani on the 3rd of November, partly by bus and partly by train. Mataji chose to go by train, reaching Pilani late at night. She was received by Sri J.K. Birla's Secretary and Manager at Loharu station, from where She motored the remaining 14 miles to Pilani.

Mataji, Her Mother and a number of Ashramites were put up in 'Vishram Vatika,' Sri Birlaji's guest-house, which is beautiful, quiet and spacious, surrounded by well laid out gardens, and very near the school hall where the satsang of the *Samyam Saptah* was held. That very night, soon after Her arrival, Mataji saw, in their subtle bodies, a number of people connected with Pilani.

Over a hundred people who wished to take part in the forthcoming *Samyam Mahavrata* had already arrived on the 3rd of November. On the 4th, Mataji and all the vratis who had come, were taken by cars and buses to see the main sights of Pilani, namely the College campus, the very interesting Technical Museum of the Engineering College, the exquisitely beautiful Saraswati Temple, built entirely of white marble, and Shiva Ganga, the new Canal House.

Pilani originally a small, little-known village in Rajasthan, had by the magic touch of the Birlas blossomed forth into a sizeable township with modern amenities, magnificent buildings, parks and play grounds. Essentially an educational centre with large well appointed colleges and high schools, it had already in 1962 a student population of about ten thousand.

The Birla Vidya Vihar campus is a spacious area, imaginatively planned and artistically laid out. It is dominated at one end by the imposing and elegant edifice of the Saraswati Temple, which is an almost exact replica in white marble of the famous Mahadeo Temple of Khajuraho, with the deities of the Hindu Pantheon,

figures of distinguished scholars, scientists and savants of all ages and countries, like Panini, Chanakya, Newton, Archimedes, C.V. Raman, Malviyaji, Rabindranath Tagore, Gandhiji and others. At the other end, separated by long stretches of rolling lawns in the middle and lined on both sides by hostels and other college buildings, stands the beautiful structure of the Science and Engineering Colleges.

13th Samyam Mahavrata

The 13th *Samyam Mahavrata* was observed in Pilani from 5th to 11 November, 1962. Thanks to the efficient management of Rai Bahadur Sri Narain Dass, Pandit Devdar Sharma, Sri Madan Lal and Captain Harish Chandra, all arrangements were first class, and the entire function could proceed perfectly smoothly and harmoniously.

Less attendance, better performance

Although the programme of the *Samyam Saptah* always sounds more or less alike (judging from the printed invitation card), however, each one of the 13 *Mahavratas* had its own distinctly unique note and seemed not only entirely different from the preceding ones, but also the best of all. This last function was certainly no exception to this rule, although due to the Chinese war, the attendance was somewhat weaker than usual, as officials could not get leave. Those who live in Delhi did however come at least for the last week-end, which marked the climax of the function. Most of the participants were accommodated in the school hostels. Everyone was comfortable and therefore kept good health. Consequently, there was hardly any coughing or restlessness during the long hours of satsang, which was a very welcome change from former years. After all, physical well-being does help concentration.

Pandavas did tapasya here

Until the day before our *Samyam Vrata* ended and Professor Tripurari Chakravarti from Calcutta delivered several talks, many of us were not aware of the fact that the country in which Pilani is situated, namely, Matsyadesha had already been famous in ancient times. The Pandavas are supposed to have practised *tapasya* there for one year. Moreover, Prof. Chakravarti

told us that the very day on which he was talking to us, happened to be the anniversary of the day on which Sri Krishna had left Udupi (which Prof. C. believed to have been more or less where Pilani is now) for Hastinapur on his peace mission, making a last attempt to persuade the Kauravas to refrain from war. The next day, the full moon and the 7th day of our function, was the anniversary of Sri Krishna's return to Udupi. Having failed in this mission, he now advised the Pandavas to get ready for a flight. Professor Chakravarti thrilled the whole audience by his talk, notwithstanding the fact that he did not master Hindi. He used four languages, namely Sanskrit, Bengali, Hindi and English, all mixed up. However, he succeeded surprisingly well in conveying, with great force, what he intended to let us know.

Inspired Prayers

The thought that we had practised *samyam* in Mataji's presence in such a memorable place inspired everyone, and fervent prayers rose from our hearts that this time the world might be preserved from the nightmare of a modern war with its inhuman cruelty and wholesale destruction.

How to become devoted to God?

A large number of the students of Pilani had the good fortune of Mataji's darshan, since She was shown round the beautiful Girl's School and other places, and even more so when Mataji was invited to the Auditorium of the Engineering College, where She gave quite a lengthy reply to the question, "How to become devoted to God?" The students of the college were present. More and more boys got interested in our gathering and came to our evening meetings. At the end, some people of Pilani voiced the wish that a satsang hall should be built in their city.

On November 12th, everyone dispersed. Mataji and a very large party returned to the New Delhi Ashram, which was packed to capacity for the next few days and nights. Many arrived by various buses on the 12th evening and late at night, while Mataji reached there by train in the early morning of the 13th.

Visit to Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru

She had the *kheyala* to pay a visit to Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru immediately after the *Samyam Saptah*. She drove to the Prime

Minister's house on the 14th of November, very early in the morning. By coincidence it happened to be his birthday. Nobody at the Ashram knew where Mataji had gone. To our utter surprise, we read in the evening papers that Mata Anandamayi had been the first to greet Sri Nehru on his birthday. She had arrived at his residence without any previous notice, and stayed there only for a few minutes and then took Her leave.

KISHENPUR AND HARDWAR

Foreigners feel the blessed Presence

Mataji remained in the Chandraloka Ashram for five days. On the 17th night, She left for Dehradun, reaching the Kishenpur Ashram on the 18th morning. Among the very few who were allowed to accompany Her, were visitors from France and the U.S.A. They also followed Her to Hardwar where She arrived on November 21st. Ma stayed at Baghat House for one week. She gave darshan twice daily, but most of the time was able to have a good rest. Our foreign guests were delighted to be with Her in such quiet and intimate surroundings. This had become a rare privilege in recent years. One of our guests from the West wrote to a friend, ".....Although Mataji seldom comes downstairs and we are not allowed to go up, yet the darshan times are something very special. There are so few here... Mataji sometimes even cooked Herself for the three brahmacharis. We have such rare and beautiful glimpses of Her here. The first morning after we came, we spent a long time with Her up on the terrace where She delighted everyone by feeding the monkeys...."

Bhagavata Saptah and Gita Jayanti at Vrindaban

On November 28th, Mataji left Hardwar for Vrindaban. She passed through Delhi, but did not halt there and arrived at Mathura station at 1 a.m. on the 29th. At the Vrindaban Ashram, a *Bhagavata Saptah* was observed, that had been arranged by Maharani Satya Prem Kumari of Mysore for the good of her Mother's soul, who had also been a devotee of Mataji. Another *Bhagavata Saptah* was held simultaneously, followed by a Gita Jayanti. Many guests came from various places to attend the functions and Mataji had a busy time once again. Nobody knew where She would go from Vrindaban.

Swami Shankarananda's Tirodhan

Suddenly Ma turned up quite unexpectedly with only two companions at the Kishenpur Ashram on the 27th December evening. That day it had rained in Dehradun, and Mussoorie had had its first snowfall this winter. Fortunately, the sun came out the next morning. A surprisingly large number of people could be informed of Mataji's sudden arrival and the hall was full at the darshan on the 28th evening. On the 29th midday Mataji motored to Hardwar. Swami Shankarananda, one of the sannyasis belonging to our Ashram, had at an advanced age, passed away on the 18th of December at Hardwar. His sons had begged Mataji to be present at a feast that they wished to give in his honour to 101 sannyasis at Hardwar on December 30th. This was how Dehradun, Kankhal and Hardwar were so fortunate as to receive Mataji's unexpected visits.

Visit to Swami Krishnashramji

On December 31st, Mataji left Hardwar to return to Vrindaban. Before Her departure She paid a visit to Swami Krishnashramji at Modibhavan. Swami Krishnashramji is one of the most remarkable living Mahatmas. He has spent years at Gangotri (the source of the Ganges) in complete silence and without wearing any clothes. He is said to be well over a hundred years old, but one cannot help noticing in him the radiance and energy of agelessness.

Tulsi planting ceremony at Vrindaban

On January 1st, 1963 Mataji alighted in Vrindaban. The Vidyapith, the Boy's School run by the Shree Shree Anandamayee Sangha in Almora, has for the last 2 or 3 years, been shifted to the Vrindaban Ashram during winter. The students and staff, had therefore the privilege of Mataji's company. On the 8th a charming ceremony was performed. Fourteen tulsi plants were planted by twelve sannyasis of our ashram. Sri Krishnanandaji Avadhuta related the legend of tulsi and Mataji sang. Finally, She fed monkeys with *prasada*.

Ten days at Bombay

On January 11th, Mataji left for Bombay, which She reached on 12th. As usual She stayed in Her 'pagoda' in the beautiful garden

of Sri B. K. Shah's residence in Ville Parle. Sri Haribabaji came to see Mataji that very afternoon. A large number of people gathered for Mataji's darshan throughout Her sojourn, among them several foreigners from various countries.

On January 14th, Uttarayan Sankranti was celebrated by an uninterrupted programme of kirtan, bhajan and the reading of the Ramayana. On January 15th, Mataji visited the Udasin¹ Sampradaya Math and on the 17th attended Sri Haribabaji's *Rasalila*. Sri Haribabaji's was putting up in a Gurdwara. On the 19th, Mataji graced the houses of several devotees in Bombay with Her presence. In one of them, kirtan had been arranged. On the 20th on the way to the railway station, Mataji stopped at the Shiva Temple, Sion, where She used to put up in former years, whenever She was in Bombay, as the guest of Sri Muljibhai Patel.

Modinagar : Ten days functions for consecration of temple

On the 21st, Mataji returned to Vrindaban, only to leave by car for Modinagar on the 23rd. Rai Bahadur G. M. Modi had arranged for a big 10 days function to celebrate, in a fitting manner, the consecration of a very beautiful new Temple of Lakshmi Narayana, Durga and Maheshwara. He had invited Mataji and as many of Her Ashramites and devotees as could come and also numerous well-known *Mahatmas* and a *Rasalila* party. By the side of the new temple an enormous pandal had been erected and satsang was held there daily for hours, consisting of lectures by *Mahatmas*, kirtans and the performances of *rasalila* mornings and evenings. Mataji and Her very large party were accommodated in a quiet and beautiful place called 'Krishnashram,' about a mile from the town. The spacious and comfortable main building, in which Swami Krishnashram, the Guru of Rai Bahadur Modi, was also put up with his attendants, is situated in the midst of a very large garden. Under its mango trees many of the guests stayed in tents. At the far end of the garden, a small house near a panchavati² gave shelter to Sri Krishnanandaji Avadhuta and to several of our own sadhus. Mataji used to retire there in the afternoons for a rest, to be safe from the crowds that constantly besieged the main house for Her and Sri Krishnashramji's darshan.

¹Udasin = renunciate, Sampradaya = Sect. This sect was founded by Guru Nanak's son, Shreechand. They wear saffron or black.

²Five sacred trees; Bat, Aavatta, Amla, Bel, Ashok.

Governor of U. P. had interview

Many devotees flocked from Delhi, Meerut and other places in the neighbourhood, staying for weekends, for a day or for a few hours only. The Governor of U.P. and a number of other officials availed themselves of this opportunity and had interviews with Mataji, who was throughout Her stay in a very active, humorous and communicative mood. On the 29th of January a large procession was taken out with elephants, horses, cars, etc. In the centre small replicas of the deities of the new temple were carried on a profusely decorated chariot. Mataji sat in an open horse carriage together with Sri Haribabaji and some other *sannyasis*. On January 30th, Vasant Panchami day *Saraswati Puja* was celebrated in the courtyard of Mataji's residence. Saraswati is the goddess of learning, music and art, but more than that, she is called "*Brahmavidyadayini*," bestower of the Supreme knowledge of Reality that liberates man once and for all from samsara, the wheel of birth and death. When after the puja, people went to do obeisance to Mataji, She blessed them by putting Her hand on each one's head, saying '*Brahmavidya*' (supreme knowledge).

Ma leads the kirtan

On February 3rd, the function at Modinagar terminated with *akhanda* kirtan in the pandal from early morning until late at night. Mataji attended for the last two or three hours and at the end led the kirtan Herself for quite a long time and distributed the *prasada* with Her own hands. It happened only rarely in those days that Mataji feels inspired to sing for such a long while and with such vigour and abandon. The whole congregation was carried away and welded into one by the power of Mataji's enchanting voice. On February 4th, everyone dispersed and Mataji left for Delhi.

Satsang at Jodhpur

On February 5th evening, She travelled to Jodhpur at the request of Sri Haribabaji. On February 6th, the new Satsang Bhavan was inaugurated there in the presence of Mataji, Sri Haribabaji and Swami Akhandanandaji of Vrindaban. Mataji and Her party were put up in that very building. For a whole week, satsang was held daily for many hours, with lectures, kirtan and *rasalila* performances. Mataji used to be present twice daily and on most nights and also sang for a short time. On the 11th, She

was shown round the extensive gardens of Jodhpur palace and on the 12th She followed invitations to the houses of several devotees. At Her departure on the 13th, a large crowd assembled at the station, bidding farewell to Mataji by singing "*Bhajo Ma Anandamayi*" with great fervour and emotion.

Two days at Kanpur

Mataji reached Delhi on the 14th morning. The same evening She boarded the train to Kanpur, where She stayed for two days at the residence of the Jaipuria family. The arrangements were excellent. Two beautiful pandals had been provided for meetings. At Kanpur, Mataji also visited the famous J. K. Temple which contains shrines for a number of deities of the Hindu pantheon.

Shivaratri at Hardwar

On the 17th morning, Mataji alighted in Kishenpur with two or three companions only. In the late afternoon, She left by car for Kankhal, where the rest of the party had already reached early morning. After spending one night at the Ashram there, Mataji with everyone else moved to Baghat House at Hardwar where She took rest for a couple of days in preparation for Shivaratri, which was observed on the 22nd by a complete fast of 36 hours and puja in the hall and temple throughout the night. Like last year, comparatively few people had come, although quite a number arrived from Delhi and Dehradun. Even so, the hall was filled to capacity. The festival proceeded with the usual solemnity and deep absorption. Mataji was present most of the night, except for a short while when She drove to the Kankhal Ashram, where two brahmacharis of our Ashram, who had just been initiated into *naisthika brahmacharya* performed their worship. *Naisthika brahmachari* means *brahmacharya* of a strict order. *Naisthika brahmachari* cannot become a householder anymore, he has dedicated his life finally to the search after Supreme Knowledge and wears the *gerua* robe of the *sanmyasi*. He is not allowed to work for money and has to observe very strict rules of conduct.¹

Opening of Dharmasalas at Sitapur and Naimisharanya

On February 23rd night, Mataji with a party of about 30 people left for Sitapur. Sri Prayag Narayan Saigal had built a new

dharmasala there and requested Mataji to bless it by being present at the opening ceremony and staying in it together with Her companions for at least one night. The *dharmasala* was inaugurated as soon as Mataji reached Sitapur, at about midday of the 24th and everyone was accommodated there and lavishly entertained. Satsang proceeded in a pandal until 1 a.m. On the 25th morning the Shiva-Parvati-Hanuman temple of the *dharmasala* was consecrated in Mataji's presence and immediately after a procession taken out.

In the early afternoon Mataji drove to Naimisharanya. Sri Prayag Narayan Saigal had built a new *dharmasala* there as well and it was formally opened on that occasion. Mataji then paid a short visit to Swami Naradananda after which She proceeded to the grounds that had been acquired for our Ashram near the banks of the Gomati river on Hanuman Tila.

Naimisharanya is supposed to be the place where Rishi Vyasa composed all of the 18 Puranas. When our 11th *Samyam Mahavrata* was held there in November 1960, it was discovered that few of the Puranas were not to be found anywhere in Naimisharanya. Mataji then suggested that at least one person should daily read a portion from one of the Puranas in Naimisharanya. In this way, all 18 Puranas should, one after the other, be constantly read there. The reading was started then and there. The Anandamayee Sangha soon after acquired a piece of land at Hanuman Tila for the purpose of building a small Purana Mandir, where a copy of each one of the Purana may be preserved and read in rotation.

Lucknow-Delhi

From Naimisharanya Mataji was taken by car to Lucknow that very evening. Sri Rameshwar Sahai had earnestly requested Mataji to stay in his newly built house for at least a night with Her whole party, before he and his family occupied it. The devotees of Lucknow availed themselves in large numbers of this opportunity for Mataji's darshan. On the 26th morning, Mataji went to the residence of Sri P. K. Banerji in another locality of Lucknow and later met people in the pandal in Sri Sahai's compound. In the evening on Her way to the station, She visited the house of Sri H.C. Banerji. The next day, 27th February Mataji spent in Delhi, alighting in Vrindaban by car on the same evening.

¹See Vol.I, p. 210.

Bhagavata Saptah and Holi at Vrindaban

Since Shivaratri, Mataji had been through an extremely crowded and strenuous programme. No sooner did She reach Vrindaban than preparations for a *Bhagavata Saptah* began, which was held from 1st to 8th of March. The *Saptah* proceeded very beautifully and harmoniously. Mataji's health being indifferent, She did not attend for long stretches, but came to the hall daily at least two or three times for short sittings. Towards the end of the week, more and more devotees arrived from far and near to be with Mataji during the *Holi* festival, which fell on March 10th and was celebrated by a wonderful and inspiring kirtan in circumambulation of a circular altar for 30 hours, kept up with great vigour and enthusiasm throughout. Mataji was not in a mood to play *Holi* with wet colours and with the hilarity displayed on several former occasions. Only dry red powder was put on everyone's forehead and on Mataji's feet. All the same the festival was one of those that will ever remain unforgettable to all present.

Holi, or *Dol Purnima* is also the birthday of Sri Gauranga Mahaprabhu and happens to be Sri Haribabaji's birthday. He was invited to hold his satsang in our hall on the eve of his birthday.

Consecration of Vighraha of Gopal

On the morning of the 10th, a new very beautiful image of Gopal was consecrated and placed in the temple between the statues of Sri Gauranga and Sri Nityananda. Exactly eight years ago, namely during *Holi* 1955, this temple had been consecrated. Dr. Pannalal had been responsible for procuring the image that were sculptured by the famous Bengali artist Sri Nitai Pal of Calcutta. These *vighrahas* are extraordinarily beautiful and give the impression of being alive. Mataji had the *kheyala* that it would be nice to place Gopal, the child Krishna, between the two statues. When in March 1954, a devotee informed Mataji that the then owner of the black image of Gopal (now kept in the Varanasi Ashram) wished to hand over Gopal to any of Her Ashrams, the then newly inaugurated Ashram was thought of. But various difficulties arose and the matter was dropped.

Much later we heard that the son of the *pujari* who owned the *vighraha* had dreamt that Gopal said, "Don't remove me from Benares!" When in August 1954, a couple of days before Her

departure for Varanasi, Mataji was lying in Her bed in Dehradun, She had the *kheyala* to say, "Well, Gopal, you have not come. How nice it would have been, if you could have sat on the swing! Jhulan is starting in two days." (see Vol. I.p.40) As soon as Mataji arrived in Varanasi, a message reached Her that the *pujari* was now willing to part with the *vighraha* in favour of the Ashram. Mataji at once sent brahmachari Raghunath Das Goswami in Her own car to bring Gopal, although everyone was very doubtful that the *pujari* would give away Gopal so suddenly. But behold, Gopal arrived and was duly installed in the Varanasi Ashram. Many strange incidents since happened in connection with Gopal. However, Gopal did not come to our Vrindaban Ashram.

Superior to other images

Some time ago, an old Vaishnava devotee conceived the desire to present to the Ashram in Vrindaban a *vighraha* of Gopal in memory of his recently deceased wife. Swami Paramananda, who was in Calcutta at that time, was deputed to select a suitable image. It was found that Sri Nitai Pal (who had modelled the statues for our Gouranga temple) had sculptured a beautiful image of Gopal in *astadhātu* (8 metals, including gold, silver, copper, etc.) which he had intended for our Ashram. But he passed away and the image remained in his studio. It was now chosen by Swami Paramananda who thought it superior to all of the other images offered to him by various artists, and so Sri Nitai Pal's wish had thus been fulfilled.

One evening before *Holi*, Mataji related to us much about the black Gopal of Varanasi, who, She said, was a '*jagrat murti*' and had deeply moved several people who were not at all interested in the worship of what they called 'idols'. At the end of Her narrative, Mataji remarked, "Gopal is one, now he has after all come to Vrindaban as well as to Varanasi."

Visit to Karauli

On March 16th, Mataji followed the repeated invitations of the Maharani of Karauli in Rajasthan (110 miles from Vrindaban). Almost everyone present at the Vrindaban Ashram including 5 foreigners accompanied Mataji. Sri Haribabaji and the *rasalila* party had also been invited. Satsang and *rasalila* were held daily until Mataji's return to Vrindaban on March 21st. One evening M.

Desjardins delighted everyone by showing his new film of Mataji. Mataji visited the famous Madan Mohan temple at Karauli. Its *vighraha* is also supposed to be *jagrat* (alive).

On March 25th, Mataji left for Vindhyachal, where She reached the next morning.

Visitors from foreign countries

More and more seekers from foreign countries seem to be attracted to Mataji. In Modinagar four gentlemen hailing from France, Canada, Columbia and California shared a tent. Besides several Europeans came for a few hours each. In Hardwar some Americans kept vigil during Shivaratri, watching the puja from the gallery of the hall, with deep emotion and admiring the intensity of the kirtan singers. When told that many who participated were high officials, teachers, businessmen, etc., who had to return the next morning to their secular occupations, a lady from South America exclaimed, "How wonderful the Indian people are! They spend their energy in search of God, while in my country they waste it on low types of amusements."

Last winter during Mataji's stay at Vrindaban, the German element was predominant. In Volume I are mentioned the stirring old German religious songs we listened to every evening. This year, due to the publication of A. Desjardin's new book, the French were in the majority. An elderly lady from Paris told us, "For forty years I dreamt of going to India. When I saw Mataji's picture, I said, 'Now I am going'." However, the record of originality was surely beaten by a young Frenchman who came straight from Paris to Vrindaban in less than 20 hours.

"I started my journey by aeroplane yesterday at 3 p.m. and I finished by tonga," the young Frenchman remarked. He did not know more than a dozen English words, but God evidently provides for those who have faith and a spirit of adventure. An Ashramite who knows both French and Hindi happened to be present and so the situation was saved. "Shall I be allowed to travel with Mataji?" asked the newcomer a few days later, "for I am not interested in seeing India. If I cannot remain with Mataji, I shall return to my country." The young man accompanied Mataji to Karauli and then went to Vindhyachal together with five other foreign visitors.

Sannyasa Utsava in Chandraloka Ashram

After a fortnight of comparative quiet and rest at Vindhyachal, Mataji reached Delhi on April 12th. On the 14th *Chaitra Sankranti*, Didima's *Sannyasa Utsava* was celebrated in our Ashram at Chandraloka, New Delhi by a full programme of puja, kirtan etc. Fifty sadhus had been specially invited for a feast at midday, and about 500 people in all partook of the meal. In the evening Sri Maheshanandaji of the Nrisinha Giri Ashram, Delhi, gave a fine talk on *Sannyasa* and Swami Sivananda Giri spoke about Didima and her extra-ordinary life. At night there was illumination.

Mataji at Hardwar

On April 16th Mataji left Delhi for Hardwar, where She reached the next morning early. Her stay there of five days was divided between our Ashram at Kankhal and Baghat House, Kharkhari. In both places some of our *naisthika brahmacharis* were performing rigorous *tapasya*. One day, when Mataji went for a stroll on the bank of the Ganges She was reminded of the time when She stayed at Hardwar and Kankhal with Bholanath, Bhalji and Swami Akhandananda (Gurupriya Devi's father). She also related about Her trip to Mansarovar. On the way to Kailash they came across a valley called Mantal that is so deep that the rays of the sun cannot penetrate. It is so dark there that at times the stars are visible in the day. The people round about believe that one who comes to the valley and is unable to see the stars, will die soon. Bhalji could not see the stars. It so happened that he left his body soon after returning to Almora from Kailash.

As usual at Hardwar several Europeans came to see Mataji and had talks with Her.

To Dehradun

On April 22nd early morning Mataji motored to Dehradun. Before going to the Kishenpur Ashram She went to the Civil Hospital to see a devotee, Sri A.P. Dikshit, Collector, who had just undergone an operation. During Her stay at Kishenpur, She one day related to us in detail how, when Mataji had gone to Jodhpur in February, having left Didima and some others at Kankhal, Didima appeared to Her in her subtle body on February 11th and indicated to Mataji that she intended to leave this world the next day. But Mataji did not agree and requested her to remain

in the body for some time more. To confirm this also physically, She had a wire despatched to Sri Narayan Swami who was at Kankhal with Didima, asking him to be careful and see that Didima kept good health. Everyone at Kankhal wondered why the wire had been sent, since Didima was in any case leaving Kankhal on the 13th night in order to join Mataji in Delhi on the 14th of February. In this connection many other interesting incidents were related to us by Mataji. Didima is not ill, but at the age of 87 her health is naturally frail. Nevertheless she still follows Mataji almost everywhere and bears the strain of this constant travelling with admirable poise.

To Calcutta

Before leaving Dehradun on April 29th Mataji visited a devotee's house at Raipur on way to the railway station. She took the night train to Delhi and from there proceeded straight to Calcutta to be present at Her birthday celebrations, that is observed from May 3rd-12th. At Burdwan Mataji suddenly decided to detrain and thus reached Calcutta in the evening of 1st May to the disappointment of many devotees who were waiting to receive Her at the Howrah station in the early morning and found that the party had arrived without Her.

Mataji's Birthday Celebrations at Calcutta

An imposing hall and some living rooms were recently added to the Agarpa Ashram and were inaugurated on the auspicious occasion of Mataji's birthday celebrations. Arrangements had been thought out with such care this time, that even the unmanageable crowds of Calcutta were kept in check, although they were still very noisy. A special passage for Mataji's sole use was constructed, leading from Mataji's room directly to Her seat in the hall, so that nobody could crowd round Her. The celebrations proceeded with much fervour, yet in harmony and order, in spite of the very large attendance. A number of well-known Mahatmas were present, such as Sri Sri 1008 Swami Santananda Saraswati, who is the Jagatguru Shankaracharya of Jyotirmath, Sri 108 Haribabaji Maharaj, Sri Krishnananda Avadhutaji and others. Amongst those who came for Mataji's darshan was the renowned dancer Sri Uday Shanker who has known Mataji for many years. One day Mataji visited the famous Sanskrit College at Calcutta.

On May 13th, Mataji left for Varanasi, as Sri Gurupriya Devi was very much ill. Sri Haribabaji also flew to Varanasi, especially to see Didi.

We are happy to say that Didi's (Gurupriya Devi's) health has lately much improved. She was able to proceed to Bombay in the last week of May for a thorough medical check-up and has reached Dehradun on the 15th July.

At Ranchi

Mataji reached Ranchi on May 21st while most of Her party had already gone there straight from Calcutta. Sri Haribabaji and the *Rasalila* party that always accompanied him had also come to Ranchi. Satsang was held daily, ending with half an hour when Mataji would reply to questions. The performances of *Krishna lila* and *Mahaprabhu lila* delighted the audience as usual.

From May 27th to 30th Mataji was at Jamshedpur, putting up at Satya Narayan Mandir. During the satsang many interesting questions were asked and replied to. On the 29th *akhanda* kirtan was held.

From Ranchi to Patna

From 1st-17th June Mataji again remained in Ranchi. During Her stay there She visited the houses of several devotees. On the 17th She left for Patna, reaching on the 18th. On the 20th She proceeded from there to Rajgir, where She spent two days together with Sri Haribabaji, who had never before been there. After one more day at Patna, Mataji took the train to Roorkee, where a car waited for Her to drive Her to Hardwar on the 25th early morning.

At Hardwar

At Baghat House, Kharkhari a *Bhagavat Saptah* was observed from June 28th to July 5th. It was arranged according to Didima's wishes, not for the good of any deceased person's soul, but just for the love of God. This is called '*niskama*'. Didima's son and his whole family took an active part in the *Saptah*, having come specially from Varanasi for the occasion.

During Her stay at Hardwar many distinguished persons came for Mataji's darshan, among whom special mention might be made of Shri Chavan, the Defence Minister, Government of India.

Guru Purnima Day at Hardwar

The number of visitors that flocked from all over North India increased daily, until it became a large crowd on *Guru Purnima* day, July 6th. Many travelled from great distances to pay homage to Mataji and Didi on this auspicious day. One of the day's programme was a feast given to 108 *Kumaris* on the veranda of the *Shiva mandir*. While they had their meal, *arati* was performed to them by the brahmacharinis of our Ashram, who circumambulated in a line between the *Kumaris* who sat on both sides of the veranda. Each brahmacharini was wielding one of the instruments with which the worship is performed while Mataji Herself topped the line, throwing sweet smelling flowers to each one of the *Kumaris* and saying: "*Puspanjali*" (Flower offering done to a deity.) The idea being that the Divine Virgin is adored in the form of the little girls. The following night there was a lunar eclipse, which was celebrated by kirtan in Mataji's presence on the roof of the Baghat House from 2 to 5 a. m.

Many visitors left already on the 6th. Mataji and the rest of the party dispersed on the 7th early morning. Mataji proceeded by car to the Kishenpur Ashram at Dehradun where She was expected to stay for a few weeks.

Few Quite Days at Kishenpur Ashram

Mataji reached the Kishenpur Ashram by car from Hardwar on July 7th. Quite a number of visitors who had come to Hardwar for *Guru Purnima* (July 6th) accompanied Mataji to Dehradun. However, after two or three days, it became fairly quiet in Kishenpur. Sri Gurupriya Devi was expected from Bombay on July 11th, but the railway line being damaged due to heavy rains, She arrived on the 15th evening. Mataji was downstairs most of that day, seeing in person to the arrangements for Didi's stay, since Didi's health was still indifferent at the time.

A small accident

On the 16th Mataji felt rather tired and remained upstairs all day. In the evening when She got up to give darshan as usual, Her foot got entangled into a towel that had fallen to the floor, and a small bone of one of the toes of Her right foot was fractured. Mataji had no *kheyala* to put the foot into plaster and therefore every movement would have aggravated the trouble. Mataji thus re-

mained confined to bed for eight days. Sometimes one has the feeling that incidents of this kind are the only means of providing a little much needed rest for Mataji between spells of intense activity and strain. During that week people had darshan in the evening, standing on the veranda in front of Mataji's room. On the 22nd Mataji agreed to have the fractured toe bandaged tightly with sticking-plaster and on the 23rd She came downstairs and paid a visit to Didi, who was confined to the room below Mataji's. To the joy of everyone present, Mataji walked all over the Ashram and to the temples, although the foot must have been quite painful.

Mundan of Gopal

On July 25th a very charming little ceremony took place in Mataji's own room. When reporting about the festivals and functions that are being celebrated year after year, a good deal of repetition seems unavoidable. The following is being described rather in detail, since there has been no occasion so far to write about anything similar. Gopal, the youngest child of Sri A.P. Dikshit, the District Magistrate of Dehradun, had a few days before had his first haircutting ceremony (*mundan*). His mother was eager that *Vidyarambh* (the beginning of learning) should now be performed in Mataji's presence. On a mat right in front of Mataji's couch sat little Gopal and Brahmachari Nirvanananda, who was guiding the child's hand to write every single letter of the alphabet, which he simultaneously taught him to pronounce; then his own name, various sacred syllables and words, some with chalk on a slate, some with a pencil on paper and finally a few with red ink into a copy book. The parents, some other close relatives of the little boy and as many as could squeeze in, stood tightly packed at the back of the room and on the verandah, men on one side and women on the other, watching with great interest. Mataji seemed to guide and supervise everything, often suggesting what should be done next. At the end She gave garlands to Gopal to be presented to his elders and asked him to fall at their feet. At midday a feast was given to everyone. There is surely nothing very noteworthy in a child being taught the alphabets. But the original way in which it was done in Mataji's presence left a deep impression on many who watched the procedure.

Another unusual happening, although of a very different order, was the visit of a Roman Catholic priest, who had travelled

to India all the way from France to find out what Indian spirituality actually was. He spent a couple of days in Dehradun in order to meet Mataji and had an interesting interview with Her. For a consecrated priest of the Roman Catholic church to visit India, not as a missionary but as an inquirer, is very rare and surely not without significance.

Mataji at Raipur Ashram

On July 29th Mataji shifted to the Raipur Ashram. Raipur has played a special part in Mataji's *lila*. In 1932, when She suddenly left Bengal together with Bholanath and Bhairi, they remained for many months in the dilapidated room and veranda next to the Shiva Temple. The room could not provide adequate shelter from either the sun or the rain, but the place was and is charming, commanding an extensive view over the surrounding hills, and is even now fairly secluded. Much later, the Ashram was built just below and by the side of the Shiva Temple. On the plot next to it a devotee of Dehradun, whose son passed away soon after his investiture with the sacred thread, erected in his memory another small Ashram for brahmacharis. The room that Mataji occupied in 1932 was renovated and improved when the Ashram was first constructed and has just now been enlarged and converted into almost a mansion, compared to what it used to be.

In 1932 Mataji was not known outside of Bengal. While at Raipur, Bholanath would sit in meditation most of the time, while Bhairi did whatever housework and errands were required for the three of them. They lived on very scanty and extremely simple food, often just a few boiled vegetables and a couple of rotis each. Bhairi was clad in a dhoti only and walked about bare footed, since Mataji did not use any footwear either. There was hardly anyone to talk to in that solitary place which was then a real jungle, infested with snakes and scorpions. Some of the villagers wondered, whether Bholanath had perhaps left his home to do *tapasya* and his wife had followed him against his wish, taking their servant (Bhairi) with them. However, later, when letters began to arrive for Bhairi, his identity as a high official in Government service was disclosed. In those days, Mataji did not bathe and hardly ever changed Her clothes. Her hair became matted. Later She had it cut off. It had formed into an exquisite pattern just like a crown, which was preserved. When Bhairi had

to return to Bengal, Brahmachari Kamalakanta came to attend to Mataji and Pitaji. One or two others arrived from Bengal and tried to join the party, but Mataji sent them back. Only very gradually a few people of Dehradun discovered Mataji and began to go to see Her in spite of the very bad road that became in parts a riverbed during the rains.

Jhulan at Raipur Ashram

For the last several years, Mataji had not stayed in the Raipur Ashram for more than a few hours at a time. But on this occasion She remained there for full eight days. *Jhulan* was celebrated from July 31st to August 5th. The two Raipur Ashrams are comparatively small and it was quite a feat to accommodate all who had shifted from Kishenpur. The satsang hall had to serve as a dormitory at night. The *jhula* was placed in the room adjoining the hall. The decorations, done by the Ashram girls with infinite care and great artistic taste, using profusion of flowers and brightly coloured hangings, were different every evening and always superb. The devotees of Dehradun and the people of Raipur village and Raipur Factory joined into the functions with enthusiasm. The crowd overflowed from the hall to the veranda and into the courtyard. *Jhulan Purnima* night, as always, marked the climax of the festival. After the silence, from 9 p.m. onwards until the midnight meditation started at 11.45 p.m. Mataji indefatigably tied *rakhis* to the hand of everyone who approached Her, and there was no end to the children and grown-ups, eager to receive Mataji's blessing in this manner. After the meditation the kirtan was resumed and kept up until the morning. A lady from Venezuela was present throughout the night, while two gentlemen hailing from Holland and Australia attended some of the functions. The celebration of *Raksha bandhan* continued the next morning in Raipur and then in Kishenpur until late at night and even the day after. On the 7th night Mataji, Didi and half of the party entrained for Delhi, while Didi with the rest went straight to Varanasi, where *Janmastami* was to be celebrated. Mataji spent only one day in Delhi and reached Varanasi on August 9th.

Festivals at Varanasi Ashram

The famous black Gopal of the Varanasi Ashram had been presented with a beautifully carved *simhasana* made of sandalwood and Mataji had been specially requested to be present during

the installation on Gopal's Birthday on August 12. The next morning *Nandotsava* was observed and Mataji left the same evening for Delhi, where she remained until August 22nd. On the 23rd she motored to Vrindaban. A *Bhagavata Saptah* was held there from August 26th to September 3rd. On September 4th Mataji returned to Delhi. On September 11th Mataji was back at Raipur, this time for a sojourn of 15 days, interrupted only by a stay of 24 hours in Kishenpur on the 15th, when Srimati Sushila Nair, Health Minister, came for Her darsan. From September 18th to 25th a *Bhagavata Saptah* was held for the first time in the Raipur Ashram. It had been arranged by the Asstt. Secretary of the Dehradun Ashrams, Sri Nawal Kishore, for the good of his deceased father's soul, and was enjoyed and appreciated by all who had the good fortune to attend. Electricity had so far not penetrated to the village of Raipur. On the eve of the *Saptah* the installation was completed and electric lights flared up in the whole of the Ashram. A loudspeaker could thus be installed, to enable people to listen from the courtyard and the roof, since the hall could not hold even half of those who flocked regularly every afternoon and listened spell-bound to the lucid exposition in Hindi by Pandit Srinath Shastri, who was also responsible for the Sanskrit reading every morning. A German lady and a French doctor who had come from their respective countries mainly for Mataji's darsan were present in Raipur for the whole of the week. The entire function proceeded in great harmony. Mataji sat in the hall dally towards the end of the talk for sometime.

On the first morning, while the puja that precedes the reading of the *Bhagavata*, was in process, a snake appeared on the back veranda where some girls were cutting fruit. It soon left the veranda but remained in the open near the hall until the *arati* was over, and then vanished into the adjoining jungle. It was again sighted the next day in the Ashram compound, where the Raipur children killed it with stones. Some of the people present felt that it may have been more than a coincidence that the snake came just at that moment and also that it was released from its existence as a reptile while the *Bhagavata* was being recited.

To Kishenpur

On September 26th Mataji proceeded to Kishenpur where She spent one night, leaving on the 27th evening for Kanpur to respond

to the entreaties of the Jaipurias there to bless another *Bhagavata Saptah* with her presence. However, Mataji remained there only for a night and then went to Allahabad by car staying at the Satyagopal Gita Ashram for three nights. She motored to Vindhyachal on the 2nd noon, where She was expected to stay till about 15th and then proceed to Varanasi.¹

It was expected that the next *Samyam Saptah* would be held at Ahmedabad from 23rd to 29th November.

¹Although the *Durga Puja* was not celebrated in our Varanasi Ashram, it was hoped that Mataji would stay at Varanasi during the Puja period.

TWELVE

(October 1963 — October 1964)

Mataji's month-long stay at Varanasi

After the Varanasi Ashram was started in 1945, Mataji used to stay there very frequently, often for weeks and months together. But during the last two or three years Mataji had been to Varanasi only rarely and then also for a very few days each time. Last October-November, however, Varanasi was so fortunate as to be blessed by Mataji's presence for a full month. She arrived from Vindhyachal on October 16th and remained without a break until November 15th. *Durga Puja*, *Luxmi Puja* and *Diwali* were celebrated during that period. *Durga Puja* took place, not in the Ashram, but in Mataji's younger brother's residence which adjoins the Ashram. Many visitors had come from Calcutta and other places and the people of Varanasi availed themselves in large numbers of this rare opportunity of Mataji's darshan. *Kali Puja* on *Diwali* night was celebrated in the Ashram on November 15th and on the 16th morning Mataji entrained for Bombay.

Mataji went to Bombay at the special request of H. H. Rajmata Saheba of Gwalior who had arranged for a *Bhagavata Saptah* for the benefit of the soul of her deceased husband, the late Maharaja Scindia of Gwalior, who died about a year ago. Mataji reached Bombay on November 17th and for three days she attended the *Saptah* for several hours daily. Mataji stayed for three nights in a Shiva temple inside the compound of the Gwalior Palace, just on the sea side in Worli, Bombay. The Rajmata Saheba's spirit of service and attention to even the minutest details is rather unique. On the 21st evening she left for Ahmedabad where the 14th *Samyam Mahavrata* was held from November 23rd to 29th.

As a rule this yearly function is observed in a place of pilgrimage. This time, however, Ahmedabad was chosen to fulfil the special wish of Late Sri Kantilal Munshaw, an ardent and very active devotee of many years' standing, who unfortunately passed away suddenly about four years ago. Shortly before he died, he had begged of Mataji the privilege to arrange for a *Samyam Saptah* in his own residence in Ahmedabad. Ever since then his family was anxiously waiting for an opportunity to fulfil his wish.

Samyam Saptah at Ahmedabad

All arrangements were excellent and carefully thought out to the minutest detail. A dainty and artistically decorated little house built of asbestos and matting for Mataji's personal use and a large and elegant pandal equipped with fans, lights and loudspeakers were erected in the compound of the residence of the Munshaw family. Many devotees, who have made it a point to take part in the *Samyam Vrata* every year without fail, had come from considerable distances and the *bhaktas* of Bombay and Gujarat naturally attended in numbers. Among the *vratis* were also two Western guests who had come to India for the sole purpose of spending some time with Mataji, namely, Sri Durga Mata of the Self Realization Fellowship, who arrived straight from Los Angeles and Melita Maschmann, the well-known German novelist whose article : 'Mataji gives Darshan' appeared in the last August issue of 'Ananda Varta.'

Mataji showed us how to face calamities

The hardships and inconveniences of camp life that the *vratis* had to contend with on former occasions in places like Naimisharanya, Sukhtal, Rishikesh and so forth, were this time conspicuous by their absence. The *vratis* were accommodated in private houses in the neighbourhood and those who stayed at a distance of half a mile or more were regularly taken backwards and forwards by cars. As if to make up for this lack of austerity a quite untimely and very severe thunder storm broke out on the third day of the function, just a few minutes after the collective morning meditation had started. Torrential rain began to batter the canvas roof of the pandal and, where it gathered, it burst through the canvas with the vehemence of waterfalls. The fury of the storm seemed to threaten most of all the platforms on which Mataji and the Mahatmas had their seats. A large piece of waterproof had to be held above Mataji's head by two tall men to protect her from the water leaking through the roof and, when after a little while the roof was in danger of falling right down overhead, a larger after was brought to support the canvas. Big vessels arrived from the kitchen to catch the rain that had begun to form little pools in several places of the pandal, but the vessels filled up in no time and had to be emptied again and again with the help of buckets. All this activity was carried on in complete silence.

Mataji Herself sat like a statue until the meditation hour was over. Many vratis followed her example and remained in their places without budging, continuing their *japa* and *dhyana*, notwithstanding their drenched clothes. Others were forced to move from their seats and to stand up, but perfect calm and quiet was maintained by everyone. Sixteen ceiling fans and many tube lights had been fixed in the roof of the tent and one can easily imagine what might have happened if even a part of the roof had collapsed and crashed down on the vratis. When the short kirtan that always follows the meditation had been sung, the announcer requested the congregation to vacate the pandal without delay, as Mataji would not leave the tent until the last person was in safety. As soon as the last vrati left the pandal and Mataji also came out, the huge pandal collapsed in the twinkling of an eye. It was indeed a miracle that no one was hurt. We could not help remembering the legend in which Sri Krishna is supposed to have held Mount Govardhana over the cowherds to protect them from torrential rains. Here also it seemed obvious that only Divine Grace was responsible for saving the situation.

The vratis were then asked to collect on the veranda and in the spacious drawing-room of the house, while Mataji, who never enters the house of a *grihastha*, sat under the porch. The programme proceeded as scheduled : there was no interruption at all. In the evening we were informed that a new pandal was under construction and would be ready by 4 a.m. the next morning. Lo and behold, the pandal was actually ready for use with lights and loudspeakers, and Mataji arrived punctually at that early hour and stayed throughout the kirtan, blessing the newly built structure with her presence.

Thus, what might ordinarily have resulted in panic and caused even a serious calamity, became on the other hand a source of inspiration. The whole incident seemed to have been turned into an object lesson of how difficulties and emergencies should be met. A *sadhaka* must regard every difficulty or trouble as an opportunity to develop initiative, courage and powers, as an incentive to make him proceed on his chosen path with even greater determination and vigour.

When, with the erection of a new pandal within 16 hours a serious obstacle had been overcome, the spirit of the function seemed to rise perceptibly. Mataji attended the satsang for longer

hours; some eminent Mahatmas arrived and enlightened the audience by their brilliant and highly interesting discourses. Chhabi Banerji, the radio artist from Calcutta was among the vratis and there was more music this time than on former occasions. Mataji Herself sang almost daily for a short while to the delight of everyone present.

No sooner had the *Samyam* week been successfully accomplished, than Mataji began to follow invitations to the houses of devotees. The daily satsang was now held in various places of Ahmedabad. Mataji also visited a few schools. One early morning, she gave an hour and a half to Sarada Vidya Mandir, a school in which all the pupils join into a religious gathering every morning, even on Sundays. A few songs, exercises and fifteen minutes of silent meditation to very soft instrumental music formed their routine starting every single day.

To Bombay

On the night of December 4th Mataji, Didima, Didi and a large party entrained for Bombay, reaching there the next morning. Mataji put up in Her pagoda in the compound of Sri B. K. Shah's house. There She usually gave darsan for about two hours in the evening and had a comparatively restful time. She also paid a short visit to our Ashram in Poona in the meantime. The devotees of Poona were exceedingly pleased to have her darsan after more than a year.

Leaving Bombay on the 19th evening, Mataji alighted in Calcutta on the 21st, staying not in our Ashram at Agarpara on the bank of the Ganges, but in the city proper. For three days She stayed in a newly built premises inside the compound of the house of Sri R. K. Banerjee, a devotee of Mataji. After that she shifted to the house of Sri D. K. Nag in south Calcutta where the *Gita Jayanti* was held from December 25th to January 1st. Thousands of people were blessed by Mataji's darsan every day. A special cottage was built for Mataji and the arrangements left nothing at all to be desired.

To Puri

On January 2nd Mataji left for Puri with a limited number of devotees, where She stayed for full one week and had a very good rest after the hectic days in Calcutta. The Ashram in Puri, just on the

bank of the Bay of Bengal, is situated in very beautiful surroundings. Mataji's stay coincided with the annual session of the Indian National Congress in the nearby city of Bhubaneswar, the capital of Orissa. Naturally therefore quite a number of big Congress leaders and Ministers took this opportunity of going to Puri and have Mataji's darsan.

Mataji returned to Calcutta on the 11th morning and at the earnest and repeated request of Sri M. L. Ghosh stayed for two nights in his house at New Alipore. There also a room had been specially built for Mataji's use sometime back. On the 13th Mataji shifted to our Ashram at Agarpara, where a *Bhagavata Saptah* was observed from 15th to 22nd. Mataji left for Rajgir, in Bihar, on the 23rd and was expected to stay there for about two weeks, from where she was most likely to proceed to Vrindaban. The *Shivaratri* and the *Holi* festivals were to be celebrated there in Her presence.

Mataji left for Rajgir

On the 23rd Mataji left for Rajgir where She remained for two weeks. Mataji kept good health and was in an excellent mood in that quiet and holy place, where Lord Buddha had spent much time. According to the *Srimad Bhagavata*, Sri Krishna also is said to have been to Rajgir. Mataji visited all the famous spots in the vicinity and used to go for walks almost daily in the *Venuvan* bamboo grove, where Lord Buddha is supposed to have dwelt. Only a small party was with Mataji, among them some *bhaktas* from Calcutta, also a young American *sadhaka* and a German novelist.

Mataji in Vrindaban

On February 7th Mataji alighted in Varanasi where She spent a day and a night. On February 9th She reached Vrindaban. There she attended a function in Uriababa's Ashram, held in his honour on February 11th and on the 12th morning was present when a marble statue of the Babaji was revealed. Mataji used to go every evening to Uriababa's Ashram during Sri Haribabaji's satsang and also graced with Her presence the *Bhagavata Saptah* that was celebrated there in memory of Sri Uriababaji, with Sri Akhandanandaji expounding in Hindi. Another *Bhagavata Saptah* was held in our own ashram from 18th to 28th February. On the 18th Vasant Panchami was celebrated by *Saraswati Puja*.

This year, being a leap year, there are two opinions about festivals. While in Haribaba's Ashram Shivaratri and *Holi* were celebrated in February, these festivals were observed in our Ashram only in March. On February 26th evening Sri Haribabaji's birthday was celebrated in our Ashram, on the 27th *Holi* and on the 28th *Maharasaila* was performed in great style in the open space near Mataji's house. Many Mahatmas attended. Almost daily devotees from Delhi came by car or train for Mataji's darsan.

Mataji proceeded to Hardwar

On February 29th Mataji and Her whole party proceeded to Hardwar. Mataji motored to Delhi, resting in our Ashram for a couple of hours and then drove to the station where She gave darsan to an enormous crowd of people. On the way to the station She paid a short visit to Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru at the request of his daughter.

On March 1st Mataji arrived in Hardwar where She stayed mostly in Baghat House, Kharkhari, but off and on also visited our Ashram "Santiniketan" at Kankhal. On the 4th morning She went by car to Kishenpur, returning again on the 5th evening. For a week after that She stayed every night at Sri J. K. Birla's house "Santi Nivas," a solitary place 2 or 3 miles on the road to Rishikesh. However, She motored to Baghat House and gave darsan there. On the 9th She paid another flying visit to the Kishenpur Ashram.

Shivaratri at Hardwar

On the 12th March Shivaratri was celebrated by the usual feast for 36 hours and four pujas with kirtan in between throughout the night. The attendance was not as large as in former years, since many had observed Shivaratri already in February, but the function was none the less beautiful and solemn.

A party of *sannyasis* and brahmacharis of Shivananda Ashram, Rishikesh, arrived soon after the first puja had started and performed kirtan between the first and second puja. There was hardly a day during Mataji's stay at Hardwar when visitors from Sivanada Ashram did not come for Mataji's darsan. Mataji remained present in the hall throughout the Shivaratri night, except for two hours when She retired to Her room. In the small hours She Herself led the kirtan, playing the cymbals at the same time.

On March 16th two functions began simultaneously, each performed for the benefit of a deceased devotee by their respective families. One, a *Bhagavata Saptah*, that took place in the hall was completed on March 24th. Pandit Srinath Sastri of Vrindaban officiated, reciting in Sanskrit every morning and expounding in Hindi every afternoon for about four hours in his lucid and delightful manner.

The other function was a *yajna* held for five days, ending on the 21st. For the *yajna* a special structure had been erected on a platform near the Shiva Temple in the courtyard of Baghat House. A *yajna* is a rite of oblations offered into a sacrificial fire which represents the mouth of the deity. A *yajna* has for its purpose either the propitiation of any particular deity or of the *Paramatma* Himself. Fire is the symbol of the *Brahman*. Some regard it also as the symbol of the knowledge of Reality since it burns up illusion. In this particular *yajna* one lakh of oblations were offered with the *Gayatri Mantra*, a number of pandits officiating.

In ancient times Rishis, Munis and Kings used to perform quite frequently *yajnas* that continued for years together. The fire sacrifice was regarded as a powerful means to achieve any worldly or transcendental purpose. In recent times however, the science on which the *yajna* is based, although preserved in the Shastras, is known only to the few. Moreover, the purity necessary in order to carry out such a rite effectively is hardly to be found anywhere.

It may not be out of place to relate here something of the history of the sacrificial fire that has been preserved in our Ashram with great care for the last 38 years.

Yajna which transformed to Mahayajna

In 1926, while Mataji lived in Dacca, Kali Puja was performed at *Divali* in Her presence. It was a most extraordinary puja, during which many supernatural events took place.¹ Very often, a fire sacrifice marks the end and completion of a religious function, such as for instance our yearly *Samyam Mahavrata*, a *Bhagavata Saptah* etc. All the proceedings of the function are thereby finally dedicated to God. After the above mentioned Kali Puja too, a *yajna* was performed. Like the puja, the *yajna* was very special. At Mataji's own suggestion there was no '*Purnahuti*' (last oblation

¹See 'Ananda Varta,' Vol. VII/3, pp. 144-150 and Vol. VIII/1, pp. 45-51.

that completes the sacrifice) and the fire was not allowed to be extinguished. When, after the *yajna* everyone had left with the exception of Didi (Gurupriya Devi), her father and her two brothers, Mataji asked Didi to put the live coals into a vessel and bring them to Her. Mataji took the vessel and shaking the fire, remarked "Wait and see. The fire of this *yajna* will be converted into the fire of a *mahayajna*." Nobody then understood the meaning of this statement. But when 21 years later, namely in January 1947 a *mahayajna* was started in our Varanasi Ashram, which lasted for full three years, the significance of Mataji's words became clear. The first person who volunteered to guard the fire after Mataji had made the memorable remark was Didi's father, the then Civil Surgeon of Dacca, Dr. S. Mukherji, who later became Swami Akhandanand. He kept the fire intact for nearly five months. It was arranged that oblations should be offered into the fire every morning. After the inauguration of the Dacca Ashram, the brahmacharis there were entrusted with the care of the fire. Once, on leaving Dacca, Mataji showed them some special rite by which to relight the fire in case it should by accident go out. While Mataji was at Adinath, *Agnideva*, the fire god, all of a sudden appeared to Her in the shape of a fiery wave. Then again, when Mataji stayed at Calcutta, *Agnideva* appeared before Her as a flame. In both cases it was later verified that this had occurred at the exact time when the fire at Dacca had by mistake been allowed to go out. In this manner, although the sacred fire went out physically, its subtle counterpart at once reverted to Mataji, and thus in one way, it was preserved without interruption. The fire was then divided into two or three portions so as to make sure that it would not be extinguished. One portion was installed in the Vindhyachal Ashram, in a specially erected small building. Later, when Dacca came under Pakistan, the fire, together with the images of Annapurna and Kali, were transferred to the Varanasi Ashram. The food that is offered in the Annapurna Temple is always cooked on that same sacred fire.

The *Savitri Mahayajna* that was performed at our Varanasi Ashram from 1947-1950 was of a magnitude, quite extraordinary in modern times, carried out with meticulous care by specially chosen brahmacharis under Mataji's personal supervision.¹ For

¹It is described in detail in Bengali and Hindi in the book "*Akhand Mahayajna*" by Sri Gurupriya Devi.

the end and climax of the function a great number of prominent Mahatmas from all over India were invited and many came. It was indeed a unique occasion never to be forgotten by anyone who had the privilege to attend. Not a few are of the opinion that a *yajna* of this quality has not been achieved since Vedic times. The chief priest of the *yajna*, who faithfully attended to his duty throughout the three years, Sri Nepal Brahmachari, then performed his *viraja homa* (the fire by which a man is supposed to renounce everything before taking *Sannyasa*) and thence became Swami Narayananda Tirtha.

Once, when Mataji was asked about the actual purpose of the great *yajna* at Varanasi, She replied. "This *yajna* — so I hear — is performed for the love of Him who is the one Beloved of men, beasts, trees, plants, flowers—in fact of every living beings belonging to the universe, performed for the love of Him who can never cause harm to anyone or anything. Therefore, who will reap the benefit of this celebration? Can you tell? There is no particular motive or set purpose behind it, surely not! When there are clouds in the sky, what happens? It rains. Who profits by it? Everyone indiscriminately....."¹

In 1961 a portion of the sacred fire was brought to Hardwar when on Shivaratri day three brahmacharis of our Ashram were initiated into *Naisthik Brahmacharya*. For two years they had to remain in Hardwar, their daily routine including the performance of *Havan* (sacrifice) into this fire on which they would prepare their meal. The fire has since remained at Hardwar as well as at Varanasi and last year a portion was installed in our Ashram at Agarpara as well.

As a rule, when performing a *yajna*, the fire is lit by rubbing two pieces of wood against each other, as prescribed in the Shashtra. This 16th March, when the *yajna* at Baghat House was to be started, the priest intended to ask Mataji whether the fire should be lit in the traditional manner or taken from the sacred fire preserved since 1926. Mataji's room happened to be closed and he could not contact Her. He, therefore, decided on his own to use the sacred fire. So far, this fire had never been worshipped for any particular purpose (*sakama*) but only for the love of God (*niskama*). Mataji had therefore advised the priest to light a new

fire. But evidently it was God's will that the sacred fire should serve in this case also for the uplift of the world.

In these days of Western education and modern science people are apt to think lightly of rites like *yajnas*, *havans* etc. However, we are convinced that none of Mataji's movements and actions are without profound significance and that they invariably are designed to promote the highest good of all. True, it may not always be easy for us to understand the importance of the various rites and functions performed in our Ashrams, but there can be no doubt that whatever happens within the orb of Mataji's influence is bound to bring us nearer to the ultimate Goal of human existence.

The atmosphere during those two functions of Hardwar was quite incomparable, apt to lift everyone out of worldly cares and petty considerations and worries. It must have left a lasting impression on everyone present.

From Hardwar to Calcutta

Mataji suddenly left Hardwar on the 24th evening for Calcutta. Didima, Sri Gurupriya Devi and most of Mataji's party remained at Hardwar. After a stay of six days in Calcutta, Mataji resumed Her return journey to Dehradun on the 31st evening. She halted for one night in the Varanasi Ashram and reached Rae Bareilly on the 2nd afternoon. On the 3rd evening Mataji was taken to Lucknow by car where She gave darshan to many devotees in the house of Sri H. C. Banerjee, a Railway official, and then boarded the train to Dehradun, alighting there on the 4th morning.

Didima's (Sri Swami Muktananda Giri's) *Sannyasa Utsava* was to be celebrated on the 13th April in the Kishenpur Ashram. From April 15th to 23rd a *Bhagavata Saptah* was to be held in our Sadhan Ashram, Jakhan, Dehradun. Mataji's birthday is going to be celebrated this year in Almora from May 2nd to May 30th.

Mataji in Dehradun

From July 4th to September 5th Mataji remained in Dehradun. After spending the first day and night at Raipur, She proceeded to Kishenpur on July 5th. A great number of functions followed one another throughout Her stay. From July 13th to 15th the consecration of a new temple dedicated to Rama, Sita, Lakshman and Hanuman took place in Kalyanvan, which is a large garden

¹See Ananda Varta, Vol. IV, No. 4, p. 312.

belonging to the Sangha, nearly half a mile further up Mussoorie Road than the Kishenpur Ashram. It is a very special place. We have on several occasions written about it at length. This time also Mataji related how, years ago, She once saw the whole garden with deities, Rishis, Mahatmas—great being without number. Amongst them was also young Sri Ramachandra riding on a horse.

Reading from Ramayana

The Assistant Secretary of the Dehradun Ashram, Sri Nawal Kishore, had for several years, at Mataji's advice, reading portions of the Ramayana on Sunday afternoons in the Ashrams in turns and also organised the reading of the entire Ramayana almost every full moon. He was largely instrumental in building the new Rama temple. Mataji appeared to take great interest in the rites and functions in connexion with the final consecration of the images on July 15th. These images (like those of all temples of our Ashrams) strike everyone as extraordinarily beautiful and alive. A word might here be said about the peculiar way in which they were acquired. Mrs. Kamala Mohanlal and her son Anand, an official at Jaipur, had been entrusted with the task of procuring the images, as Jaipur is famous in this respect. After searching in vain the whole of the city, they were about to return home tired and disappointed, when a half-grown boy approached them in the street, offering to take them to see some good images. At first they paid no attention to him, but when he insisted they finally gave in and followed him. Lo and behold, they found exactly what they had been looking for. During Mataji's stay a number of functions took place on the veranda of the temple, the audience being accommodated on the large platform in front of the Rama and Sita shrines.

Guru Purnima

On July 24th *Guru Purnima* was celebrated. As every year, devotees gathered from far and near, and Mataji was especially gracious, remaining among us almost continuously from early morning until late at night, blessing abundantly every single person who approached Her.

Other Rites

Guru Purnima marks the beginning of a period called *chatur-masa* and a shorter one called *chaturpaksha*, which has since

Vedic times been considered as specially suitable for *tapasya* and concentrated *sadhana* by *sadhus* and *sanmyasis*. *Chaturmasa* signifies the four months of the rainy season and *chaturpaksha* means the four phases of the moon upto September full moon. *Sadhus* usually select some holy place for their abode during that period, making strict rules for themselves as regards food, sleep, practice of *sadhana* and so forth. This time Mataji suggested a number of special rules also for the Ashram girls, who are now occupying their rooms in the newly built upper storey above the Ashram kitchen and dining hall. At darshan time Mataji referred to this, requesting everyone to utilise to the best of their ability this opportunity for the practice of *Samyam* in their homes. People might for instance try to rise early morning and yet not sleep during the day, they might also fix one day a week on which to eat only one main meal and take milk and fruit at night and also keep a weekly saltless day. Mataji was never tired of urging people to cultivate satsang whenever possible.

Guru Purnima was succeeded by a spell of greater quiet, at least regarding functions and festivals. On August 12th Mataji motored to Kankhal to be present at the opening ceremony of a new room on the top floor of our Ashram there, named 'Shantlniketan.' In the early morning of the 13th She was back at Kishenpur, where *Akhanda Ramayana* started that very day in the new Rama Mandir and was successfully completed in Mataji's presence at noon the next day. From 15th to 22nd August another *Bhagavata Saptah* was held, with Pd. Srinath Sastri of Vrindaban officiating as the reader of the Sanskrit original every morning and also explaining in Hindi every afternoon for about four hours.

Jhulan Festival — Dehradun

From July 18th to 22nd the *Jhulan* festival was celebrated every evening after the discourse on the Bhagavata was over. Puja and kirtan were performed in front of a profusely decorated swing on which several images of Krishna and Radha were placed. As usual, the Ashram girls were in charge of the decorations, that were different every evening and always beautiful and artistic. *Jhulan Purnima* marks the culmination of the festival. Mataji delighted everyone by singing for quite a while that evening. The hall was packed even during the midnight meditation (11-45 p.m. to 12-15 a.m.) that was preceded and followed by very beautiful

bhajans until 1 a.m. This constituted the yearly anniversary of the memorable night in 1922 when Mataji gave Herself *diksha* (initiation) as it were. This came about spontaneously, just like all the countless *sadhanas* she went through at incredible speed during the few years that followed.

Raksha Bandhan

On the day after *Purnima* falls the festival of *Raksha Bandhan*. Already during the preceding night and the whole of the next day devotees came, eager to tie silken bracelets round Mataji's wrist, and Mataji in turn also presented bracelets to everyone of them. Many of those who are unable to come in person send bracelets by post. This year as well as last year some specially beautiful ones were received from a devotee in Los Angeles who makes them with her own hands. On the 23rd morning Mataji went to the temples at Kalyanvan to present bracelets to Rama, Sita, Lakshman, Hanuman and Shivaji. This was a new, very charming informal little ceremony with only a handful of people present.

Mataji moved to Sadhan Ashram

On August 24th Mataji moved to Sadhan Ashram, Jakhan, (about 1/2 mile's distance from Kishenpur). That day She also paid a visit to the Civil Hospital to bless an aged sadhu of our Raipur Ashram who was to undergo an operation there. On this occasion Mataji went to see all the other patients as well and distributed fruits to them. The next day fruit was again sent to the hospital on Mataji's behalf. In Sadhan Ashram Mataji could enjoy comparative quiet for about three days. Her room there has been built on the roof of the house and commands an exquisite view over the mountains and the Doon Valley.

Janmastami at Raipur Ashram

On August 29th Mataji shifted to the Raipur Ashram where *Janmastami*, Sri Krishna's birthday was celebrated on the 30th night and *Nandotsava* (the joy of the cowherds over the birth of Sri Krishna) the following morning. Raipur is one of our oldest Ashrams situated in really picturesque surroundings. The place has been hallowed by Mataji's sojourn there for a whole year in 1932 together with Bholanath and Bhajji, and has an atmosphere of its own. But the hall is far too small to hold the multitude that now-a-days flocks to Mataji, especially on festive occasions such as

Janmastami, although the place is not easily accessible from Dehradun. The celebration continued until about 2 a.m. when Mataji supervised Herself the distribution of *prasada* to all. Many had fasted without a drop of water throughout the day, as customary for worshippers of Sri Krishna. No sooner was *Nandotsava* over by ten o'clock the following morning, than a bus and several cars arrived to take Mataji and her party to Gita Bhavan and three other places in Dehradun. Only late that afternoon Mataji returned to Kishenpur.

Mataji met Boy Scouts from Jullundur

During Mataji's stay in Dehradun, a group of 30 boy scouts from Jullundur arrived one day. They had quite a long discussion with Mataji, who called them Her friends and enjoined on them to cultivate the remembrance of God. Some of them seemed keenly interested and asked for details regarding meditation. After a trip to Mussoorie they came to say good-bye to Mataji. When Mataji got up to retire to Her room, they began to repeat in chorus like a slogan: "Ma Jullundur ao ! Ma Jullundur ao !" (Ma come to Jullundur). "Ma is in Jullundur and Ma is travelling with you to Jullundur," Mataji could be heard to exclaim above their voices.

Mataji met some foreigners

As usual, a number of people hailing from abroad came for long and short periods for Mataji's darsan. Two very short visits of foreigners seem worth mentioning in some detail. One morning a lady from Michigan arrived, probably a journalist. She had reached Delhi only the day before by plane, took the night train to Dehradun and wanted to leave again by the afternoon bus. She had obviously not yet adapted her American speed to Indian condition. With considerable impatience she waited for Mataji to emerge from Her room, when she at once got busy with her camera, taking photos from all sides. She was later granted a short interview. Armed with notebook and pencil, she was eager to jot down every word Mataji uttered. "What is your message to the American people," she began, "I want to write an article about you." Mataji smiled: "Well, this body has no particular message. However, what this body always says is :

(1) *Hari katha hi katha aur sab vritha, vyatha* (Of Thee alone must be the spoken word, all else is but futility and pain.)

(2) Where Rama is, there is *arama* (rest and ease) ; where

Rama is not—*vyarama* (discomfort and disease.)

(3) For man there is only one thing: to search and find Himself."

The lady wanted to know, where Rama was not. "In the world of sense objects with its pairs of opposites, Rama cannot be found. He is where pleasure and pain are not. Rama means *Ananda*, the bliss that is not of this world."

"When are you coming to America? Paramahansa Yogananda said that the U. S. A. was badly in need of a woman saint."

"This little child is in America. Try to see her there", was the surprising answer. The visitor, highly pleased with Mataji's reply, promised to follow Her advice. She also took Mataji's assurance that 'She was always with her,' verbally in a material sense, for when someone asked her whether she intended to come again, she promptly said: "There is no need, since Mataji is always with me."

The other incident was the visit of a group of 10 people from Paris, who had come on a pilgrimage to India's holy places, guided by their South Indian Guru, who teaches *hatha yoga* in France. They had travelled for two nights in order to have Mataji's darsan and were leaving Dehradun the same night. In the morning they accompanied Mataji to Kalyanvan. Then Mataji sat in the hall with them for quite sometime. We were amazed to see them *pranama* to Mataji in the Indian way with sincere and deep reverence. They were eager to take with them not only photos of Mataji, but also especially of Her feet! At 5 p.m. Mataji received them again, this time in Her own room. They sat in complete silence for about 50 minutes. Fourteen Europeans and a few Ashramites were present. The French pilgrims, who hardly knew any English, were evidently profoundly moved. On taking leave, some wished to express their gratitude to Mataji, but Mataji interrupted: "One thanks another, not one's own self." When after a pause She added: "On the contrary, this little child must thank you for having come from such a great distance to give darsan to Her", many of them had tears in their eyes. They declared that, although they had had no talk with Mataji, all their questions had been replied in silence.

Mataji's visit to Divine Life Society, Rishikesh

During Her sojourn at Kishenpur, *sannyasis* belonging to the Divine Life Society at Rishikesh had come to see Her several

times. The present head of the organisation Swami Chidanandaji also came in person and had a private talk with Mataji. On September 8th Mataji and Her companions followed his invitation to visit their Ashram. It was the anniversary of the birthday of their Guru Sri Swami Sivanandaji. Mataji was received with extreme reverence and joy and given a tremendous ovation. She was first taken to the Eye Hospital and then shown round the entire Ashram, climbing right up to the Shiva Temple. *Prasada* was offered to Her and distributed to everyone in lavish quantities. We all felt deeply moved by the spirit of the Ashramites and by the enthusiasm with which Mataji was welcomed by one and all.

Mataji shifted to Baghat House

After a few days at Kankhal, Mataji shifted to Baghat House, Hardwar, from where She left for Vrindaban on September 19th. On the 22nd Mataji paid a short visit to Delhi, Vrindaban again on the 24th, accompanied by returning to Sri Gurupriya Devi and others who had been in the Delhi Ashram.

Mataji was expected to remain in Vrindaban for the Durga Puja, Lakshmi Puja, Kali Puja (*Divali*) and also the 15th *Samyam Saptah* that is to be observed from 12th to 18th November.

THIRTEEN

(October 1964 — October 1965)

Two months at Vrindaban

From September 20th to December 16th Mataji remained in Vrindaban, except for two short visits to Delhi (Sept. 22nd—24th and Oct. 21st — 27th). Soon after Her arrival in Vrindaban on Sept. 24th a new room on the upper floor of Mataji's house was opened with due ceremony, puja and kirtan. Mataji offered the room to Sri Haribabaji, who, however, was still in Hoshiarpur at that time, arriving in Vrindaban on October 11th, the first day of Durga Puja. One of the *sannyasis* of our Ashram had gone to Delhi to bring Sri Haribabaji directly to our Ashram. He was taken to his new room by Mataji before proceeding to the hall where Durga Puja was performed in the space between the two temples of Shiva and Nitai-Gauranga.

Durga Puja

The image of Durga was specially beautiful and alive. The artist from Lucknow had come to Vrindaban in person to give the finishing touches to his creation. For the whole of *Navaratri* (6th--16th Oct.) *Durga Sapta Sati* was recited daily in Gita Bhavan. The attendance during Durga Puja was enormous, many having come not only from Delhi, but from all over North India. Every evening the *Rama Lila* was enacted in the open air by a special party. The whole of Sri Rama's life was shown. Thousands flocked to watch those performances that ended with *arati* to Ma Durga, succeeded by Sri Haribabaji's daily *kirtan*. On Dasami day (Oct. 16th) the traditional immersion of the image into the Jamuna took place.

Lakshmi Puja and Kali Puja

On October 20th Lakshmi Puja was celebrated and the next day Mataji motored to Delhi, taking with Her Sri Muktibaba, an aged *sannyasi* of our Ashram who had to undergo an operation. In Delhi Ma enjoyed comparative quiet, since She had come without previous notice. Before returning to Vrindaban on October 27th, She paid a visit to the patient at Dr. S. K. Sen's Nursing Home. We are happy to state that the Swami has since recovered.

In the spacious Ashram at Vrindaban Mataji used to give darshan sometimes in Her room, sometimes walking up and down in the open space in front of Her house, at other times in the hall. On November 4th Kali Puja was celebrated as usual during *Divali* night, Mataji remaining present throughout the function. On *Annakut* day, over a hundred dishes were offered before the *Narayan Shila* and then distributed to all.

Fifteen Samyam Mahavrata in Vrindaban

Now preparations for the 15th *Samyam Mahavrata* that was observed from November 11th to 18th were carried out vigorously. Like similar functions this *Samyam Vrata* also had its unique note. Holy Vrindaban was no doubt specially suitable for such an occasion. Moreover, our hall there is large enough to hold 350 *vratis* plus visitors. The participants were housed in tents in the Ashram compound as well as in neighboring *dharmaśalas*. A good number of prominent Mahatmas and Goswamis accepted invitations to deliver discourses that covered a greater variety of subjects than ever before. Apart from the lectures on Upanishads, Puranas and the significance of *samyam*, the history of Vrindaban and its temples, Vaishnavism and the Ramayana were dealt with.

Swami Akhandanandaji, Swami Chetan Giri, Swami Sharananandaji were among the Mahatmas who blessed the assembly by their enlightening and stirring talks. Every evening Sri Haribabaji performed his kirtan followed by stories from the lives of *bhaktas*. Mataji sat in the hall for long hours, mornings afternoons and evenings, even more than on former occasions. Once or twice She sang. It was an extremely busy and successful week, the rigours and hardships of which were borne with ease and pleasure by one and all.

Do you recognize me?

For the last few years already, two or three Westerners had joined into the *vratas* with great zeal and zest. This time the number of foreign participants shot up to 9, not counting visitors who come for a day or two. Besides the *vratis* hailing from U.S.A., France, Germany, Switzerland and Australia, Indians were present who had come from our Embassy in Moscow, others from South India and Ceylon. This *Samyam Vrata* may for the first time be called an international one. Mr. and Mrs. Desjardins had

arrived from Paris by car, not only with their seven-year old daughter, but also with their son aged barely four months. He is surely the youngest European who has ever had Mataji's darshan. Soon after he arrived Mataji said to her tiny friend: "Do you recognize me?"

After the function Ma remained in Vrindaban for another month. On the morning of November 25th a Vaishnav sadhu from Ayodhya addressed the audience. On completing a discourse it is the custom to present a speaker with a small basket of fruit and other things. This time also such a basket was kept ready near Didi's seat. Suddenly, just as the speaker related that the monkeys were asked by Sri Ramachandra to return to their homes from Lanka, a huge monkey entered the hall by a side door, leapt across the rows of girls and women who sat in between, and as quick as lightning snatched three bananas from the basket and bolted outside. The speaker was delighted: "Hanuman himself had taken his share of the fruit." Mataji remarked: "Usually in the course of Durga Puja, *bhoga* is once offered to Sri Rama. This year this had somehow been omitted. Now Hanuman himself has come to make up for it. He has taken three fruits, one each for Rama, Sita and Lakshman." Everyone thoroughly enjoyed this amusing interlude, wondering at the same time how the monkey could have detected the fruit as it seemed invisible from outside of the hall.

Visit of Thakur Sitaramdas Omkarnath

The same afternoon, one of our brahmacharis visited Govindaji's temple and there found that Sri Sitaramdas Omkarnathji had arrived in Vrindaban the same morning with his party and was due to leave for Delhi the next day. On hearing that Mataji was in Vrindaban, the Mahatma at once decided to come to our Ashram. His party sang kirtan in our hall and Sri Sitaramdas Omkarnathji gave a talk in Bengali. Everyone was deeply moved by the radiant presence of the great saint.

The lost Locket

One day a small Locket was found just outside of Mataji's house. The opinions were divided as to whether the picture it contained was of Shiva or Krishna. Ma said: "When you find the owner bring him or her to me." The Locket belonged to a servant

girl named Ganga, aged about 10, who had come with a lady from Agra who was staying at the Manav Seva Sangha next door and daily used to come for Mataji's darshan. Ganga had been sad and had cried because she had not been allowed to accompany her mistress. She was then permitted to go with her to the Ashram, but ordered to remain outside, from where she secretly peeped into the room, eager to catch a glimpse of Mataji. Thus, when taken into Ma's room, she was naturally beside herself with joy, but felt extremely shy. Mataji talked to her very sweetly, calling her 'friend' and asking her a number of questions. "Have you studied anything?" Mataji said. Ganga had to reply with: "No," to which Mataji exclaimed laughingly: "Then we are equals, this friend of yours has not studied anything either." Ganga's mistress later remarked that, although she did so much puja and tried her utmost to please Mataji, yet Mataji took no notice of her, while her illiterate servant girl had found favour in Mataji's eyes. Didi explained: "The person who makes preparations for the puja and scrubs the vessels also gets the fruit of the worship."

Foundation stone for Radha Krishna Temple

During Mataji's sojourn in Vrindaban the foundation stone was laid of a temple for Radha-Krishna near the hall. The opening ceremonies of two new houses in the Ashram grounds took place on the 9th and 14th December, the one built by Sri S. Dutt, I.C.S. (Rtd.) Secretary to the President of the Indian Republic, the other by the Maharani Satyaprem Kumari of Mysore. The latter contains a shrine dedicated to Sri Rama and is called "Rama Mandir."

One day Mataji visited the camp of Sri Prabhudatt Brahmachariji on the opposite bank of the Jamuna, where a mass gathering with kirtan and religious discourses will continue for two months in spring. From December 7th to 15th a *Bhagavata Saptah* was held. The *Saptah* was followed by *Nama Yajna* performed by our Delhi Kirtan party. Mataji took active part in it and was in an ecstatic mood such as we had not observed in Her for many years.

Six weeks at Varanasi

On December 17th Mataji alighted in Varanasi. She had been expected to remain there for three days only. However, to the delight of the devotees of Varanasi, Mataji prolonged Her stay

up to January 31st. She had come mainly to be present at a *Yagna* on December 18th.

After the *Yagna*, which marked the completion of 24 lakhs of *Gayatri japa*, performed by one of our brahmacharis for the last two years, a quiet time followed. Mataji gave darshan twice daily, usually on one of the Ashram roofs that command inspiring views over the Ganges. At times Mataji would look remote, Her winkless eyes gazing through everything, at — who can tell what? A hushed silence would then envelop the whole of the congregation, until Ma would suddenly get up, smiling at everyone, distributing garlands and walking back to Her room, seemingly Her normal self again.

Foundation stone for Charitable Hospital and opening of two new Halls

On January 14th, *Sankranti* was celebrated by kirtan and a feast given to all present. That morning the foundation stone was laid of the Charitable Hospital which the Anandamayee Sangha intends to build on a plot acquired for this purpose near the Ashram. The next day two new halls, one of them underground, were inaugurated with due ceremony, havan, kirtan and the recitation of the *Durga Sapta Sati*. Mataji remained present practically the whole day.

On January 18th Mataji motored to Allahabad, where She stayed for 3 nights at the Ashram of late Sri Gopal Thakur and then returned to Varanasi.

Demise of Maharatan and Buni

It is with deep regret that we report about the passing away of two very prominent devotees of many years standing, namely Srimati B.L. Jaspal, named 'Maharatan' by Ma, on October 16th in a Delhi hospital and Kumari Juthika Guha, known as 'Buni' on November 27th in Vrindaban Ashram itself. Both of them were unique in their profound love and veneration for Mataji.

Maharatan met Mataji in 1934 in Dehradun and felt at once irresistibly drawn to Her. She was one of the first Punjabis that made contact with Ma and subsequently took initiation from Bhajji. Although the mother of several children she managed to go to Mataji at all times, no matter where Ma was. Soon she lost all her attachment to her family who also became devoted to Ma. Her one aim in life was to spend every moment in Ma's blissful and uplifting

presence. After the death of her husband she travelled almost constantly with Mataji. In spite of her ailing body, she was never tired of sitting near Mataji and gazing at Her in adoration, her hands ever busy with her *japa mala*. During the last few years, however, her failing health would prevent her from seeing Mataji except rarely. When Ma visited Delhi in September, she expressed the desire to be in Vrindaban for the *Durga Puja*. In between she had to undergo an operation. Mataji sent one of her daughters who is a brahmacharini of our Ashram to attend to her sick mother. "Bring her here!" said Mataji. But the patient's condition deteriorated and only after she passed away on Vijaya Dasami day at the age of 67, her lifeless body was taken to Vrindaban by her children. Mataji passed Her hands over the body from head to foot, calling loudly three times "Maharatan, Maharatan!" before it was taken to the banks of the Jamuna to be given over to the flames.

Buni

Buni was one of the foremost brahmacharinis of our Ashram, well-known and loved by all. Already in her childhood she had been taken for Mataji's darshan by her grandparents who lived in Dhaka. Later, when Mataji travelled to Calcutta, Buni's whole family became greatly devoted to Mataji. At the age of 17 or 18, Buni left her home to give her life to Mataji's service. Urged by an irresistible inner call she left her parents, decided to abjure all that the world relishes and surrender herself at Mataji's feet.

In spite of her physical condition she succeeded in serving not only Mataji, but all who came to the Ashram. She was gifted with rare initiative and capacity for organization. Her departure has left a permanent gap in the Ashram and in the hearts of all who are close to Mataji. Everyone has reason to feel grateful to her for some kindness or other.

For the last so many years she suffered from heart trouble and medical science could not explain how she kept alive, since her heart and lungs hardly functioned at all. It can truly be said that she lived solely by Ma's grace and by her deep love for Her. Several times Mataji literally snatched her from the clutches of death.

On November 26th she was suffering acutely. Mataji remained in the patient's room from 5.30—11.30. Buni, as so often lately,

expressed a desire to leave her body that had become a burden to herself and others. Mataji noticed that the *prana* was tending upwards. The next morning before 10, Buni breathed her last. Mataji was called and sat by the deceased while the whole of the *Bhagavad Gita* was recited by a group of Ashramites in the adjoining room. This was followed by kirtan that continued until about 2 p.m. when the procession started for the burning-ghat. The dead body was laid on a bier and completely covered with garlands of fresh flowers. Only the face was visible. It showed a deep calm and peace, not a trace was left of the suffering she had gone through in the preceding night. Group photos were taken of the deceased with Didima, Didi and all the sannyasis and brahmacharinis of the Ashram. In Buni's room the reading of the whole Ramayana was started by Ashramites the next day, followed by a feast given to brahmins and kumaris in her honour the day after. Mataji requested the brahmacharinis to observe silence for three days in Buni's memory and perform all kirtan and prayers in Buni's room during the following week.

Mataji among children

Towards the end of Mataji's sojourn at Varanasi at the end of January a very touching little function took place. In memory of their father's death anniversary some devotees had sent money to feed poor children. 200 children from the vicinity were called and asked to sit in rows in the courtyard. They made a deafening noise. At first Mataji looked down from the roof on the second floor. Then She sent some girls of the Kanyapith to sing kirtan. Our little guests were asked to join in, and although quite out of tune, they all sang "Jai Ram, Jai Jai Ram" at the top of their voices, obviously enjoying themselves thoroughly. After a little while Mataji came downstairs and walking along the rows, put flowers on the heads of those unkempt and neglected little boys and girls, smiling at them and patting some. When the kirtan was over, Ashram-made *puris* and sweets were distributed to the children, who one by one scrambled out of the gate beaming with happiness, holding their leaf full of food in both hands.

Mataji at Varanasi Station

On January 31st Mataji left Varanasi for Giridanga, a place in Bengal. Sri Vinay Dube, General Secretary of the Yogoda Satsang

had requested Ma to grace with Her presence the consecration of a Shiva Temple, belonging to the famous T. B. Sanatorium, "Niramoy." Mataji's train was to start at about 2 p.m., but being late by 8 hours, the Railway Medical Officer, Dr. Chakravarti invited Ma and Her party to spend the rest of the day at his residence nearby. Under a large tree a charming resting place was improvised for Mataji and Didima on two wooden couches, curtained off with bed spreads. *Khichuri* was then prepared for all who had come to see off Mataji and had not had their meal. Mataji was always at her best when things happened unexpectedly, spontaneously. Mataji seemed in a delightful mood. After resting, She walked up and down in the garden. By the evening the news had spread and many came with flowers, sweets and fruits. There was no harmonium, but the kirtan sounded more beautiful than ever. After 7 p.m. everyone proceeded to the station where Mataji sat on the platform for more than one hour. That evening the people of Varanasi enjoyed probably the best darshan they had during Mataji's stay. In spite of the noise of coming and going of trains and the large crowd that gathered around Her, Mataji looked relaxed and amazingly young. She had a gracious smile and a kind word for everyone.

Mataji at Giridanga

Mataji reached Giridanga on February 1st after midday. She and Her party were put up at the guest house of the hospital. Mataji first went to see the newly built Shiva shrine with its adjoining house for the priest. It is in beautiful natural surroundings. On the last day She was taken to the hospital that comprised of a number of buildings. All the patients who were not bed-ridden came to greet Mataji and collected under a large tree. Mataji told them how lucky they were that Lord Shiva had taken his abode near their hospital. She enjoined on them to use to the full His benign presence. Those who wished could repeat the mantra "*Om Nama Sivaya*" that was engraved on their new shrine. Mataji then started singing "Jai Siva Sankara" and everyone joined.

Mataji had sent some of Her people ahead of Herself to Giridanga to help with the arrangements, so that the consecration could proceed with due solemnity and full ceremony. Every evening some *Baul* singers came to sing to Mataji and after 9 p.m. the hospital nurses would have long informal discussions with Her.

On February 4th Mataji left for Rajgir, alighting there on the 5th morning. Didima, Didi and most of Mataji's party had come directly from Varanasi and reached already two days earlier.

Rajgir is a place with a very special atmosphere. The Lord Buddha is said to have spent many rainy seasons and preached some of his finest sermons on a hill near Rajgir called "Gridhra Kut." It is no exaggeration to say that his presence is all but tangible there to this day. One has just to sit down quietly to become aware of it and be enveloped in a deep peace that passes understanding. No wonder that Mataji favoured Rajgir and recommended it as congenial for the practice of meditation. On certain evenings this time, the girls of the Ashram were allowed to meditate in Mataji's presence for half an hour. On one or two occasions She replied to their questions. After 9 p.m. Mataji was available for the sadhus of our Ashram. The first few days after Her arrival Mataji would go out for a walk in the early afternoons, accompanied by only one person. One day She strolled to the Mahabir Dharmasala where She had stayed before our Ashram was built. She went to see a very sick man who had been pining to have Her darshan, but could not move from his bed. Mataji spoke comforting words to him, asking him to trust in God and keep his thought on Him.

Mataji had come to Rajgir for the first time to visit the hot springs while She stayed at Patna, some 13 or 14 years ago. Sri Mukti Maharaj, one of our oldest *Sannyasis* had then said: "Ma, build a small house here!" His suggestion was taken up and a devotee presented Rs.5000/- for the purpose. A plot of land was acquired and a small Ashram started in 1952.

This time a double storied guest-house has been added that was inaugurated as soon as Mataji arrived. On February 6th, Vasant Panchami day, Saraswati Puja was celebrated in one of the new rooms. It was a charming function, of an intimacy which is extremely rare in our Ashrams nowadays. There were hardly half a dozen people present besides the inmates of the Ashram.

Next to the guest-house a beautiful little Shiva temple has been erected with quite a spacious platform for satsang at the back. Srimati Rama Saksena, an old devotee, had a few years ago been cured of an ailment of 15 years standing by bathing in the hot springs of Rajgir. She then expressed the wish to build a shrine for Shiva in gratitude. In the meanwhile she became a widow and

decided to build the temple in memory of her husband. For some time the date of consecration had been fixed on *Shivaratri* day and Swami Paramananda had stayed in Rajgir to supervise the building work. There are three *lingas* in the temple. Besides the Saksena family, Sri Subimal Dutt, who had just retired as Secretary to the President of the Indian Republic, desired to have a *linga* installed in memory of his only son who died in Russia. A third one was dedicated in the memory of Sm. Hamsa Devi's husband, a devotee of Dehradun.

The Narmada river in Gujarat is said to be the place where practically every stone has the shape of a *linga*. It is therefore customary to procure *Shiva lingas* from there. While Mataji was in Vrindaban last December, three *lingas* were brought from the Narmada for the Rajgir Temple. However, the pandits of Vrindaban for some reason did not approve of those *lingas*. When Mataji enquired what to do with them, the pandits said they should be put into the Ganges. Since the Ganges is not anywhere near Vrindaban, someone suggested that the Jamuna would serve the purpose. The day on which the *lingas* were let down into the river Mataji felt extremely cold, in fact She was so stiff that She could not get up. She had the sensation as if Shiva was being drowned. She then sent for the *pandits* and asked them to locate those *lingas* and have them taken out of the water. The *pandits* succeeded and the *lingas* were subsequently sent to Varanasi and later to Rajgir. Mataji remarked that there was a natural connection between Shiva and Ganga. The three *lingas* in question, however, had by their immersion in the Jamuna carried the love of Krishna to Rajgir.

Shivaratri at Rajgir

During Mataji's stay the last finishing touches were put to the new temple, which was duly decorated for consecration that took place on February 28th and March 1st in Ma's presence. A large canvas roof was spread over the new platform so that there was ample space for everyone to watch the elaborate rites and ceremonies. Mataji Herself supervised the preparations with Her usual vigilance and insistence on precision. Gradually more and more devotees had gathered from all over North India, taking part enthusiastically in the function. Srimati Rama and her son Virendra Saksena arrived with his family, as well as Sri S. Dutt, who

had to take part in the preliminary ceremonies, prescribed for those who are responsible for the installation. Srimati Hamsa Devi was unfortunately unable to attend in person and one of our brahmacharis therefore acted on her behalf. One of the prayers at the consecration runs as follows: "Lord Shiva, be pleased to remain here as long as the sun and the moon are in the sky. Oh, Thou who art the destroyer of sorrow and suffering. Fill Thou the whole universe with light and peace." At the end of the function Mataji smeared ashes on everyone's forehead. It was our good fortune that some of the foremost *sannyasis* of Sri Shivanda Ashram came from Bodhgaya to see Mataji and were present during the consecration as well as during *Shivaratri* night. When Vir decorated the *linga* with a crown, the bell leaves fell off. Mataji remarked: "Shiva, the god of renunciation asks but for leaves and water. If the emblems of royalty are offered to him, it is natural for the leaves to fall off." Rama-di then poured Gangotri water over the *linga*. No sooner had the consecration been completed than everyone started getting busy with the arrangements for the all-night puja that is performed at *Shivaratri*. Seats for the worshippers were laid out in large circles on the platform behind the temple and puja was also celebrated in the temple itself, while Mataji's couch was placed on the temple veranda. After the first puja, at about 9 p.m. Mataji retired to Her room, only to emerge again before 1 a.m. She then remained present throughout, and in the early morning distributed fruit, first to those who had fasted for 36 hours and then to all present. *Shivaratri* is a festival of a very special atmosphere and concentration cherished by all who have attended once. Many arrive every year from great distances, just to take part in the puja in Mataji's presence and leave again in the morning for their various professions. They can not afford to spend even one extra night in the Ashram.

The day after *Shivaratri* two very interesting discourses were delivered. Pd. Agnihotri (Batuda) spoke on the significance of each of the different parts of a temple. The temple itself may be looked upon as the body of the deity enshrined in it. Then Professor Bireswar Ganguly of Patna talked lucidly about the significance of *Shiva Sakti* according to *Tantra*.

Mataji remained in Rajgir for ten more days, which were quite busy, with visitors coming and going. Mataji daily spent some time in the new temple to make sure that everything was in

working order by the time She would leave. Almost daily someone or other gave a feast to Shiva, and everyone was invited to partake of the *prasada*. One day a Bhikkhu from Nalanda came for Mataji's darshan during the satsang. At Mataji's request he enlarged on Buddhist methods of meditation and on the life of the monks at Nalanda. Nalanda, a few miles distance from Rajgir was a Buddhist seat of learning for several centuries. The ruins show that three universities had existed there at different periods. They were built each over the foundations of the earlier one. Close to that ancient site, modern Buddhist University has recently been started, of which the said Bhikkhu is a lecturer. This University owns many valuable old manuscripts. Post Graduates from all Buddhist countries come to study there.

On March 6th the President of the Indian Union Dr. Radhakrishnan together with Srimati Indira Gandhi visited Rajgir to lay the foundation of a Japanese Buddhist temple about two miles off Gridhrakut. Dr. Radhakrishnan addressed a mass meeting in the open.

Mataji at Patna

In the afternoon of March 10th Mataji and Her party motored to Patna. She first visited the residence of Sri Jalan, directly on the bank of the Ganges. The house contains a remarkable museum of Indian, Chinese, Tibetan pieces of art, some very ancient, collected by Sri Jalan's father. Since the residential part of the house is quite separate, Mataji could be shown round the extraordinary collection. After a couple of hours She proceeded to the house of Professor S. Choudhury, which has a puja room with a separate staircase reserved for Mataji's exclusive use. Until late at night Mataji gave darshan to large numbers of people on the adjoining open terrace.

In the early hours of the morning Mataji was taken to the station. Her train left for Jullundur at 4 a.m. Only a handful of people were permitted to accompany Ma to Hoshiarpur, while Didima, Didi and the rest got down at Varanasi. At Jullundur Mataji spent a short time at the Savitri Devi Ashram before motoring to Hoshiarpur where She had been invited to be present at Sri Haribabaji Maharaj's 80th birthday. Sri Haribabaji, just as Gauranga Mahaprabhu (the great Bengali apostle of Vaishnavism, who lived several centuries ago) was born on *Dol Purnima*, the full

moon on which the Holi festival is celebrated. The festivities extended over several days, culminating in the actual two birth anniversaries commemorated on the two days of the Holi. Inspiring talks were delivered by well-known *Mahatmas*, such as Sri Chetan Giriji, Sri Akhandanandaji, Sri Krishnanand Avadhutji and others. The *Rasalila* was enacted every morning and the *Ramalila* every afternoon. Mataji was received with extreme veneration by Sri Haribabaji and his devotees. She herself sang kirtan several times.

Mataji at Doraha

On March 20th the whole party moved to Doraha, a small town in the Punjab, where Mataji had stayed once before for two or three days during the celebration of Her birthday, some 12 or 13 years ago, there also the *Ramalila* continued daily. The gentleman, who was responsible for inviting Mataji, Sri Haribabaji and their parties, came to do obeisance to Mataji and the *Mahatmas*, accompanied by his wife and grown-up sons and the whole family. His health seemed precarious. There was heavy rain and Sri Haribabaji's kirtan that evening had therefore to be held in his room. During the night while lying down in bed quietly, Mataji saw an apparition that moved about unobstructed by walls or doors. At 2 a.m. Sri Avadhutaji sent word to Mataji that their host's condition had turned serious: anything might happen, Mataji then had the *kheyala*: "If anything happened in the presence of so many *Mahatmas* it could only be for the best." At 5 a.m. the gentleman breathed his last.

Mataji at Chandigarh

The whole of March 23rd was spent at Chandigarh where Sant Lakshmanji, a Sikh sadhu, has built a small Ashram in Mataji's name, in beautiful surroundings, where he lives himself. He is one of the family who are running the Savitri Devi Ashram in Jullundur. Many people of Chandigarh came for Mataji's *darshan*. Mataji also went to see the lake near Chandigarh.

Mataji on Her way to Vrindaban

The same night, the whole party including Sri Haribabaji boarded the train to Delhi, where devotees were waiting with their cars to take everyone to Vrindaban on the 24th morning.

The main purpose of going to Vrindaban this time was to follow

an invitation by Sri Prabhudatt Brahmachari, who had started a new Ashram and was holding a large satsang extending over several months. There also, apart from kirtan and talks by various *Mahatmas*, the *Rasalila* was shown daily.

Mataji at Vrindaban

A strange little incident happened during Mataji's sojourn at Vrindaban. A Parsi gentleman, who had come for Ma's *darshan* from Poona, distinctly noticed that the eyes of the sculpture of Sri Gauranga in the Nitai Gauranga temple of our Ashram were moving. It was exactly like the blinking of a living person. He was nonplussed and went to the temple again the next day. He again found this time only one eye moving perceptibly. He approached the priest and said to him rather sharply: "Why do you use mechanic devices to produce this kind of sensational effect?" The priest could not understand why he was being rebuked and assured him that no device whatsoever was responsible for what he had witnessed. Greatly amazed the Parsi gentleman thereupon reported the matter to Mataji who made him repeat it in Sri Haribabaji's presence. He was told to regard it as a special grace of Lord Gouranga who had given him *darshan* in this unusual way.

Mataji started for Bhopal

A number of foreigners hailing from Germany, France and the U. S. A. came to Vrindaban to see Mataji. Mr. R. Bosch from West Germany, together with his wife and mother-in-law accompanied Ma also to Bhopal, the capital of Madhya Pradesh, where She alighted on the 27th morning, at the invitation of Sir and Lady Datar Singh. Sir Datar Singh used to be a high official in the Government of India. He owns a large piece of land a few miles out of Bhopal and has recently built a very nice Ashram consisting of three large rooms and accessories in beautiful rural surroundings with a view on hills and on a wide lake. Sir Datar Singh was anxious for Ma to inaugurate the new Ashram. She seemed to like the place and looked relaxed and at ease, remarking more than once that the air resembled that of Vindhyaachal. Since Her hosts were Sikhs, Mataji asked them to arrange for readings from the *Granth Sahib* every afternoon in the largest room of the Ashram that serves as Satsang hall. A number of the high officials of Bhopal came to pay their respects to Mataji and also the mother of the Begum of Bhopal.

who was greatly impressed by Ma's darshan. Some visitors sang *bhajans* to Ma and She Herself sang twice. On the whole Mataji had four really restful days in Bhopal after the hectic time in Punjab and Vrindaban.

Mataji at Hardwar

On the 30th evening Mataji left for Hardwar, stopping in the New Delhi Ashram for the day on the 31st. Since Mataji had come after a considerable interval and remained only for a single day, the crowd that thronged for Her darshan proved quite unmanageable this time. By the night train Mataji proceeded to Hardwar where She as usual stayed at Baghat House. There was a severe rainstorm at Hardwar and the daughter of a devotee from Bombay who had accompanied Ma from Delhi, got a severe attack of asthma. The anxious mother wanted to take the child to Delhi by taxi and catch the next plane to Bombay, but Mataji dissuaded her from travelling until the weather cleared up. She sent a Brahmachari to call a doctor. The Brahmachari had no idea where a good doctor was to be found and was about to inquire. As he stepped out of the gate, a gentleman entered, who asked: "Do you think I can have Mataji's darshan at this untimely hour?" (It was about 2 p.m.) "Yes," was the reply, "If you are a doctor, you can, at once." The gentleman happened to be Major General Sharma from Delhi. He took up the case and the child was all right the next day.

Early on the 3rd April morning Mataji motored to Dehradun. She first went to Kalyanvan, before alighting at the Kishenpur Ashram. Mataji had not been to Dehradun since last September and so the rush there was also very great. Mataji left Dehradun on the 5th evening and reached Varanasi on the 6th.

Vasanti Puja at Varanasi

Since Vasanti Puja started on the 7th evening, an extremely busy time followed. Vasanti Puja is the Durga Puja celebrated in spring. It ends on *Ram Navami* (Sri Rama Chandra's birthday) and is held in memory of his victory over Ravana in Lanka. The traditional image of Durga, with Lakshmi and Saraswati at her right and left and the *Asura* being pierced to death under her feet, was sculptured by the artist in the *Chandi Mandap* itself (in which the puja took place), and was really beautiful and alive. Mataji was present for hours together, and on Ashtami day practically the whole day

from 4.30 a.m. till late at night. So the devotees of Varanasi could enjoy Her darshan to their hearts' content this time. Although it must be said that sitting in the open courtyard, protected from the blazing April sun only by a thin canvas roof, means *tapasya*. But no body seemed to mind. The place was packed to capacity and beyond, especially in the evenings. On April 11th *Vijaya Dasami* day the image was taken on a boat and immersed in the Ganges. The next day *Ekadasi*, was the death anniversary of Mataji's grandmother (Didima's mother). By chance someone performed a special puja in the Shiva temple. On the 13th Didima's *Sannyasa Utsava* was celebrated in great style from 5.30 a.m. until 9 p.m. It was amazing how well Didima was able to bear the strain of such a day in spite of her age and her frail body. She was nearly 90. It was inspiring to behold her remarkable poise while being the centre of a tremendous ovation. Didima was ever sweet and gentle, the very picture of egolessness, and yet responding with warmth and liveliness to everyone who approached her. Distributing blessings and *prasada* indefatigably. Mataji was present throughout giving lustre to the function. She stood up for Didima's *arati*, honouring her mother and the *guru* of so many of Her devotees. In the morning of that day a new room built for Mataji's use on the uppermost floor of the Ashram guest-house was opened. Mataji rested there both in the afternoon and during the following night. Only the next evening She returned to the Ashram building. Most of the function took place in the new hall that had been inaugurated on January 14th, although it even now remains to be completed. On the 13th of April there was also a *Havan* that marked the completion of 24 lakhs of *Gayatri Mantra* by one of our *Naisthik* Brahmacharis. Since many visitors had flocked from Bombay, Calcutta, Dehradun, Lucknow and other places, Mataji gave darshan several times daily also on the days following the function.

Mataji left for Ranchi

On April 22nd Mataji left for Ranchi where Her 69th birthday anniversary was to be celebrated from May 2nd to 19th. Her further programme was as yet uncertain, but it was likely that the Durga Puja might be observed in Agarpara and the next *Samyam Mahavrata* in Hazaribagh in November.

On April 23rd Mataji alighted in Ranchi where Her 69th birthday was celebrated from May 2nd to 19th. Ranchi, Hazaribagh and

other places in Chhota Nagpur are considered congenial for *tantric sadhana*. This was the first occasion on which Mataji blessed Ranchi with Her presence for two full months. It may therefore be interesting to relate here a few details of the history of our Ranchi Ashram.

History of the Ranchi Ashram

Dr. P. R. Ghosh, a young dentist originally hailing from East Bengal, but settled at Ranchi, met Mataji for the first time during the *Samyam Mahavrata* that was held in Calcutta in November, 1953. When soon after, at the invitation of devotees, Mataji paid a short visit to Ranchi, it was suggested (since Mataji does not enter the residence of a householder) that She should occupy one of the rooms in the as yet unfinished house that Dr. Priyaranjan Ghosh was building for himself on the Main Road. As soon as Mataji entered the largest room She remarked that it would be a good place for the performance of kirtan. Dr. Priyaranjan, a bachelor and a religiously inclined person felt that after Mataji had sanctified the house by living in it, it was too precious to be used merely as his clinic and residence, and he expressed his desire to donate it to our Ashram. The devotees of Ranchi were in any case eager to have an Ashram in their town. His offer was accepted. In October, 1954 the new Ashram was opened in Mataji's presence by the celebration of Durga Puja under a pandal in the open space adjoining the Ashram. It developed into a grand function during which the *Devi Bhagavata* and the whole of the Ramayana were recited as well.

Dr. Priyaranjan then suggested that an image of Ma Kali should be installed in the new Ashram. A devotee donated Rs. 1000/- for the purpose and Sri Nitai Pal, the artist who had sculptured the beautiful twin statues of Nitai-Gaur for the temple at our Vrindaban Ashram was subsequently commissioned to carve an image of the goddess to be installed at *Divali*, November, 1955 in one of the rooms of the Ashram (which now serves as an office). Mataji Herself gave some indications of how the image should be made. While, for example, Kali is usually black, this Kali is of the hue of the heavy grey-blue clouds that gather before the monsoon breaks. The statue is quite unusually alive and impressive. During the consecration a strange thing happened. The priest, a brahmachari of our ashram who had been a student of science, noticed that the locket suspended on a golden chain with which the goddess was

adorned, vibrated distinctly as if the statue were breathing. When afterwards he carefully examined the image to make sure whether there was no physical cause to the phenomenon, he found that the locket had become stuck in the paint that had not yet been quite dry.

Since the room seemed quite inadequate as an abode for the goddess, it was suggested that a temple should be built on the spot where Durga Puja had been celebrated in 1954. When the difficulties over the acquisition of the plot, which belonged to a Catholic Mission, were finally overcome, the problem of funds remained as yet to be solved. However, Ma Kali Herself seemed to take the matter in hand.

Kali Herself takes matters in hands

Many years ago, a little boy called Manik Banerjee had said to the Goddess : "When I am grown up I shall build a temple for you!" In his home at Barisal in East-Bengal, a statue of Kali had been kept in a hut with a thatched roof. Manik's mother used to worship Mother Kali every morning before starting her day's work. So the little boy also got used to worshipping together with his mother. When much later he settled in Ranchi and built a house for himself, he felt that the time had come to fulfill his promise to Mother Kali. He planned to build a temple right in front of his house. But he had a curious dream. Mother Kali appeared to him and said : "Why build here? I am already in Ma Anandamayee's Ashram." In his dream Manik Babu saw the Ashram of which in waking he did not even know that it existed. Replying : "Won't you come to my home at all Mother?" He woke up. He disclosed his dream to a friend who was Mataji's devotee and who took him to the Ashram. When soon after, in May 1958, Mataji visited Ranchi, he was introduced to Her and in a long private interview told Her of his life-long devotion for Mother Kali and of his dream. Mataji said : "Well, try to build the temple and then see what Kali Ma does."

... and fulfills the promise of a Boy

Actually Sri Manik Banerji bore the entire cost of the temple, while the construction of the beautiful large hall in front of it was financed by other devotees.

Swami Jnanananda Giri of the Bhologiri Ashram at Hardwar was requested to supervise the building work. As usual, some

difficulties arose and the actual expense far exceeded the estimate. But Mother Kali reassured the Swami in a dream, in which She showed him masses of gold coins and told him not to worry. On one occasion the Swami felt so desperate that he said to Mother Kali, "Rather than return to Hardwar and wait till money is provided, I shall sell all your jewelry and complete the temple." That night he dreamt of a place covered with a cloth. On removing it, he found an iron safe that contained money. Mother Kali said: "Take money from here!" "I am a *sannyasi*," he replied, "I cannot take anything, it has to be given." Kali then directed him to approach Manik Babu again.

During the *Divali* festival in 1962, the beautiful temple was consecrated in Mataji's presence. Although the Ashram is situated in such a busy street the temple and the hall are pervaded by a most powerful and inspiring atmosphere. It has come to light that the site of the Ashram was formerly a dense forest in which sadhus and yogis practised meditation and one of them is said to have attained *siddhi* in that very spot. In olden times there was a Kali Temple belonging to the Rajas of Chhota Nagpur, exactly where our temple is now.

When the Ashram was started it was very small, gradually it is growing large. This time again three new rooms on the upper floor were inaugurated a few days after Mataji's arrival.

* * *

In the beginning of Ma's stay in Ranchi this time there were comparatively few people and so it was a restful time when one could enjoy Mataji's darshan in small groups.

On April 27th Ma visited the residence of Sri R. N. Pandit, a devotee in Hatia, which is a new colony (about 6 miles from the town) where with the help of Russian and Czech engineers, some huge factories for heavy industries have been built up and are still being enlarged. (Later in June, Mataji was shown round those factories on a second visit.) Satsang was held in a delightful garden. Ma was relaxed and communicative. When the kirtan was over, a Czech engineer asked a few questions.

There is only one real life

At the end he said: "I do not believe in reincarnation. Does it matter?" Mataji replied: "You believe in this life, don't you? There

is only one real life, namely, the one that is dedicated to the search of God; only one real death, which is the death of death. After that there is no more birth and no more death."

On April 28th Mataji slipped on the staircase and slightly hurt the bone of the middle finger of Her right hand. A couple of days later a doctor examined the finger and wanted to prescribe some medicine. Mataji explained to him, that Her body did not tolerate medicine of any kind. In the course of the conversation She related that about 40 or 50 years ago when during a cholera epidemic everyone had been inoculated, Mataji at first refused; but when Bholanath pressed her, She finally stretched out Her arm and the injection was given. The whole arm swelled up tremendously, however after sometime it became normal again. Yet, a weakness remained. Mataji said that all the pains She gets even now in Her arm are due to that one inoculation.

Birthday Celebrations in Ranchi

Mataji's birthday celebrations had been thought out and prepared with great care and a good deal of trouble was taken over the arrangements. Everything therefore proceeded in great harmony and beauty. Large number of guests arrived from far and near, the greatest number from Calcutta. Accommodation had been provided in various places in the neighbourhood. Almost next to the Ashram, a very spacious house with long verandas and a courtyard, which had served as an office, happened to be available, and provided as the kitchen, dining-places and several living rooms. The Yogoda Math, which is about 3/4 of a mile from our Ashram, very kindly offered hospitality to nearly a hundred of our guests.

A large pandal was erected in a compound adjoining the Ashram. However the satsang was transferred from the hall to the pandal only on May 14th, when Sri Haribabaji Maharaj arrived and with him the *Rasalila* party. A number of prominent Mahatmas, such as Mahamandaleswar Swami Maheshwaranandaji from Bombay, Swami Vishnu Ashramji from Sukta, Swami Sharananandaji and Sri Krishnananda Avadhutji reached Ranchi about the same time and daily delighted the audience by their inspiring talks. Before their arrival some local University Professors and Pandits gave interesting and instructive lectures on spiritual subjects in Hindi and Bengali alternately. A full programme of kirtan, *bhajan*, puja, recitation of scriptures and discourses on religious topics was

kept up from early morning until 10 p.m. throughout the birthday celebrations. Along with it *akhanda japa* was sustained day and night without a break from May 2nd to 19th.

The *Tithi Puja* in the night of May 19th, which marks the culmination of the function, was so well arranged that everything proceeded in perfect order and solemnity in spite of the enormous attendance. After the puja, as customary on that occasion, a long queue was formed and everyone was allowed to ascend the dais and offer his *pranama* to Mataji, who, as usual that night, was lying completely still as if far removed from this world. The obeisances took about two hours. There was no crowding and no pushing. *Rasalila* was performed as usual later in the morning and a feast given to everyone who cared to partake.

The next day the statue of Ma Kall was newly painted for the first time after its installation. A special, very elaborate puja was therefore performed. Mataji sat in the hall most of the time and sang for about an hour. In reply to questions, She also related how the Kali Temple came into being.

By the end of May, most of the visitors had dispersed, but Sri Haribabaji's daily kirtan, his talks about the lives of saints as well as the *rasalila* continued regularly until Mataji left for Jamshedpur. For a whole fortnight in the 2nd half of May, Pandit Kapindrajī delighted the audience by his humorous and spirited exposition of the Ramayana as the last item of every day.

Congregational Puja by Narendra Brahmachari

On June 12th Sri Narendra Brahmachari, a *gurubhai* of the late Sri Gopal Thakur came to the Ashram with a large party and performed a congregational puja in the hall in front of the Kall Temple. Women also took part in the very impressive and original puja.

One afternoon, while Sri Haribabaji was expounding the Gita between 5 and 6 p.m., Mataji saw a man with a long white beard, who had the appearance of a *rishi*, looking through the window. She called one of the brahmacharis, drew his attention to this, and he also was able to see the venerable old man.

Vision of a Mohammedan Saint

Just outside the hall, under a spreading banyan tree, there is a tomb of a Mohammedan saint who is supposed to have been a

"*siddha fakir*." It is possible that he was the one whom Mataji saw looking in through the window that day. A sum was given to the attendant of the grave to perform a special puja and distribute the *prasada* to the Mohammedan devotees.

During the latter part of Her stay at Ranchi, Mataji visited the T. B. Hospital, run by the Ramakrishna Mission. She also graced the homes of several devotees with Her presence.

With Haribabaji at Jamshedpur

On June 21st Mataji with a small group of devotees, accompanied by Sri Haribabaji and his party left for Jamshedpur at the invitation of some old *bhaktas*. Everyone was put up in a Gujarati School. The *Rasalila* party acted both Sri Krishna and Sri Mahaprabhu *Lila* with considerable success. A local party also did some specially beautiful kirtan in which incidents from Sri Krishna's life were sung. Mataji and Sri Haribabaji were invited to a large public hall by the Municipal Board and given an official reception.

On June 24th Mataji left for Puri with an enormously large party. Our Ashram there is right on the seashore, next to the burning ghat. Since it is very small several houses in the neighbourhood were rented to accommodate Mataji's and Sri Haribabaji's parties. The satsang and the *rasalila* had to take place in the open or rather under a canvas that had to be pitched and removed daily. The monsoon had started and several times the rain threatened to upset the programme. But fortunately the situation was always saved somehow as if by miracle and the satsang could be held regularly.

June 30th was the day of the renowned car festival "Rathayatra" when Lord Jagannath (Krishna) is taken out in procession to a place at a distance of 2½ miles. Seats had been reserved for the whole Ashram party and everyone went to have darshan on the 3rd day of the festival. Even Didima, notwithstanding her 90 years was carried up to the chariot on the shoulders of a *sannyasi* disciple and so was able to touch the image.

Guru Purnima at Agarpara

After staying for about eleven days in Puri, Mataji, Sri Haribabaji and the whole party arrived in our Ashram at Agarpara on the 7th morning. As usual the *bhaktas* from Calcutta invaded the spacious Ashram, where *Guru Purnima* was observed on July 13th. This time

Guru puja was offered not as on former occasions to Didima and Ma, but to Govindaji, the Narayan Shila at the temple.

Visit to Sri Sitaramdas Omkarnathji

On July 9th, Mataji accompanied by Sri Haribabaji and a few others went to pay a visit to Sri Sitaramdas Omkarnath, who was ill. He was staying in a thatched hut in the compound of a wealthy Calcutta devotee. On July 10th, Sri Haribabaji left by plane for Delhi, the same afternoon Mataji with a small party were taken to Kalyani, about 30 miles beyond Agarpura to bless the newly built house of some devotees of many years' standing. Being sufficiently far from Calcutta it proved a restful place and arrangements were excellent. Mataji spent one night there and on July 11th went to inaugurate the house of another devotee at Behala, where She remained for the next night. On the 12th afternoon She visited the residence of a devotee in Calcutta where Sri Mohanananda Brahmachari was putting up with his party.

Outdoor Section of our Hospital opened

On July 14th Mataji left for Varanasi where on July 16th a new building to house the Medical out-door and Dispensing section of the Charitable Hospital which Shree Shree Anandamayee Sangha is building, was ceremonially opened.

It is understood that the hospital, when complete, will have various out-door-patients departments along with a provision for 80 indoor-beds. Needless to say that the proposed charitable hospital in Varanasi will go a long way to serve the suffering humanity, irrespective of caste or creed.

On July 18th Mataji left for Kishenpur where She remained for a few weeks. She gave darshan daily after 6 p.m. and paid a visit to Kalyanvan every day at least once. From 21st to 24th July at the request of a devotee, one hundred *Durga Sapti Sati* were chanted at the Rama Temple at Kalyanvan by 10 pandits who had been specially called from Hardwar and Varanasi. It was followed by a *havan* (fire sacrifice) and a special *Shiva Puja* called *Rudrabhisheka*.

On July 19th, Mataji arrived in Kishenpur, Dehradun from Varanasi. Throughout Her stay there, not only did one function succeed another, but quite often two or three functions took place simultaneously.

From August 2nd to 3rd the whole of the *Ramayana* was recited in the hall of the Kishenpur Ashram, devotees taking turns of one or two hours at a time. From August 4th to 11th a *Bhagavata Saptah* was held. Pandit Srinath Shastri of Vrindaban read the Sanskrit original every morning, and every afternoon for about four hours explained very lucidly in Hindi. As usual devotees of Dehradun attended in large numbers. At the request of a *bhakta*, about a dozen pandits who had been summoned from Hardwar performed ceremonies at the Kalyanvan temple from 6th to 10th August which were followed by a *Gayatri yajna* in an improvised shed in front of the temple, the next morning. Twice daily Mataji was present at the *Bhagavata Saptah* in the Ashram and gave some time to the function at Kalyanvan as well. On the 8th morning, there was also an opening ceremony of the newly built house of a Calcutta devotee near our Ashram.

Mataji at Jhulan Festival at Kishenpur

From August 7th to 11th, *Jhulan Ekadasi* to *Jhulan Purnima*, the usual *Jhulan* festival was celebrated every evening on the verandah of the Brahmacharinis' building. A beautifully decorated swing had been suspended at one end of the verandah. Several *vigrahas* of Krishna and Radha were placed on it and puja and *kirtan* were performed daily in front of them. On *Jhulan Purnima* which is also the festival of *Raksha Bandhan*, many tied bracelets of silk-thread (*rakhis*) round Mataji's wrist and Mataji distributed *rakhis* to all who approached Her that night and the next day. The culmination and climax of all the festivities was a very wonderful midnight meditation in Mataji's presence. On *Jhulan Purnima* (full moon) night in August 1922, Mataji gave Herself *diksha* (initiation), as it were, which was followed by an incredible variety of *sadhanas* during the next few years. Mataji had repeatedly declared that there was nothing for Her to be attained and that therefore all these practices, which came to Her spontaneously, were nothing but a play (*lila*). For us, however, the *Jhulan Purnima* has great significance and it is the custom in our Ashrams, to commemorate this sacred night by silent meditation, preceded and followed by devotional music.

Mataji on Her way to Vrindaban

On the 13th morning *Ramarcha* was performed in the Kishenpur Ashram hall and the same evening Mataji boarded the

train to Delhi enroute to Vrindaban.

One can well imagine what hectic days Mataji had in Kish-enpur, but one must have seen for oneself how gracious She was to everyone and how She found leisure for the thousand and one things that had to be arranged and attended to. However, for twelve nights Mataji slept in the room on the upper storey of Kalyanvan house, where She did not receive people and so could at least enjoy quiet and solitude during the night, which was very exceptional indeed with Mataji. On most mornings, after visiting the Rama and Shiva temples at Kalyanvan and sometimes strolling about in the gardens, She walked the distance of half a mile back to the Ashram, accompanied only by one or two devotees. At the end of Her sojourn in Dehradun, Mataji spent one night in the new house of the Calcutta devotee and one night at our Sadhan Ashram, Jakhan.

Mataji at Vrindaban

On August 14th morning Mataji alighted in Vrindaban with only a very few companions and the next day She proceeded from there to Jodhpur, where She spent one night, leaving for Hardwar on the 17th. On Her way She paid a flying visit to the Delhi Ashram on the 18th morning and from there motored to Baghat House, Kharkhari at Hardwar, reaching in the early afternoon. The bulk of Her party had remained at Dehradun and gone directly from there to Hardwar, where Sri Krishna's birthday (*Janmastami*) was celebrated with great solemnity by midnight puja and kirtan on the 19th. At the end Mataji Herself distributed the *prasad* to all present. Many had come for the occasion from Dehradun, Delhi and other places. The next morning a somewhat abbreviated *Nandotsava* (the joy of the cowherds over Krishna's birth) was arranged. After the traditional amusing dance of two or three devotees dressed up as *Gopas* and *Gopis*, carrying vessels full of curds on their heads and letting one of them drop down and break into pieces, Mataji with Her own hands fed everyone with curds, so there naturally was much merriment and laughter.

Mataji at Kankhal Ashram

Immediately after, Mataji left for the Kankhal Ashram (4 miles from Baghat House) where She remained until August 26th. At Kankhal a devotee had arranged for the ceremonial recitation of the *Durga Saptah Sati* and *japa* of the *Mahamrityunjaya mantra* by

a group of pandits from 19th to 24th August, followed by two *Havans* (fire sacrifices) on August 25th and 26th. New rooms had recently been built for Mataji and Didima on the roofs of the Ashram. Ma, Didima and a few others stayed at Kankhal for the whole of the week, while Didi and the majority of the party remained at Baghat House, but spent the day at Kankhal. The Kankhal Ashram, called 'Santiniketan' is solitary and beautifully situated between the Ganges and a canal. Next to it there was an old Shiva temple, named '*Dakshalaya*', where Mataji stayed with Bhalji many years ago, when nobody could have dreamt that Mataji would one day have an Ashram next door. At Kankhal Mataji gave darshan on the roof when the weather was good, and later in the evening when only very few visitors were left, sometimes replied to interesting questions. Once She said to a very hard-working, elderly person: "The more work in the world you undertake, the denser become the veils that hide the *Atma*. For whom are you doing all this work? Like a creeper it grows and grows. Give time to the contemplation of the self (*Atmachinta*). Find out who you are!" Then She added: "Of course, if you do service to God in the guise of man, this also can be a *sadhana*."

On the 26th evening Mataji went to Baghat House to see to the finishing touches of the preparations that were being made for the ceremonial reading of the *Devi Bhagavata* that takes nine days and was held in the hall of Baghat House from August 27th to September 5th, followed by *Havan* on September 6th. While the *Srimad Bhagavata Saptah* is a regular feature in our Ashrams, the *Devi Bhagavata* is read only rarely. As in the *Bhagavata Saptah*, the Sanskrit recitation was performed every morning and the Hindi translation given every evening, with kirtan to fill in the 3-4 hours of interval at midday. The function took place at the request of the Rajmata of Sirmur for the good of the soul of her son who passed away fairly recently. A pandit had been called from Vrindaban to officiate, assisted by a number of other pandits, who also read with him or did *japa*. The atmosphere became more intense day by day and towards the end of the nine days, the presence of Devi could be felt tangibly by some. Many had come from Dehradun to participate. No sooner had the function been completed, than Mataji returned to Kankhal on the 6th evening for a night and half the next day. Another fire sacrifice was held at Kankhal on the 7th morning.

Mataji at the birthday celebration of Swami Sivanandaji

During Mataji's stay at Hardwar and Kankhal, *Sannyasis* and other inmates of the Sivananda Ashram at Rishikesh came very frequently for Mataji's darshan. Sri Swami Chidanandaji, the head of the Divine Life Society, came twice in person. At his special invitation, Mataji visited the Sivananda Ashram on September 8th, which was the birthday of their Guru, Sri 1008 Swami Sivanandaji. Last year also Mataji attended part of the celebrations on the same day. This year Mataji remained there for about an hour in the afternoon on Her way to Dehradun. There was beautiful chanting and music and, like last year, Mataji was received with great veneration and enthusiasm by all.

While Mataji was at Hardwar and Kankhal, a number of visitors from foreign countries had Mataji's darshan and interesting talks with Her. A few of them came from Sivananda Ashram, others from greater distances just for a day or two, among them a French dancer and a Canadian University Professor. A gentleman who lives in England and had come all the way from Bombay to see Mataji, asked: "I suppose my case is hopeless since I can spare only one or two hours daily for meditation, although I try to do all work as God's work." Mataji said: "It is not the number of hours that matters, but rather the intensity with which your heart and mind are centred in God."

Mataji at Dehradun

When Mataji reached Dehradun on September 8th, the days of 'black-out' had begun. Whenever Mataji gave darshan, people talked to Her about the war or beseeched Her to protect their sons, husbands and brothers who were serving in the Army. Some wanted to know what the future would bring, but Mataji never made prophesies. She only said: "God will let you know in His own time." When people asked Her what should be their attitude of mind in those troubled days, Mataji enjoined on them to turn to God with even greater concentration and fervour than usual; to practice *japa*, to pray and meditate. She also advised everyone to read regularly every day a portion of some sacred book, be it the *Gita*, the *Ramayana*, the *Bhagavata* or any other scripture, depending on each one's predilection. Mataji always radiates peace and light, but in those agitated days, this could be felt much more powerfully than at normal times. To be able to sit by Her

quietly for a while made a vast difference. One experienced a deep inner peace that remained unaffected by war and natural fear.

Mataji at Nama Yajna

On Sunday, September 12th, a *Nama Yajna* had been planned and our Kirtan party from Delhi, who are great experts, had been invited to come for the occasion to lead the kirtan. However, everything was uncertain in those gloomy days, and trains were irregular, or at any rate arrived late by many hours. It therefore became very doubtful whether our friends would be able to come. But lo and behold, they all turned up by car and bus in the late afternoon on Saturday. Without delay some one got into his car and went round to invite devotees residing in various localities. Mataji wanted everyone to spend the whole day in the Ashram and join the kirtan. The attendance was very large, in spite of the short notice. The devotees from Delhi led the kirtan with ever increasing enthusiasm throughout the day. Mataji was present for hours on end. We were transported into a realm that was far removed from the depression and excitement that held the whole country in its grip. New hope and faith stole into our hearts. The kirtan sounded like a song of triumph over the forces of dissension and hate. We felt: the power of the Divine must and will conquer the evil that had started creating havoc. The *Nama Yajna* of September 12th at Kishenpur will remain unforgettable to those who had the good fortune to participate.

On September 15th, the greater part of Mataji's companions, including almost all the women headed by Didi Gurupriya Devi, left for Varanasi. Mataji was to follow a few days later. She had already some months ago provisionally agreed to be in Agartala Ashram for Durga Puja, but due to the insecure situation, Her journey to Calcutta had been as good as cancelled. It was understood that Mataji might remain at Varanasi instead. On September 19th, She informed us that She was due to leave the next evening. She said: "To begin with, I am going to Varanasi. But if everything suddenly becomes all right, which after all is quite possible, this body may be in Calcutta for Durga Puja." And sure enough, soon after Mataji reached Varanasi, the hostilities were over. Trunk-calls were put through from Calcutta to Varanasi and already on September 23rd Mataji together with a large party, boarded the train to Calcutta.

Nobody could foresee whether it would be possible this year to celebrate Durga Puja, one of the main Hindu festivals, in peace and under bright illumination. After those weeks of anxiety and apprehension, Durga Puja has gained a new significance for us. With hearts full of gratitude we pray to Durga Ma to slay for ever the demons of hate and greed, to awaken humanity to the knowledge that all men are children of the one Great Father, and to establish lasting peace and good will on this suffering earth.

Mataji in New Alipore, Calcutta

On the 6th, next day after the *Dusserah*, Mataji moved from the Agarpara Ashram to the house of Sri M.L. Ghosh in New Alipore and stayed there till the Lakshmi Puja. She left for Rajgir on the 11th night reaching there on the 12th early morning. It was expected that She had some good rest there after the most hectic days in Calcutta.

Mataji arrived in Varanasi on the 21st evening for the Kali Puja and the *Annakut* functions and left for Hazaribagh Road on the 28th. The next *Samyam Saptah Mahavrata* was scheduled to be held at Hazaribagh Road from 1st to 7th November.

FOURTEEN

(October 1965 – October 1966)

Cease fire just in time

The "cease fire" between India and Pakistan came just in time. Mataji left Varanasi on September 23rd and reached Calcutta on Mahalaya.

Durga Puja is always a very grand and joyous function, especially in Bengal. In former years, literally thousands would come and partake of a full meal of *prasada* daily. This year for the first time *prasada* was packed in neat little cardboard boxes and distributed in this manner.

Mataji shifted from our Ashram at Agarpara to Calcutta on October 6th, staying at the residence of Sri M. L. Ghosh in New Alipore where Lakshmi Puja was celebrated on October 10th (the full-moon night after Durga Puja). On October 11th She left for Rajgir, accompanied by many Calcutta devotees, including Professor Tripurari Chakravarti who gave a daily talk at Rajgir. Dr. A. Lipski, Director for Religious Studies, California State University came to Rajgir for Mataji's darshan. He remained for three days, and had a private talk with Mataji.*

Special Kali Puja in Varanasi

On October 21st Mataji arrived at Varanasi where Kali Puja was celebrated at *Divali*. There is a history to this particular puja. About 35 years earlier, when Mataji lived in Dhaka the grandson of one of Her oldest devotees, Nishikanta Mitra (who later joined the Ashram) was suffering from an abscess in his ear. The sick child was then about eight months old and the doctors took a very serious view of his condition. Mataji, at Her own place, picked up a needle and scratched the back of Her hand with it. It was later ascertained that abscess had burst at about the same time. The child was saved. Mataji had enjoined on the family to perform Kali Puja every year at *Divali* in grateful commemoration of the child's recovery. The child, now a grown-up man, had for a long time desired to have this puja performed in Mataji's presence. This

*The later wrote a book "Life and Teaching of Ma Anandamayee" published by Motilal Banarasidas, Delhi 1977.

year at last, he got the chance to arrange for it in our Varanasi Ashram. The scratch on Mataji's hand is still detectable.

After an interval of three years, Mataji was present in Varanasi during the *Annakut* festival on October 25th. On the same day also the foundation-stone of the main building of the Ashram Charitable Hospital was laid in Mataji's presence, and an upper storey above the Medical Out-door block ceremonially opened. These rooms were meant to be used as staff-quarters but were for the time being occupied by Ashram patients. The allopathic and homeopathic sections are working from 8-12 a.m with four doctors in attendance. An average of 120 patients daily received free treatment and free medicines. It is interesting to note that Mohammedan patients were in the majority. No distinction of caste or creed is made.

Jai samadhi of an insect

On October 26th a strange little incident occurred during a Narayana puja performed by one of Mataji's nephews at the residence of the architect of the Annapurna Temple of our Ashram, Sri Manmohan Ghosh, a devotee of many years' standing. Mataji was sitting in the open courtyard, watching the ceremony. One of the attending girls saw a small insect on Mataji's *asana* and wanted to remove it, when Mataji firmly caught hold of her wrist and told her to leave the insect where it was. After a little while another girl approached Mataji and, seeing the insect, tried to brush it away. Mataji again prevented this. When a similar thing happened for the third time, Mataji took the towel with which Her head was covered, carefully placed the insect on it, and put it on the shelf that was near Her head. The insect had become completely still by this time and Mataji drew someone's attention to it, remarking that it was as if in *samadhi* (deeply absorbed in meditation). After the puja, which continued for two or three hours, Mataji took the towel from the shelf and, looking at the insect intently, said that it had left its body. She showed it to several of the people present. After cautiously wrapping it into the towel, She summoned Narayana Swami, who was asked to take the tiny creature to the Ganga and give it *jai samadhi*, wrapt in the cloth that Mataji had worn on Her head. Who can tell who comes to Mataji in what guise? This is one of thousands of mysterious incidents that constantly take place round Mataji.

16th Samyam Mahavrata at Suriya

On October 27th, Mataji with a large party entrained for village Suriya near Hazaribagh Road Railway Station in Bihar, reaching there the next morning. On the Journey, Narayana Swami caught a severe cold and on arrival at Hazaribagh Road he had very high fever and breathing trouble. The attending physician diagnosed broncho-pneumonia. The swami was then an old man of 68. He was bed-ridden for the next few days and Mataji would go and see him daily, giving directions as to treatment and diet. But lo and behold, on the first evening of the *Samyam Vrata*, Narayana Swami, at Mataji's suggestion, gave an interesting lecture with a clear voice and with hardly a cough to disturb it. This surely was an unusually speedy recovery, to say the least of it.

When Mataji arrived at Suriya, our host Sri Jagannath Roy and Swami Paramananda, assisted by a band of helpers, were busy preparing for the function. Suriya has no municipal water supply. Water has to be drawn from wells. An electric pump was installed in one of the tube-wells and water pipes laid on for the convenience of the vratists.

Sprinkling Sugar did the job

Many people were put up in houses in the neighbourhood. Since tents were not available, a kind of second pandal with partitions made of dhotis was improvised near the Satsang pandal. A large number of women were accommodated in this peculiar tent. One day, when Mataji went round inspecting the preparations, She saw a long row of hired tape-cots lined up in the open, ready to be put into the tent. She advised that they should be put into the sun and sugar sprinkled on them to make sure that they were free from troublesome insects.

She then related a story from Her early life. When She stayed at Ashtagram with Bholanath, She once visited Her home at Vidyakut. There were bed bugs in the cots. Mataji watched the women trying various remedies with very little success. So She finally devised Her own cure. When the whole family went away on a visit, She put all the cots into the sun and sprinkled plenty of sugar on them. This attracted large black ants which ate up the eggs and perhaps also the smaller bugs, while the bigger ones fled away. In any case, after three days there was not a single bug left.

The 16th *Samyam Mahavrata* was held at Suriya, Hazaribagh Road, from November 1st to 7th. Every *Samyam Vrata* has had its own special note and seemed different from all the preceding ones, although the rules as well as the programme are more or less similar every year; everyone of these meetings has always seemed even more elevating and inspiring than the previous ones. This was so also on this occasion. Suriya, although not a place of pilgrimage, seemed singularly favourable for a function of this kind.

Here Mahaprabhu walked around

It is said that Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu walked through the jungles there singing the name of the Lord, thereby sanctifying the whole countryside. However this may be, the beauty and the deep peace of the large open spaces, with picturesque hills rising in the distance, the complete freedom from the hustle and bustle of modern life, the absence even of shops and traffic were invaluable assets.

Mataji was in an excellent mood throughout and obviously felt at home and at ease in the new house that had, in the midst of Mr. Roy's spacious gardens, been built for Her, Didima and the attending girls.

Intimate and very intensive

The number of participants at our week of *sadhana* was much smaller than usual, only about 150 compared to 350 last year at Vrindaban. This also was a distinct advantage. It gave the function an intimacy and concentration that had probably never been achieved before. The climate was just perfect, neither too hot nor too cold, and everyone consequently kept good health. Hardly even a cough could be heard during the hours of collective meditation. One of the rules of the *Samyam Vrata* is to refrain from going up to the dais to offer flowers or other things to Mataji. For the first time this restriction was observed by one and all.

A number of eminent Mahatmas, such as Mahamandaleswar Swami Maheshwarananda of Bombay, and several other heads of well-known Ashrams had come from considerable distances and gave excellent discourses on *Samyam* (self-mastery), on the Gita, *Bhagavata*, Upanishads. It was really surprising that, although we had listened to talks on *Samyam* for fifteen years, this

time again so many new very striking and significant things were said on this subject.

So that *Samyam Swarupa* may come about

Mataji, Herself, spoke very little. A few words, however, She repeated two or three times, "You practice *Samyam* (self-control) so that *Samyam Swarupa* may come about. *Samyam Swarupa* means that a-*samyam* (uncontrolled behaviour, speech and thought) becomes impossible. Action, speech and thought are then naturally disciplined—right thought, right speech and right conduct have become your second nature, no effort is required anymore.

All unnecessary movement of mind and body ceases. When one attains to *Samyam Swarupa*, then That for the sake of which *samyam* is practiced will stand revealed.

Swami Sharananandaji said among other things: "By the *Samyam Saptah*, Mataji gives the *vratis* initiation into *samyam*. There is a great difference between teaching and initiation: teaching appeals to man's intelligence, while initiation transforms the I-ness. *Samyam* signifies the relinquishment of all unnecessary action, talk and thinking. To do, say, and think exclusively what is really necessary is called *samyam*."

To conquer the Tongue

Swami Chidanandaji, the head of Divine Life Society at Rishikesh, pointed out that control of the tongue and the palate was the key to self-mastery. "To conquer the tongue is like killing the commander-in-chief in battle—the whole is thereby put to flight."

Swami Sadananda of Paramarth Niketan, Rishikesh, one day spoke about Guru and *sisya* (disciple), "The Guru knows that the disciple is *Brahman*, while the disciple believes that the Guru is *Brahman*. When the disciple comes to know that the Guru is *Brahman*, he himself has attained the status of a Guru."

Swami Chetan Giri talked mostly about the fleeting nature of all happiness that is not of the *Atman*; in fact, no other happiness exists at all. When a desire has been fulfilled, the mind becomes still for a moment and in that moment of stillness the *Atman* is reflected, which causes happiness. Man, however, thinks that he is happy because his desire has been fulfilled. But actually the gratification

of desire causes only new desires to arise. There is only one desire which when fulfilled results in the cessation of desires; namely, the desire for God, Truth or Self-realization.

Sleep on the floor

So long as we are identified with the body, it is impossible to conquer greed, passion, anger, pride, jealousy and the rest. Sri Chetan Giriji related a story to illustrate this. A man was lying on a cot that was riddled with bugs. He killed twenty, fifty and more, but there were still a sufficient number to prevent him from sleeping. At last someone advised him to come down from the cot and sleep on the floor. At once he was able to rest in peace. The moment we cease to identify ourselves with body and mind, and become aware of our true nature, trouble ceases for us.

There is no town near Suriya, Hazaribagh city being 32 miles away. It had therefore been taken for granted that there would be very few chance visitors. However, the rural population seemed to take even greater interest in the proceedings of the *Samyam*. They came on foot and on cycles — men, women, and children. There was often not enough space in the comparatively small pandal. Many sat and stood outside, listening to the talks of the *Mahatmas* and to the kirtan.

Story of Udas's Narayana Shila

At the collective midnight meditation that always marks the end and climax of the satsang, a *Narayana Shila* was enthroned on the dais near Mataji's seat; this was an innovation. After the meditation Mataji said, "In future whenever this particular *Narayana* is available, you may perform your *Samyam Mahavrata* in front of him."

A *Narayana Shila* is a special kind of blackish stone, regarded as a form of the Lord, which only a brahmin is allowed to worship. It is found in Nepal only. The legend has it that Lord Vishnu was once upon a time threatened by the planet Saturn. To escape him, he hid inside a mountain called 'Gandak' in Nepal. Saturn then took on the form of an insect and began to cut holes into the mountain. Thereby gradually, bit by bit of the rock crumbled down and fell into lake 'Damodar Kund' that was below the mountain. A *Narayana Shila*—a small piece of the crumbled mountain is to be regarded as the very body of Lord Vishnu. There are a number of

signs by which a *Narayana Shila* distinguishes itself from every other stone and can be recognized as such.

This particular *Narayana Shila* has a story of its own. When on August 14, 1965, Mataji on Her way from Dehradun to Jodhpur, halted in Vrindaban for a day, a man connected with the Ashram told Her that he had recently found a *Narayana Shila* on the road while going round the temples of Vrindaban. Although not a brahmin, he had picked it up and taken it with him. It then occurred to him that the raised place near Mataji's house in the Vrindaban Ashram, where twelve *sannyasis* had planted twelve Tulsi shrubs, would be a suitable abode for the *Shila*. (The Tulsi plant is supposed to be very dear to Narayana; below and above a *Narayana Shila* Tulsi leaves are always kept.) He had therefore buried it in the earth below those plants. Mataji asked to bring the *Shila* to Her. Some of the people present were of the opinion that it was an ordinary stone, but Mataji had the *kheyala* that it was *Narayana Shila*.

Usually women not permitted

She washed and cleaned it with Her own hands and three Chakras (circular holes) were found in the stone. Mataji then gave the *Shila* to brahmacharini Udas and asked her to do puja to it regularly and to offer *bhoga* (food) to it. Usually, however, women are not permitted to worship a *Narayana Shila*.

During the time when Mataji played the role of a Sadhaka, She had once performed a sacred thread ceremony on Herself, and for the next few days lived exactly as is enjoined on a brahmachari after his investiture with the sacred thread. When Bhalji came to know of this, he was greatly surprised because he had never heard that according to Shastric rules, women could be given the sacred thread. Yet, the *sadhana* which Mataji had gone through, had without exception been in keeping with the Shastra. On inquiry, it was later confirmed that there actually was provision for this in the Hindu Scriptures.

Ma gave sacred thread to three women

Mataji then had the *kheyala* that three of the women connected with Her should be initiated as brahmins and thus wear the sacred thread and practise the *Gayatri mantra*. These three were: Maroni (Bholanath's niece who had been brought up by

Mataji), Gurupriya Devi and Udas. This happened many years ago. The rule is that after that initiation a woman has either to get married immediately or else live in the Ashram of her Guru. It so happened that Maroni's wedding took place two days after the investiture. Gurupriya Devi and Udas had both left their families and were already staying with Mataji.

In August 1965 in Vrindaban, on giving the *Narayana Shila* to Udas, Mataji had said, "Look, after a quarter of a century, your initiation as brahmin has at last borne fruit. The Lord in His grace has let Himself be found on the road so that you should be able to worship Him in this form."

That same day, Sri Prabhudatta Brahmachari came along with a basket full of vegetables, inviting himself for a midday meal. However, when he heard that Mataji was due to leave the same afternoon at 3 O'clock, he felt that the time was too short. He thus said, "Since I am living in Vrindaban and you are here only a day, you are my guest and so please come and take your midday meal in my Ashram?" Mataji agreed. Since Udas had to feed Mataji, her *Narayana Shila* had also to be taken to Sri Prabhudattaji's Ashram for *bhoga*. When Mataji showed the *Shila* to Brahmachariji, he told Her that a *Narayana Shila* with three Chakras was supposed to be most unlucky and would bring nothing but trouble and distress to its worshipper. Very likely some one therefore had thrown this particular *Shila* away. Thereupon Mataji at once started cleaning the stone again and two more Chakras came to light.

A very auspicious Shila

The *Shila* was later shown to pandit Agnishwatta Shastri (Batuda) who declared that it was a *Narasingha Lakshmi Shila* and extremely lucky. It would bring success in all his undertakings to one who worshipped it. A *Narasingha Lakshmi Shila* was in fact the *Ista Devata* of Sri Padmapada, a direct disciple of Adiguru Sankaracharya.

Whenever Udas travels, the *Narayana Shila* is still tied round her neck with a silken cloth. Everyday before feeding Mataji, *bhoga* was offered to *Narayana*. At Suriya, Mataji showed the *Shila* to all the Mahatmas present and related to them its strange history.

Ma gives Rama Nama to villagers

After the *Samyam Saptah* was over, Mataji remained in Suriya for another eight days. Most of the vratis left on completion of the

function and only a comparatively small group of people stayed back. The pandals were dismantled and satsang was now held either on Mataji's veranda or in the largest room of Her house. Mataji was in a delightful mood. The self-effacing spirit of service of our host and his entire family who had taken endless trouble to make the gathering a success and to see that everybody was comfortable and at ease, was now amply rewarded. Mataji highly praised the place and its people, calling Sri Roy's property an Ashram and enjoining on the family to live as Ashramites, expressing the hope that She Herself would come there again before long. Mataji used to go for walks in the open fields twice daily. She would walk into the compounds of neighbouring villagers, talk to them and give them "*Rama Nama*" in Her own unique way. "Which of God's names do you like the best?" She asked. "We like them all." "But which of them do you repeat?" The villagers felt at a loss and remained mum. Mataji stretched out three fingers of Her right hand and pointing to each of them said, "This is Rama, this Krishna, this Shiva; now catch hold of one!"

The next day She again went to see the villagers and asked them whether they had started repeating the names. She one day stood in the field surrounded by the villagers and sang *Rama Nama* to them and made repeat every line after Her. Some of the people became friendly and brought vegetables, guavas and sugar from their fields for Mataji, which She distributed. On the last day, She went to say good-bye to them, calling them loudly by their names until they one by one came out of their houses.

Of Mahatmas only Sri Chakrapaniji had remained after the *Samyam* week. He used to come and talk to us at satsang time. Mataji also was in a communicative mood, joking and relating incidents from Her life, sometimes till quite late. It was not often later that one would find Mataji so relaxed and approachable.

Visit to Katrasgarh colliery

On November 11th, Mataji and Her whole party, including Sri Roy and his family, visited Katrasgarh colliery at the invitation of one of its owners, Sri Morajibhai, who supplied the Ashrams with coal. Morning and evening satsang was held in his house and every one present was entertained to a sumptuous Gujarati meal.

One day Sri Chakrapaniji took Mataji by car to a Mahadeva Temple called Smashaneshwara near a river. They found a sadhu

there who had lived in this very solitary place for twelve years, subsisting on whatever food and clothes God would provide for him. Mataji talked to him and the next morning sent some of our *sannyasis* to him with gifts of grain, fruit, vegetables and a blanket.

On November 15th, Mataji boarded a train to Varanasi, taking our hostess and one of her daughters with Her for a long stay. At Varanasi, during Mataji's darshan time, at 5 p.m., some of the talks from the *Samyam Saptah* were reproduced by the tape recorder daily for half an hour for the benefit of the Varanasi devotees. The recording is perfectly clear and it was a joy even for those who had been at Suriya to hear once more the words of wisdom of the *Mahatmas*.

Solar Eclipse at Varanasi

In the early morning of November 23rd, a solar eclipse was spent in very beautiful kirtan sung mostly by the pupils of Kanyapith for two hours, with half an hour's silent meditation in the middle. Mataji Herself sprinkled Ganges water on everyone's head at the start and again blessed all when they returned to do *pranama* after a bath in the Ganges at the end of the eclipse.

One day at Varanasi, Mataji and Didi were talking to a small group of people about the time when Mataji had been keeping *mouna* (silence). Her facial expression was then stonelike. Not even Her eyes would indicate whether She recognized anyone who approached Her. Nobody knew how long Mataji would remain in that state or whether She would ever revert to a different one. Didi sometimes cried bitterly saying, "Mataji does not know me anymore." During those times Mataji once said to her, "Wait and see, a time will come when I shall seem so ordinary that you will be amazed." Mataji laughed and remarked, "This time has now come."

Visit of Governor, C.M. etc. of U. P.

On November 24th, the Governor of U.P., Sri Biswanath Das, paid a visit to Mataji. He was received on the veranda in front of the temples and sat near Mataji for half an hour.

On November 26th morning, the Chief Minister of U.P., Srimati Sucheta Kripalani and the Union Health Minister, Dr. Sushila Nayar were shown round the hospital. They also came to

the Ashram and had Mataji's darshan. Dr. Sushila Nayar returned in the evening to see Mataji.

On November 17th Mataji left for Dehradun. Since it was the first anniversary of Buni's death-day, kirtan was performed by the girls for six hours and a feast to kumaris and brahmins before Mataji's departure.

Kishenpur : Foundation stones and Akhanda Ramayana

Mataji arrived in the Kishenpur Ashram on November 28th morning. On the 29th, *Rudrabhisheka* was started at Kalyanvan in front of the Rama and Shiva shrines and continued every morning until December 4th. Mataji used to attend daily for some time. Also on the 29th the foundation stones for four buildings were laid in Her presence, first, for two houses in the grounds adjoining Kalyanvan, belonging to Sm. Rajadevi Khaitan and then two cottages in Kalyanvan itself.

On November 30th, *Akhanda Ramayana* began in Buni's memory in the Ashram hall ending in the afternoon on December 1st. The reading was done in relays mostly by women.

Mataji remained extremely busy throughout Her short sojourn in Dehradun attending functions and talking to people both at the Kishenpur Ashram and at Kalyanvan. On December 4th, while the final ceremony of *Rudrabhisheka* was taking place at Kalyanvan, a Gita Jayanti was celebrated in the hall of the Kishenpur Ashram. In the morning, the girls recited the entire *Bhagavad Gita* and three lectures on the Gita were delivered in the evening in Mataji's presence.

Chidanandaji visits Ma

On December 6th, Swami Chidanandaji, and a number of other *sannyasis* and Ashramites of the Shivananda Ashram in Rishikesh, had lunch in our Ashram at Mataji's invitation. In the evening, some of the swamis tape recorded our Ashram kirtans. Mataji sat in the hall for three and a half hours and at the end sang two wonderful kirtans. One of the swamis of the Shivananda Ashram took those tapes to South Africa.

New Delhi : Opening of J. N. Dutta's House

On December 7th, Mataji left for Delhi visiting three places in Dehradun on Her way to the railway station. In Delhi, Mataji did not

stay in our Ashram, but in the newly built house of Sri J.N. Dutta. Sri Dutta had arranged for the recitation of the whole of the Gita and *Durga Sapta Sati* and for kirtan continuing for 12 hours. Mataji was to leave on the 11th morning for Vrindaban but at the urgent request of the whole family, reinforced by the entreaties of other devotees from Delhi, who wished to celebrate *Nama Yajna* of 24 hours in Mataji's presence, She agreed to postpone Her departure one more day.

The kirtan was, as usual, performed by the men all day and by the women all night. Mataji took an active part and was present for a long time at night, returning again early in the morning for the termination of the very successful function.

Three days at Vrindaban

Before motoring to Vrindaban on the 12th, Mataji paid a flying visit to our Ashram, leaving Gurupriya Didi there. Mataji went to Vrindaban mainly to see the progress on the Radha Govinda Temple that is being built in the Ashram there. She remained in Vrindaban for three days only. Satsang was held every evening. One day Pandit Sundar Lal said, "Ma, we are all beggars, begging for your grace." Ma replied, "And I am the greatest beggar, ever begging for your greed, anger, jealousy, pride and egoism to be laid at the feet of the various deities of your temples."

One night Mataji slept in Rama Mandir, although the house was not yet ready. Maharani Satya Prem Kumari of Mysore who was building it, stayed with her companions at the Modi Bhavan, next door to our Ashram. It had been her desire that Mataji should sanctify the house by spending one night there first of all.

Allahabad : Satya Gopal Ashram

On December 15th, Mataji reached Allahabad, where She put up at the Satya Gopal Ashram. She usually goes there for three days before *Durga Puja*, but this year it could not be fitted into Her programme earlier.

At Allahabad, a research student of the University came one day and posed many searching questions. She was full of the spirit of enquiry and had a lively argument with Mataji. Finally Mataji said to her, "Listen first of all to what I have to say and do not contradict just yet. Think it over quietly, and if you have any questions left, we shall discuss again tomorrow." The next day the

girl returned saying all her doubts had been resolved. She had not a single question to ask. Mataji presented three flowers to her.

A few restful days at Vindhychal

On December 18th, Mataji motored to Vindhychal. There She had a really restful time, at least for the first few days. She had been expected to go to Varanasi for a short visit, but this was cancelled and She remained in Vindhychal without a break until She moved to the Kumbh Mela at the Triveni on January 11th, 1966. Vindhychal was still a place where no crowd ever collected round Mataji.

Ashtabhuj Hill has not yet been invaded by modern civilisation and has preserved its charm and solitude. To spend even a couple of days there with Mataji was a privilege treasured by Indian and foreign visitors alike.

Mataji remained in the Kumbh Mela from 11th January to 25th and thereafter stayed for three nights in the Ashram of Sri Prabhudatt Brahmachariji at Jhusi. On January 26th, Sm. Indira Gandhi, Prime Minister of India, Sri G.L. Nanda, Home Minister, Dr. Sushila Nayar, Health Minister, Sri G.S. Pathak, Law Minister and a number of other high Government officials came to our camp in the mela ground for Mataji's darshan and sought Her blessings. They had all come to the Triveni to be present at the immersion of the ashes of late Sri Lal Bahadur Shastri.

Our camp at Prayag Purna-Kumbha

A spacious camp consisting of thatched huts and tents and a pandal for satsang had been arranged for Mataji and Her devotees by the Shree Shree Anandamayee Sangha. The *Purna Kumbha* occurs only once in 12 years. Large number of devotees from all over India availed themselves of this rare opportunity to spend few days with Mataji at that holy spot. Five Westerners hailing from five different countries were also putting up in Mataji's camp. A number of Europeans and Americans were among those who came for Mataji's darshan. On the main bathing days, namely, on January 14th and 21st, Mataji went to the Triveni together with all the devotees present. She did not actually bathe, but just sprinkled Triveni water over Her head and put Her feet into the water. On both occasions She was carried the distance of nearly a mile to the river in a palanquin in procession, surrounded

by a kirtan party before boarding a boat. Thousands of pilgrims had the benediction of Her darshan on those days.

On January 18th Mataji followed an invitation to the camp of the Bharat Sevasram Sangha, where a meeting of many prominent and learned Mahatmas was held. Mataji was received with the utmost veneration. She could not be persuaded to address the gathering, but finally agreed to lead the kirtan for a short while.

Saraswati Puja in our camp

On the 26th, Vasant Panchami day, Saraswati Puja was celebrated with great joy and solemnity in our Camp in Mataji's presence. Saraswati is the Goddess of learning, art and music and above all the bestower of *Brahmavidya*, the Knowledge of Reality.

The same afternoon Mataji went to the camps of Sri Jogesh Brahmachari of Calcutta and of Maharshi Mahesh Yogi. Late at night Mataji moved to the Ashram of Sri Prabhudatta Brahmachari at Jhusi, where She remained quietly for three nights, visiting the Kumbha in the day and also giving darshan at 31, George Town, Allahabad on the last day.

Visit to sick Haribabaji at Hoshiarpur

On January 29th She alighted at Varanasi by car, only to leave the next morning for Hoshiarpur, to pay a visit to Shri Haribabaji Maharaj who was seriously ill. In Varanasi Mataji went to see a number of patients on Her way to the Ashram and in the Ashram itself.

Without halting at Jullundur, Mataji proceeded straight to Her destination, but promised to spend a few hours there on Her return journey, which She did. Sri Haribabaji's health and spirits improved visibly during Mataji's sojourn and when She left for Vrindaban on February 9th his condition was very hopeful. During Her stay at Hoshiarpur, everything that Sri Haribabaji partook of in the way of food and drink was prepared in Mataji's kitchen under Her personal supervision.

Shivaratri

A large crowd of devotees came to meet Mataji at Delhi Station, trying in vain to persuade Her to remain with them for a few days. Mataji, however, agreed to come to Delhi on April 6th and to remain over the celebration of Didima's *Sannyasa Utsava*

on April 14th. Mataji reached Vrindaban on February 19th. Only a very few companions had been allowed to accompany Her to Hoshiarpur. Didima, Didi and the rest of the party had remained in Varanasi and came to join Her in Vrindaban on February 12th. On the 18th Shivaratri was celebrated in the Ashram hall. As every year, many came to spend that holy night in puja and kirtan in Mataji's presence after a whole day's complete fast.

. . . and a Bhagavata Saptah at Vrindaban

From February 21st to 28th a *Bhagavata Saptah* was held, arranged by Sm. Taraben Bhuta from Bombay for the good of the soul of her husband who had passed away recently. Pd. Srinath Shastri officiated and also gave the Hindi version in the afternoons. Swami Akhandanandaji very graciously agreed to talk every evening for about an hour on the *Srimad Bhagavata* in his well-known delightful way. Some of the students of our Vidyapith came specially to Vrindaban to receive their sacred threads in Mataji's presence during that time.

Holi at Hoshiarpur

On March 1st Mataji left for Hoshiarpur to spend *Holi* with Sri Haribabaji Maharaj, who was not yet strong enough to go to Vrindaban, although his health had in the meantime further improved considerably. Just before Mataji's departure from Vrindaban, an urgent telegram brought the sad news that Swami Bhumananda Giri, one of the *sannyasi* disciples of Didima, had suddenly the same morning died of heart failure at our Varanasi Ashram.

Bhumananda Giri

Swami Bhumanandaji, before he renounced the world and became a sadhu, had been a senior official of the Government of Bengal and had been well-known to Mataji and Bholanathji since the days at Shahbagh. After having joined our organization in the fifties as a permanent inmate, Swamiji, in spite of his old age, served the organization in various capacities with a rare spirit of service. It is indeed surprising that Mataji had advised the swami to come down to Varanasi from New Delhi only a few weeks before his death, and thus he was fortunate enough to be able to leave his mortal coil in our Ashram at Varanasi on the bank of the holy Ganga.

Mataji remained at Hoshiarpur for about ten days and on March 12th She left for Dehradun, halting at Jullundur for a little while. On the 13th morning She arrived at Kishenpur where She stayed only for five days. Mataji gave darshan only once daily, as a rule, mainly at 6 p.m.

Discussion on the Inner Guru at Kalyanvan

One morning Mataji went to Kalyanvan and sat on a platform under a jackfruit tree. A small group of devotees collected round Her and an interesting discussion ensued. Someone stated that he had received certain orders from his Inner Guru. Mataji thereupon explained that to be able to discern orders from one's Inner Guru required "*adhikara*" (a certain height of achievement.) There are definite signs by which such a person can be recognized. "What then are these signs?" asked another person.

"One is free from anger, greed, delusion, pride, and egotism. One looks on all with equanimity and feels friendly towards one and all. Neither is one swayed by likes and dislikes and accepts whatever comes as divine dispensation. Unless and until one has reached a state of this kind, one is liable to confuse the promptings of one's own mind with those of the Inner Guru."

In the case which was being discussed, what the devotee had imagined to be the orders of his Inner Guru were nothing but the creations of his own mind. It is therefore imperative until one has attained to the state of achievement described above, to obey the orders of one's outer Guru.

Ma named a tree Satyavrata

At the end of the discussion, Mataji caressed the jackfruit tree and named it 'Satyavrata' (one who clings to truth) in memory of the fact that while sitting in its shade truth had been established and falsehood disclosed.

On March 18th Mataji motored to Ananda Kashi, a solitary place about 15 miles off Rishikesh on the road to Badrinath. The Rajmata of Tehri has a guest house and Shiva temple there and years ago built a small cottage for Mataji near it which was used by Her occasionally as a retreat. Only two or three people were allowed to accompany Mataji. On the way She met Swami Chidanandaji, the head of the Divine Life Society, who was going somewhere in a car. In front of Shivananda Ashram, the *sannyasis*

and other inmates waited for Mataji, who stopped there for a few minutes. They all came to Ananda Kashi later to have Mataji's darshan. Some of the people of Mahesh Yogi's Ashram and a few foreigners had the good luck to meet Mataji in that charming and picturesque place on the bank of the Ganges surrounded by forests and hills, where Mataji was in a relaxed and approachable mood, since it is inaccessible to crowds.

Death of Saroj Kumar Ghosh

During Her stay at Ananda Kashi, another sad news was conveyed to Mataji about the most unexpected and untimely death of Sri Saroj Kumar Ghosh on the 21st afternoon in the Willingdon Nursing Home in New Delhi. Sri Ghosh was in robust health and only about 48 years old at the time of his death. He was the eldest son of Sri Manomohan Ghosh of Dhaka, at present residing in Varanasi. His entire family is singularly devoted to Mataji. Sri Saroj Kumar, an extremely lovable, honest and straight-forward person, had been drawn to Mataji when he was a mere boy.

On March 25th Mataji returned to Dehradun from Ananda Kashi and went straight to the Raipur Ashram. She remained there until the 27th, when She proceeded to Kishenpur, staying in the Ashram for 5 hours only. The same evening She suddenly entrained for Varanasi with only Didima and a few others.

It later became known that Mataji, out of Her infinite grace, undertook the long journey to Varanasi only to give solace to the aged father and mother and the childless widow of late Saroj Kumar. Nothing but the divine presence of Mataji could have given them the necessary strength to bear the irreparable loss.

In quick succession came the sad news of the death of one more devotee. Immediately on Her arrival in Varanasi, Mataji was informed about the sudden passing away of the husband of Maroni, Bholanath's niece, who had actually been brought up by Mataji herself.

Vasanti Puja at Varanasi

The Durga Puja in Spring, which is celebrated every year in the Varanasi Ashram was held this time from 29th to 31st March. The devotees were delighted beyond measure to have Mataji among them so unexpectedly just in time for the puja.

The writer of *Matri Lila* just received a letter, from a friend in Varanasi, describing very vividly Her visit to the Ashram on Ram

Navami day, 31st of March. "... We had wonderful darshan of Mataji from 9 a.m. until Noon. At first Mataji was inside the *Chandi Mandap* till about 10 a.m. After the puja was over She sat in the courtyard in front of the office. There was a *shamiana* covering that part of the courtyard, and as we had been sitting there, since the morning Mataji was very near us. She distributed oranges to all present. There was a great rush of servants, street urchins and women from the neighbourhood for a short time, but the both basketsful of fruit seemed to suffice for all, even though Mataji gave two to everyone, including children in the arms of their mothers, and the crowd kept on coming in. The miracle which occurs so often seems to have no explanation.

"While seated in the courtyard, Mataji was speaking of an incident that had occurred that morning. During the puja a little bird — perhaps a sparrow — had flown into the room. During *arati* it continued there, despite the noise of cymbals, conches, drums, etc. and would not go out. But immediately the women started rolling their tongues in their mouths and making the peculiar sound they always do during *arati*, the bird rushed outside. When they stopped, it flew in again and sat there as before. So Ma made signs to the women to continue the sound and again the bird left the room. They kept on until the *bhoga* was removed. Ma said the bird would have made a mess on the floor had it been allowed to remain there.

The Bird as a Teacher

"She told us that while watching the bird She had the *kheyala* that a change occurs only when a certain special point is reached. The bird was indifferent to the sound of singing, cymbals, drums, etc. but the sound of the women rolling tongues sent it away. Similarly, we are indifferent to certain things until something special shatters our indifference and awakens us."

"In the meantime someone brought a book and gave it to Ma. It seemed to be the first copy of a newly published work in Bengali. Ma called one of the Ashram girls who teaches in the Kanyapith and asked her to read it out to the audience. As she was reading, Mataji unobtrusively put a garland round her neck, then She quietly put another garland on the book. Then She signed for a small table to be put under the book, then a *kushasana* was brought for the reader and finally a mark of sandal-paste put on the

book and on the reader's forehead.

Pathaka—A spontaneous Initiation

It looked as if She quietly initiated the girl into the vocation of a *pathaka* (reader of sacred scriptures), so that henceforth she could give discourses, etc. The girl became very bashful and shy, but Mataji motioned to her to proceed and she had to carry on for a few minutes until the chapter ended. Then Mataji called for a Hindi book, but as none was forthcoming She asked whether anyone could translate into Hindi what had been read so far. A girl who is a doctorate in Sanskrit offered and did it very competently. The subject matter was *Daksha's Yajna*. It was as if Mataji wished to satisfy all the people present, Bengalis and non-Bengalis.

"When we had arrived at the Ashram, Mataji was pacing the veranda of the Kanyapith. We had taken some loose flowers: roses, marigolds and jasmines. As we reached Her, She was distributing other flowers to those around Her. So we waited until Her hands were empty and then went forward. She took the flowers and said: "I was wondering that now the flowers were finishing what would I do for more, and here they are!" She took ours and distributed them as well, I was very happy, that morning seemed so significant and charged with an inner meaning..."

On March 29th afternoon, Mataji motored to Vindhyachal for a few hours. She then remained in Varanasi quietly until April 5th, alighting in Delhi on the 6th. On the 9th She visited Vrindaban returning on the 10th. In Delhi, Mataji had a very hectic time, with no end to people who clamoured for Her darshan and interviews.

New Delhi : Visit of Prime Minister etc.

On the 13th the Prime Minister came to see Her and invited Mataji to her house. Mataji went there on the 15th morning. Sm. Indiraji offered fruits to Mataji and fed Her with her own hand. Dr. Sushila Nayar, Health Minister, also came to see Mataji twice and listened to the kirtan that was held all day on the 15th. Another visitor who had a very long interview with Mataji was Dr. Caseyedo, Cultural Attache of the Columbian Embassy who is a Psychiatrist. On the 14th, Didima's *Sannyasa Utsava* was celebrated with great solemnity as every year. Swami Chetan

Giriji very graciously gave a beautiful talk.

On the 16th Mataji and most of Her party left for Dehradun. Mataji Herself, however, got down at Haridwar and went to the Ashram at Kankhal for 3 nights with a handful of companions. She had a short rest there between the rush of Delhi and a very full programme that was awaiting Her at Kishenpur, where She arrived by car on April 20th.

Ma four months at Dehradun

The people of Dehradun were singularly fortunate in being blessed by Mataji's presence for nearly four months. Two or three days after Mataji's arrival some newly built rooms on the roof of the main house at Kalyanvan were inaugurated and at once occupied by brahmacharis of our Ashram. A meal was cooked in the new kitchen and all ashramites and many guests invited to partake of the *prasada*. Mataji stayed at Kalyanvan for a few nights, first in the main house upstairs and then at "Amar Kutir", the house that was later at the disposal of Sri Haribabaji Maharaj for two full months. On April 27th two houses further down the hill within Kalyanvan were ceremonially opened in Mataji's presence. Sri Haribabaji arrived with his party on April 29th. He and his devotees were put up at Kalyanvan in three houses and several tents.

Ma's 70th Birthday Celebration

From May 3rd to 8th Mataji's 70th birthday was celebrated on Mr. and Mrs. M. L. Khaitan's ground adjoining Kalyanvan. The whole function, and all arrangements, were extremely well planned and everything proceeded in great joy and harmony. A spacious pandal, beautifully decorated in blue and white with great simplicity and dignity, served as a Satsang hall. At a considerable distance from the main pandal, another much smaller pandal was erected in which 100 *Durga Saptah Sati* were recited throughout the celebrations.

Ma liked to stay under a thatched roof

Three very pretty and comfortable thatched huts, put up specially for the occasion, housed Mataji, Didima and Gurupriya Devi with their attendants. Mataji was very fond of staying under a thatched roof. She remarked that She had been born in a thatched house shaded by a neem tree in Kheora and here again She lived

for a week in thatched hut under a neem tree. In Her parental home there had been a *Narayana Shila* and this time also the *Narayana Shila* (about which we wrote at great length previously) was placed in Mataji's hut.

And the Narayana Shila stayed with Her

Quite a number of tents provided accommodations for visitors. Large kitchen and dining tents, an office under canvas and several huge water tanks served everyone's convenience. The old *Panchavati* house was converted into a kitchen for Mataji and the round platform of the *Panchavati*, covered by a thatched hut, was used for the uninterrupted *japa* that is always sustained during the whole of the birthday celebrations.

A number of prominent Mahatmas graced the function with their presence and delivered interesting and enlightening discourses. Amongst them were Mahamandaleshwar Sri Chetan Giri of Kailash Ashram, Rishikesh; Swami Sri Sadananda and Bhajananda of Paramartha Niketan, Rishikesh; Dandiswami Sri Vishnuashram of Sukhtal; Swami Sharananandaji of Manav Seva Sangh, Vrindaban; Sri Krishnananda Avadhutji; Sri Chakrapaniji of Vrindaban; Sri Yogesh Brahmachari of Calcutta.

Enlightening talks and inspiring music

The programme continued from early morning until late at night, with kirtans and *bhajans* sung by the Ashramites in the intervals between the lectures. The last two nights, some first class artists of the All India Radio entertained the audience with their beautiful songs until midnight. After his daily talks in the late afternoons, Sri Krishnananda Avadhutji would request Mataji to sing, which to the delight of everyone present She did in Her inimitable way on 3 or 4 occasions.

How to overcome Anger

On some days, Mataji replied to questions for half an hour. One day someone wanted to know how to overcome anger. "Drink a glass of cold water and look at your face in the mirror, and your anger will soon vanish," said Mataji laughingly. Then, She explained very clearly that anger cannot be conquered as long as there is desire. Whenever a desire is thwarted, anger arises; and when a desire is fulfilled there is attraction for the thing obtained.

Both are essentially the same. Desire will persist so long as there is the sense of 'I' and 'mine'. Therefore, while anger can be controlled or suppressed, yet the seed will remain. Thus, only when identification with body and mind ceases and the Self is realized can anger be finally overcome.

Food for Cheshire Home and Leper Asylum

From May 5th morning to 6th midday, the whole of the Ramayana was recited in the Rama Mandir at Kalyanvan as a part of the celebrations. The full-moon night was spent in kirtan by women and there was puja during the first and last nights. It may easily be imagined how little sleep we were allowed throughout the festivities. One day 108 kumaris were given a feast and a saree each. On another day special food was taken by jeep to the Cheshire Home for old people and also distributed among the lepers of the Leper Asylum and the Leper colony of Dehradun.

As usual *Tithi puja* was the culmination and end of the celebrations. This time two priests had to officiate, as one of them did puja before the famous *Narayana Shila*. As customary in the morning after the *Tithi puja*, everyone queued up and ascended the dais to offer *pranama* to Mataji who was lying perfectly still even for hours after. In spite of the huge attendance, everything proceeded in great order.

The sacred touch for all

The next, Mataji and all the ashramites moved back to the Ashram. A day later, while Mataji gave darshan in the hall in the morning, the *Narayana Shila* was brought and Mataji touched everyone's head and heart with the *Shila* and placed it on their hands for a second. Professor Tripurari Chakravarti of Calcutta had requested Mataji to be allowed to touch Narayan before his departure and thus Mataji declared that everyone present would be granted the same privilege. She also said that henceforth, this would be repeated twice a year, namely, on the completion of every birthday celebration in May and every *Samyam Vrata* in November.

Needless to say that Mataji's birthday was celebrated with great enthusiasm not only in all Her Ashrams, but also in the homes of many devotees in India and abroad who were unable to come in person to offer homage to Mataji. It may be interesting for our

readers to learn in what an original manner an ardent European devotee celebrated Mataji's birthday. The following is translated from a German letter: "... you can imagine how often and with what intensity I remembered Ma and all of you during those days. I prepared myself for this birthday in a most childish way, but I just felt like it. I spring-cleaned my whole flat with an insane thoroughness to the most hidden corners and rearranged all my drawers and cupboards, washed everything washable and put up new curtains. Literally, in my whole life I have never made order in a similar way. I also tried to make order within myself, but that is much more difficult. When starting right in earnest, one has the feeling of being carried away by one's own disorder as in a flood. On the inside of my entrance door, I pinned a piece of paper on which was written (in Hindi letters, so that nobody could read it):

Avoid unkindness, untruth, impurity.

Thus I tried to celebrate Ma's birthday by watching attentively for a few weeks my feeling and thoughts with a view to keeping the three prohibitions mentioned above. I decided to sleep on the floor whenever I failed to observe those three rules. Finally I had to give it up because I could never for a single night sleep in my bed anymore. No doubt an extremely naive and primitive method of self-education, but a good remedy against self-conceit.

Mataji's birthday week I celebrated daily with Her, with lots of lovely flowers, much candle light and beautiful religious music and thinking of Her with deep gratitude..."

Haribabaji back to Satsang

Sri Haribabaji Maharaj had completely recovered from his illness and was able to hold satsang as usual four times daily. However, he did not beat the gong anymore and circle around as he used to, but did the kirtan sitting down and clapping his hands. Besides, since he had been asked by the doctor not to walk or talk much (he completed his 81st year in March) he also had to give up his daily morning and evening walks and although he used to hold the evening satsang in our Ashram hall from 7.30 to 9.00 p.m., or later, throughout his stay at Dehradun, one of his disciples would read out the daily story from the lives of *bhaktas*. Mataji was present during that time every evening, and not only the hall but also the verandas were packed. The morning and after-

noon meetings were held in Sri Haribabaji's house and Mataji sometimes went there at 4 p.m., and afterwards together with Sri Haribabaji watched the outdoor games played by his men in Mrs. Khaitan's grounds to which there was then a connecting door from Kalyanvan.

Many prominent visitors

Mataji quite often gave fairly long darshans at about midday in the Ashram hall. A number of important personages came to see Her during Her sojourn at Kishenpur; some Ministers of the Central and U.P. Governments and Swami Chidananda, the head of the Divine Life Society, Rishikesh, with his party. One evening the famous Sivabala Yogi of South India came and sat in the hall for about two hours in perfect stillness with his eyes shut, while kirtan was being performed. But finally, he opened his eyes and had a short conversation with Mataji. One morning we witnessed an interesting discussion of Mataji with Swami Anand of Gujarat, who had been close to Gandhiji. One evening, Sri Prabhudatt Brahmachari of Jhushi came and had a lively discussion with Mataji concerning his campaign against cow slaughter and the fast he wants to start in protest against it. Mahamahopadhyaya Dr. Gopinath Kaviraj stayed in our Ashram for some time. Since his health was indifferent, Sri Haribabaji suggested that Ram morcha and kirtan should be performed to help his recovery, and that everyone should devote some extra time to *japa* for the reading of his favourite scripture, etc. The health of the great scholar did improve.

Kalyanvan completely changed

On June 20th, the fifth building in Kalyanvan was opened in Mataji's presence with *Narayana puja* and kirtan. A kitchen and store room were then being constructed behind the two temples in order to cook *bhoga* for Rama. Kalyanvan had completely changed during the last 2 or 3 years and contained no more thick jungles as it used to earlier.

Sri Haribabaji and his entire party left on June 28th evening. The next morning the recitation of the whole of the Ramayana was started in the Ashram hall. Barely one and a half hours after its completion at nearly midday, on June 30th, the reading of the *Srimad Bhagavata* commenced. Everyone took turns reading,

some in Sanskrit, others in Hindi. It lasted two and a half days and two nights to be completed at about 11 p.m. on *Guru Purnima*. The day of the Guru was celebrated on July 2nd from early morning until midnight, many devotees having come from far and near to offer their obeisance and gifts to Mataji and Didima. Special *puja* was performed in the Shiva temples both at the Ashram and at Kalyanvan. Mataji gave darshan practically throughout the whole day, first in Her room, then in Didi's room, then on the platform in front of the temples, then in the hall, and so forth ad infinitum.

Unforgettable mantra-kirtan started by Ma

The next midday, a devotee from Bombay asked Mataji to sing kirtan of a particular *mantra*. After much hesitation, Mataji at last started singing and continued for 20 minutes in an extraordinary tone of voice entering an unusual *bhava*. The kirtan was then taken over by the brahmacharis and later by the brahmacharinis of the Ashram and continued throughout the day whenever there was no other programme and through the whole of the following night until 1 p.m. the next day, when Mataji herself led the kirtan to conclude the function. This improvised kirtan will remain unforgettable to all who took part in it. The moment it ended, one of the brahmacharinis was asked to start silent *japa* of *Rama mantra* which was kept up again for 24 hours, followed by *akhanda japa* for another 24 hours of each one's own *mantra*. This was concluded on July 5th.

At Parasuramji's House

On July 6th morning, Mataji, Didima and a few companions shifted to the house of the late Parasuram Dhammi in Dehradun town. Sri Parasuramji was an ardent devotee of Mataji. His daughter recently built several rooms on the roof of their house reserving them for the exclusive use of Mataji and Her party. Mataji remained there for three nights and satsang was held twice daily on the spacious open roof.

To celebrate the anniversary of the consecration of Ram Mandir at Kalyanvan, which had taken place in July 1964, the entire Ramayana was again recited on the veranda of the temple from the morning of July 8th until the next midday, when Mataji alighted in time for the last chapter and *arati*. She sat under a tree

and started singing "Jai Rama, Sri Rama, Jai Jai Rama" which was taken over by the women and continued for the rest of the day and the following night.

Car accident in Dehradun

Mataji motored to Hardwar on the 15th noon with a very small party and stayed over night in our Ashram at Kankhal. We were shocked to hear that while coming back to Dehradun on the 16th morning, Mataji's car met with an accident in the town. A public bus ran into the car sideways at the crossing of two roads. Mataji saw the bus advancing without being able to stop and She stretched out Her left arm as if to ward off the danger. Thus, everyone was miraculously saved through Mataji's grace, only the car was badly damaged. She Herself, however, got a very bad cut in the left palm which bled profusely, and She also received a severe shock on the left side of Her body. Fortunately, the radiological investigations did not show any dislocation or fracture. As Mataji never accepted any kind of medical treatment and Her wound also could not be properly attended to by a surgeon, all we could do was to pray to Mataji to have the *kheyala* to get the wound healed in no time and keep Her body fit.

Akhanda Kirtan for 10 days

It is well known to all Her close companions that Mataji's health kept best when kirtan was sung in Her immediate surrounding. The inmates of the Kishenpur Ashram therefore decided to start "akhanda kirtan" on July 16th evening which continued uninterrupted for 10 days and nights. At the time of the daily functions of the Ashram, one person would recite the *mantra* of the kirtan quietly to keep up its continuity. A different *mantra* was started every 24 hours. Mataji, who had already for some time before the accident tried to arrange for uninterrupted kirtan on every possible occasion, seemed to take great interest in the kirtan and Herself gave the *mantra* with its tune for each following day. In fact, it seemed that Mataji was using the poor condition of Her health to fire the enthusiasm of the mere handful of people to continue. The constant recitation of the Name produced an ever increasing atmosphere of harmony and bliss, which was tangible and felt by people who came to the Ashram. On July 26th evening, *arati* was performed in Mataji's

room to celebrate the *puṇahuti* of the "akhanda kirtan". Mataji then suggested that the kirtan should from then on be performed in the day only, namely, from 5 a.m. to 9 p.m. It continued for another week.

Mataji took complete rest in the Kishenpur Ashram. Darshan hours were strictly curtailed and it was hoped that all of us would give Her the opportunity to take sufficient rest in Her disturbed state of health.

Her condition improved steadily, although She did not come downstairs for some time. Once daily the door of Her room was opened for half an hour and all could have darshan from the veranda outside of Her room. On July 28th, people were greatly moved to have darshan of Ma's left hand without the heavy bandage for the first time since the accident. Only the cut was still covered by a small pad.

Demise of Sarvananda, Satyananda, Thakurma and Manomohan Ghosh

During Mataji's stay at Kishenpur the news of the death of a number of devotees was received from Varanasi Ashram. On May 23rd, Swami Sarvananda, a *sannyasini* in the early forties who had been a heart patient for several years, passed away in the Ashram. On May 25th she was followed by Satyananda, Sri Gurupriya Devi's aged eldest sister in whose house in Varanasi Mataji used to put up on many occasions before the Varanasi Ashram was started. She had taken *sannyasa* during the Kumbh Mela in Hardwar in 1962 and was lying ill for the last 2 or 3 years. On July 5th morning, Chintamani Devi popularly known as "Thakurma," a very old lady, who had been a child widow and cooked *bhoga* for the Annapurna temple for many years, left her mortal coil. The same night Sri Manomohan Ghosh, the architect of the Annapurna Temple, who had recently lost his eldest son, also passed away. He had been deeply devoted to Mataji since the days of Dhaka. Having been an invalid for the last few years, he stayed in a house near the Ashram and Mataji would pay him a visit whenever She went to Varanasi.

Ma from August 15th to September 30th, 1966 at Vrindaban

Mataji remained at Kishenpur (Dehradun) until August 14th when She proceeded to Vrindaban. Before leaving Dehradun the

bruises on Her body and the wound on Her hand had healed completely. During the last few days Mataji often would come out on the veranda upstairs at darshan time. From August 6th morning until 7th midday the whole of the Ramayana was recited in the Ashram hall, followed by 24 hours of uninterrupted kirtan of : *gyoti se jyoti jagawo Ram* (kindly light by light, O Rama). From the beginning of August preparations for the various festivities to be held at Vrindaban went on vigorously and advance parties were sent there from August 2nd onwards.

Bhagavat Saptahs, Jhulan, Janmastami

Mataji remained at Vrindaban from August 15th to September 30th. Not less than three *Bhagavata Saptahs* were held during that time, besides the *Jhulan* and *Janmastami* celebrations, and the consecration of the new temple on September 7th, which proved the climax of all functions.

The first *Bhagavata Saptah* took place from 18th to 25th of August. On the 26th (*Ekdasi*) the *Jhulan* festival began, ending on the 30th, full moon day, which is also the festival of *Raksha Bandhan* and the anniversary of the memorable night in 1922 when Mataji gave Herself *diksha*. This night was always celebrated by silent midnight meditation in Mataji's presence, with religious music before and after and now also celebrated in all Mataji's Ashrams.

This time Sri Krishnananda Avadhutji (who then resided in our Ashram) had taken it upon himself to arrange for the decorations of the swing festival and so they were done in a different style from former years, when the Ashram girls used to be responsible. The beautiful, large hall of the Vrindaban Ashram provides an ideal setting for such an occasion. Sri Avadhutji had also arranged for *Rasalila* to be performed every evening on the veranda of the hall, the audience sitting in the wide open space in front. On *Jhulan Purnima*, *Maharasa* was performed in the hall during the morning and outside in the evening up to 11 p.m. Mataji graced both performances with Her presence.

Consecration of Radha Krishna Mandir

From August 27th to September 7th *akhanda* kirtan of various Krishna *mantras* was kept up from 5 a.m. to 9 p.m. At the time of other functions the *mantra* was sustained by one person

quietly. The same *mantra* continued for the whole day. From September 2nd the preliminary ceremonies for the temple consecration started. They were executed for several hours daily by a number of pandits in the square of the hall between the three temples.

The Temple Consecration

A number of prominent *Mahatmas*, not only of Vrindaban but of distant places, had responded by their presence to the invitation for the temple consecration. Some of them, such as Swami Sri Akhandanandaji of Vrindaban, Mahamandaleshwara Sri Maheshwaranandaji of Bombay, Swami Sri Sharananandaji and Sri Chakarpaniji of Vrindaban, delighted the large audience by their talks for several days before September 7th. For the last several months Mataji had urged devotees to come to Vrindaban for this occasion if they possibly could. The attendance therefore exceeded even that of the 60th birthday celebrations in Varanasi.

The whole place resembled a Bee-hive

Great numbers flocked from Calcutta, Ranchi, Varanasi, Bombay, Ahmedabad, Poona, Dehradun etc. not to speak of those who came from places nearby, such as Delhi, Agra and so forth. The grounds and the hall of our Vrindaban Ashram are spacious indeed, but in those days the whole place truly resembled a Bee-hive. Accommodations had been reserved months before in *dharmaśālas*, temples and guest-houses, some at a distance of one or two miles. Even so, it was difficult, for a few days, to house and feed everyone. Among our guests there were also a few Parsis and Europeans.

Extraordinary History of this Temple

As is the case with all the temples in our Ashrams, the new Radha Krishna temple also has an extraordinary history of its own, may be even a stranger one than most of the other temples.

When the Vrindaban hall was built several years ago, it had been planned that it should contain three temples, namely one for Radha-Krishna in the Centre, and Nitai-Gouranga and Shiva temples to its left and right. Raja Durga Singh of Solan wanted to be responsible for the erection of the Radha-Krishna temple, because his grandmother had (before he was born) died with

the unfulfilled wish to build such a temple. However, one difficulty after another arose and so, while the other two temples were completed and consecrated long ago, this temple did not materialize until 1966.

Many years ago, the present Rajmata Shiva Vijayaraje Scindia of Gwalior had vowed to build a temple for Krishna if she had a son. Soon after her only son was born, she had a temple built in Gwalior, but was unable to find a statue of Krishna to her liking. When she visited our Vrindaban Ashram, she was greatly impressed by the beauty of the *vigrahas* of Gouranga and Nitai and therefore decided to place an order for a sculpture of Krishna with the sculptor of those images, Sri Nitai Pal of Calcutta, who had also created the statue of Kali for our Ranchi temple. However, when the statue arrived she was disappointed. She told Mataji that something had gone wrong with the position of Krishna's feet. The statue was therefore, not installed in Gwalior. It was subsequently sent to our Vrindaban Ashram.

With one foot digging the sand

Several years ago Mataji had "seen" Sri Krishna standing just at the place where this temple is now. He was quietly watching the current of the Jamuna river. His feet were not crossed in the traditional manner, but he was digging the sand with one foot.

Our Ashram is situated at a distance of several miles from the Jamuna. Nevertheless, when the foundations for the new temple were dug, no solid earth could be found for a long time, there was only sand. It therefore had to be concluded that in ancient times the river must actually have been where Mataji had seen Krishna stand.

Sri Krishna — his last creation

Another very strange thing was, that Sri Nitai Pal, an ardent bhakta of Lord Gouranga, had fashioned Sri Krishna exactly as Mataji had seen Him, with one foot digging the sand, although the artist did not know anything about Mataji's vision. Soon after he had modelled Sri Krishna he passed away. It was his last creation.

Two years ago, when the present Rajmata Sahiba Vijayaraje came to the Vrindaban Ashram on the occasion of Durga Puja, she wished to present the statue of Krishna to Ma ceremonially. She

dressed up Mataji as Radha, exclaiming: "Mataji is my Radha. The Raja of Solan and I will share in the building of the Radha Krishna Temple."

Chhaliya has given me trouble

This proposal was accepted. In the course of the conversation she told Didi: "Chhaliya has been extremely naughty. He has given me no end of trouble. I am really fed up." Didi listened with amazement. "You also call him 'Chhaliya'?" she said. In May 1952, Mataji had spent a few days in Simla, in a cottage belonging to the Raja Sahib of Solan. One morning, while Mataji was still in bed, Didi heard her sing again and again in a most enchanting tune and voice: "*Ao mere Salona, Chhaliya re, Banwari re.*" Didi had never before heard the words "*Salona* and *Chhaliya*," which were soon recognized as belonging to "*Braja bhasha*," the language of the countryside round Vrindaban. Mataji afterwards explained that on that morning she had seen Radha picking flowers and heard her sing this song full of deep yearning for Krishna. Mataji declared that what she had perceived belonged to a different world altogether and could not adequately be expressed or described in human language. ("*chhaliya*" means mischievous, deceptive). This is how the Krishna sculptured by Nitai Pal has been named "*Chhaliya*."

Ma composed a song for Chhaliya

In Vrindaban, Mataji now composed a song that was sung for three days running before the consecration of the temple and again for 24 hours two days after the consecration. "*Krishna Chhaliya Anandala, Brajaramana Pranagopal*"! Both the above songs were, together with some of the history of the temple, engraved on the wall of the hall near the entrance to the temple.

The original plan had been that the Radha Krishna temple should be of about the same size as the other two temples. But due to the difficulty in touching solid earth when digging the foundations it became necessary to considerably enlarge the size of the building. Mataji then said: "Let the temple be strong, build with stone. I shall see to the extra cost." Various devotees shared in paying for the additional expense. Since the temple had turned out much larger, its tower had to be proportionate and

¹Free translation: "Kraffy Krishna, Blissful lad; Sweetheart of Braja, Gopala dear."

therefore about twice as high and broad as those of the two other temples.

Another pair of Radha-Krishna statues

As the Raja of Solan wanted to build the temple on behalf of his grandmother, it was decided that beside Krishna Chhaliya, another pair of statues of Radha Krishna according to her idea should be placed in the temple. And since it is the custom at Vrindaban to always have a Radha by the side of Krishna, another statue of Radha was also ordered to be placed next to Chhaliya. The Rajmata Sahiba of Gwalior, having said that Mataji was her Radha, the Radha of Chhaliya has been named "Ananda." The two pairs were therefore given the names: "Ananda Chhaliya" and "Radha Krishna"

Some twenty years ago, when Mataji was staying at Uriababa's Ashram at Vrindaban, two sisters named Sm. Rama Saxena and Sm. Kamala Mohanlal presented to Mataji two tiny models of Radha and Krishna. Nobody had up to then given any *vigrahas* to Mataji. She said to the images: "I cannot do puja and moreover I travel about incessantly. Do, please, make your own arrangements. I shall not remove you from Vrindaban." And She passed Radha Krishna on to Pandit Yogendranath. When, much later, the Nitai-Gouranga temple was completed, Mataji suggested that those tiny images should be given a place in that temple. But Pandit Yogendranath demurred, saying that his daughter had taken a liking to the *vigrahas* and was not willing to part with them. The matter was thus dropped. On the occasion of the recent consecration, Mataji had at first no *kheyala* to ask for the images. One night She was lying awake and She felt as if the images were reminding Her that now at last they had been able to make their final arrangement: they wanted to live in the new temple.

Four pairs of Radha-Krishna in the Temple

The next day, Pandit Yogendranath most gladly responded to Mataji's request and brought the images. It was thought fit to place next to them also the presentations of Radha Krishna that Durga Singh's grandmother had worshipped. There are thus four pairs of Radha Krishna on the spacious altar of the new temple, two very large ones weighing several maunds, and two very small ones.

Ceremonial bath of deities

On September 5th the ceremonial bath of the deities took place. An adequately large basin had specially been constructed in a corner of the hall and filled with Jamuna water, so that all the statues could be fully immersed. They were then dressed and decorated and made ready to be taken out on September 6th on palanquins in procession through the town, before being finally installed in the temple on September 7th. Sri Krishnananda Avadhutaji was eager to have the procession and volunteered to be responsible for all arrangements.

Grand procession through Vrindaban

Very likely Vrindaban had never before witnessed such a grand procession. There were two elephants in it, besides several picturesque tableaux on wheels, one of Kailash with Shiva and Parvati, another one of dancing Gopis and so forth. Mataji, Didima, Didi and several Mahatmas and a few others drove in cars. All the other devotees present walked and stood in the procession for over three hours, singing the *Mahamantra*, assisted by professional kirtan parties. Fortunately it had rained a little the day before and the sky was overcast with clouds.

Final consecration behind closed doors

The next day at midday, the final consecration took place. Mataji, the officiating pandits and all the *Mahatmas* were present in the temple which was closed during the '*Prana pratishtha*.' The assembled devotees were asked to sit in the hall in front of the temple in silent meditation. The entire hall was packed. The temple door faces the main entrance of the hall, which again is in a straight line with the main gate of the Ashram compound. Consequently, in the evening, after the electric lights are lit, one can have darshan even from the road, although it is perhaps 200 yards away.

Ma two nights busy with preparations

In the night of September 7th, Janmastami (Sri Krishna's birthday) was celebrated by a solemn midnight puja in the new temple. Mataji stayed awake the whole of that night, although She had also been moving about during the whole of the preceding night, seeing in person that all the preparations for the

consecration were perfect and making sure that everyone concerned was ready in time for the ceremonies that commenced at 3 a.m.

On September 8th our Kirtan party from Delhi performed *Nama Yajna* of *Mahamantra* from sunrise to sunset. On the 9th morning Mataji sat on Her seat under the neem trees between Her house and the temples (She had named this place "Sri Kunja") and started kirtan of "*Krishna Chhaliya Anandala*" etc. which was continued for 24 hours by women devotees inside the main building.

Ma took Her abode near Chhaliya

On three sides of the new temple there is a broad corridor. From Janmastami onwards Mataji practically took up Her abode in that corridor. Periodically She did of course go to Her house, but most of Her days and nights She spent by the side of Chhaliya Temple. During the seventh night after the opening of the temple, at about 2 a.m., She watched the images turning. "Oh", She said, there are four of you and so you are performing *rasa*. There certainly is plenty of space for it in this temple." Early morning She walked round the temple singing "*Hari bol*." In those days one could have Mataji's darshan at 5 a.m. during *Usha* kirtan, which was quite unusual.

By the 12th of September the majority of the devotees had dispersed to their respective homes and it was hoped that Mataji would be able to go away for a few days' rest and quiet. But this was not to be. On September 15th a *Bhagavata Saptah* started, arranged by the family of the Raja of Achroll. It was immediately followed by another *Bhagavata Saptah*, for the good of the soul of Sm. Maharattan, one of Mataji's old and well known devotees who passed away about two years ago. One of her daughters had been a brahmacharini of our Ashram for the last 20 years. She was fortunate to be able to persuade Sri Swami Vishnu Ashramji of Suktal to do the Hindi exposition of the *Srimad Bhagavata*. The profundity and clarity of his interesting talks were tremendously appreciated by the audience who listened enthralled every day for five hours.

Ma present throughout Bhagavata

The Sanskrit original was recited by a pandit in the early mornings, while Sri Vishnu Ashramji talked daily for two hours

before midday and for three hours in the afternoon. Mataji was present throughout. This was quite unheard of in those years. Moreover, on some days when a *Mahatma* or *Goswami* came to see Her in the evening, She would converse with Her guest for another hour or two in the hall, relating about Chhaliya and the history of his temple or listening to music. Thus, during that special *Bhagavata Saptah* we had Her darshan almost as much as during the yearly *Samyam Vrata*. On September 29th the customary *havan* that concludes every *Saptah* was performed under the neem trees and a feast given to sadhus and brahmins. Being fullmoon night, a devotee also arranged for *Satya Narayan Puja* in the evening. At night only we got the news, most unexpectedly, that Mataji was leaving for Dehradun the next day for a short rest. Didima and very few others were allowed to accompany Her.

Kishenpur, Hoshiarpur, Ahmedabad

On October 1st Mataji arrived in Kishenpur remaining there until the 4th evening, when equally unexpectedly She entrained for Hoshiarpur, taking with Her only three persons. Spending two days and one night at Sri Haribabaji's Ashram there, She reached our New Delhi Ashram on the 7th morning and left on the 8th afternoon for Ahmedabad. Didima and others joined Her in Delhi, while some of Her companions who had remained in Vrindaban, boarded Her train at Mathura. At Ahmedabad She remained only for four days, reaching Bombay on the 14th morning where Durga Puja was celebrated from 19th to 23rd October.

FIFTEEN

(October 1966 — October 1967)

On October 14th morning Mataji arrived in Bombay from Ahmedabad. As usual She stayed in Her 'pagoda' in Vile Parle, in the compound of Sri B. K. Shah's residence. From October 19th to 23rd Durga Puja was celebrated in a pandal in that same compound. Excellent, very efficient arrangements had been made for the function which proceeded with great solemnity and harmony. The traditional statue of the goddess Durga stepping on the demon Mahishasura, with the goddesses Lakshmi and Saraswati standing to her right and left had been beautifully sculptured by a Bombay artist and were very impressive and lifelike. Together with Durga a *vigraha* of Ganesha, 350 years old, was consecrated and kept for permanent use. (A statue of a similar kind has been installed in the Chheliya temple at Vrindaban last September.)

From *Mahalaya* until *Navami*, during the so-called '*Navaratri*' or 9 nights of the Durga festival, the Ramayana was recited for 6 hours daily. Since Sri Ramachandra is supposed to have performed Durga Puja as a thanks-giving for his victory over Ravana and the demons of Lanka, *Navaratri* is considered a specially auspicious time for the reading of the Ramayana. Every evening singers and musicians of Bombay entertained the audience with exquisite religious music. On *Navami* night the well known singer Shrimati Lakshmi Shanker sang. Garba dances were performed almost every night by the lady devotees.

Mataji was in person seeing to every detail of the ceremonies and at the same time was making Herself available to the very large crowds that flocked for Her darshan from every corner of Bombay. Twice Swami Maheshwarananda, Mahamandaleshwara of Sanyasa Ashram, Vile Parle and Swami Akhandanandaji of Vrindaban visited the Puja. Sri Maheshwaranandaji gave a brilliant discourse on the significance of Devi, who is worshipped by Durga Puja. On *Vijaya Dasami* day, October 24th, the image was immersed in the sea at Juhu.

On October 25th Mataji left for Poona, where Lakshmi Puja was celebrated on the 28th night in a pandal in the grounds of our Ashram. Mataji seemed to have disappeared that evening. She was neither to be found in the Ashram, nor in the pandal or garden,

nor had She gone out. People who came for the Puja were perplexed and disappointed not to be able to have her darshan. At last She was discovered lying flat on a wooden couch behind the statue of the goddess Lakshmi who was being worshipped by one of our brahmacharis. When the puja was over, Mataji emerged from Her place of hiding, saying laughingly that She had the *kheyala* to remain close to Devi that night. Sri Dilip Kumar Roy and his party visited the puja and the next day gave a music recital in our Ashram. That day the foundation stone for a new-building for Mataji was also laid in the Ashram grounds in Mataji's presence. The large garden of the comparatively new Ashram has been well developed and is abounding in colourful flowers and flowering shrubs.

On October 30th Mataji returned to Bombay, leaving for Bhopal on November 2nd night, following the invitation of Sir and Lady Datar Singh, who built a small Ashram for Mataji on their land, which is a solitary spot a few miles off Bhopal. It had been inaugurated in March, 1965 by Mataji's staying there. By a strange coincidence the same German devotee who had been present on that occasion, happened to be in India for a short visit last November and again had the good luck of accompanying Mataji to that delightful place away from the crowd, where She spent two quiet and pleasant days. She actually had planned to leave already on November 4th, but fate was gracious to Her hosts who desired to keep Her for longer: the train was late by 12 hours and Mataji was thus persuaded to remain for another 24 hours. Leaving on the 5th morning, She alighted in Vrindaban the same evening.

Mataji had agreed to spend *Divali* in Delhi. She therefore reached there by car on the 10th and was present for Kali Puja, returning to Vrindaban already on the 12th. On Her way to the New Delhi Ashram, She gave darshan to Sri J.K. Birla who was seriously ill. One can easily imagine what a hectic time She had during Her short sojourn in the capital. Among prominent persons who came to see Mataji were the ex-Home Minister Sri Nanda, Health Minister Dr. Sushila Nair, and Law Minister Sri G.S. Pathak. Pandit Lakshmi Narayan Chatterji gave two talks on the *Bhagavad Gita* and on *Tantric Sadhana*.

On November 13th the *Annakut* festival was celebrated in the new Chheliya Temple in our Vrindaban Ashram by the preparation

of 'Govardhan Annakut' and feeding of the poor. Chheliya's *Annakut Prasada* was sent to all Goswamis and Sadhus of Vrindaban and to all Ashrams known to us. Mataji Herself was eager that this special *prasada* should be distributed to one and all and busied Herself supervising its preparation as well as distribution, even more than She usually does.

From November 20th to 26th the *Samyam Mahavrata* took place. Vratis started arriving in large batches several days earlier from Calcutta, Bombay, Varanasi, Lucknow, Dehradun and other places. The attendance was more than double that of last year's function at Hazaribagh. Being the 17th *Samyam Saptah*, it is but natural that arrangements and proceedings should by now have become all but perfect in every respect. Mataji took special interest in this yearly week of concentrated and concerted *sadhana* and was well nigh untiring. No detail escaped Her attention. Not only was She present in the hall nearly throughout the long hours of the daily programme but She could be seen here, there and everywhere even early morning, late at night and during the short intervals between the programme. Everyone of the *Mahatmas* who usually grace these functions with their presence and help to make them a success, came either for the whole week or at least for part of the time and enlightened the vratis with their interesting talks. Among the speakers were Mahamandaleshwara Swami Maheshwarananda of Bombay, Swami Akhandananda of Vrindaban, Swami Vishnu Ashram of Sukhtal, Swami Chidananda, Head of the Divine Life Society Rishikesh, Swami Chetan Giri, Head of Kailasashram Hardwar, Swami Sharanananda of Manav Seva Sangh, Swami Krishnananda Avadhuti, Swami Krishnananda of Bombay, Acharya Sri Chakrapaniji of Vrindaban, Sri Yogesh Brahmachari of Calcutta, Sri Bhaktamalji and Goswami Narsingh Vallabh of Vrindaban. Sri Haribabaji Maharaj came several times but only on the last evening he performed his kirtan followed by his talk on the life of a bhakta. The discourses ranged over a variety of subjects, elucidating Vedanta as well as Vaishnava teachings. Two points that were stressed specially : 1. the importance of regarding the Guru as God and of having implicit faith in Him and complete surrender; 2. the fleeting nature of worldly happiness, which even if it be found cannot possibly last and is always succeeded by sorrow and disappointment. Swami Maheshwaranandaji narrated

a striking parable which we have heard him tell before and which we should like to repeat here :

"Once upon a time there lived a king who was greatly concerned about the welfare of his subjects. He, therefore, used to go out disguised at night to see how they were faring. During one of these excursions he was bitten by a dog. Since the dog was likely to bite others as well, the king was anxious to prevent this without however killing the animal. His Prime Minister suggested that the dog should be locked into a room with mirrors on all four walls and be provided with plenty of food and a comfortable bed. This was carried out. The dog, highly pleased at the sight of so much good food, at once wanted to start devouring it, when he found his reflections in the mirrors doing exactly as he did. "No", he barked furiously, "all this is for me alone, not for other dogs", and he began to attack the mirrors. All round he saw his own reflections fighting. He got more and more engaged and never had the chance even to taste of the delicacies that had been provided for him, but went on struggling with his pictures in the mirrors. When finally the door was opened he was found dead. Later a *Mahatama's* dog was put into the same room. Having been trained and understanding that what he saw in the mirrors was nothing but himself reflected, he ate heartily and rested and enjoyed himself. When the door was opened he was found happy and at peace. The king therefore set him free. When man realizes that there are no others, that all are but reflections of the One, who is the true Self of everyone, he is liberated."

The last half hour of the programme, which is the culmination and highlight of every day of the *Samyam Vrata* belonged to Mataji. On some evenings She had lively and amusing discussions with the vratis and once or twice She sang.

The 17th *Samyam Vrata* was held at the invitation of H. H. Maharaja and Maharani Saheba of Bhavnagar. A considerable number of Rajas and Ranis from various states were among the vratis. There were also six Europeans hailing from Canada, England, France, Germany, Sweden and Roumania, who sat bravely meditating during the long hours of Hindi lectures which they could not follow. They were rewarded for their perseverance by four beautiful talks in English delivered by Swami Chidanandaji who was present for four days.

On November 20th, H. M. the Queen Mother of Greece with

her daughter Princess Irene came to meet Mataji. They were shown round the temples and then remained closetted with Mataji in Her room for 75 minutes. Both the Queen and the Princess seemed to be genuinely interested in Hindu philosophy and methods of meditations. They were obviously delighted to be able to talk to Mataji and to listen to Her words.

The next day a party of about a dozen Swiss tourists turned up during the midday interval and had Mataji's darshan. Their guide, a Swiss *sadhaka*, who had lived in India, for some years, has been coming to Mataji off and on. A few days later the wife of the Ambassador of Argentine arrived from Delhi for Mataji's darshan.

As usual the *Samyam* week ended with a solemn midnight meditation by candle light. Like last year the *Narayana Shila* was brought into the hall for this occasion. Next morning the inevitable *Havana* (fire offering) in the open air and then Mataji distributing *prasada* with Her own hands for the vratis to break their fast.

The *Samyam Mahavrata* was immediately followed by *Katyayani Puja* performed by Sri Narendra Nath Brahmachari of Deoghar who is *Gurubhai* of Sri Gopal Thakur of blessed memory. He has a special, original way of doing puja collectively which is very impressive. Already three days earlier he and a party of more than seventy of his disciples had arrived from Deoghar and Calcutta. Men and women sat in rows in front of the image and did the puja together. The celebrations continued for three days, somewhat similar to Durga Puja. "Katyayani" is a name of Durga. The Rishi Katyayan used to worship Durga by herself (that is to say without the goddesses Lakshmi and Saraswati and without Mahisasura) and the name "Katyayani" means the goddess worshipped by Rishi Katyayan. The legend has it that the Gopis, yearning for Krishna who had left Vrindaban, performed Katyayani Puja on the bank of the Jamuna in the month of Agrahayan and thereby obtained Krishna. The month of Agrahayan began just after *Samyam Saptah*. The vratis had been asked to remain as far as possible and witness this special puja. Throughout the *Samyam* week we had been watching the artist from Calcutta modelling the *vigraha* of Katyayani which was extremely beautiful. After the completion of the puja, the image was immersed in the Jamuna with due ceremony on November 29th.

In early December the great majority of the visitors dispersed

to their respective homes and Ashrams and a comparatively quiet time followed.

From December 13th to 20th, Sri Akhandananda Swamiji had arranged for a *Bhagavata Saptah* in his own Ashram, for which hundreds of people from Bombay gathered and stayed all over Vrindaban. The famous speaker Dongre of Bombay explained the *Srimad Bhagavata* in Gujarati. Swami Akhandanandaji delivered a daily talk in Hindi on the meaning of '*Gopigita*', a passage from the *Bhagavata*. Mataji and a number of Her devotees used to go to his Ashram daily to attend his talks.

On December 17th, Swami Krishnananda Avadhuti had arranged for a music conference in our Ashram. The veranda of the hall served as a dais and the audience sat in the square outside of the building under a canvas roof. December 17th is the anniversary of the day on which Thakur Sri Haridas, the Guru of the famous musician Tansen, who lived about 400 hundred years ago, had darshan of Sri Behariji while singing. This day is therefore called Behariji's birthday. The Minister of Broadcasting, Govt. of India and the Director of the All India Radio came from Delhi to open the conference. Mataji was present for part of the function which terminated late at night.

On December 19th, Mataji and Her entire (by this time small) party, including three Europeans motored to Agra at the invitation of Mr. & Mrs. K. P. Bhargava, proprietors of M/s. G. G. Industries. A new cottage had been specially built for Mataji's use. Mataji remained there for two nights. She was shown round the factories and Her companions were also taken to Dayal Bagh, the Taj Mahal and other sights of Agra. On the 21st Mataji with only a handful of people entrained for Varanasi, while Didima, Didi and their attendants returned to Vrindaban. Several of the Ashramites left for other Ashrams.

Mataji had not been to Varanasi for a long time and on this occasion also She stayed there only for five days, namely from 22nd to 27th Dec. The girls of the *Kanyapith* (the Ashram school) were just celebrating the yearly *Gita Jayanti*. How great was their joy to have Mataji present in their midst on the 3rd and last day of their well-managed function. Several professors of the B. H. U. delivered discourses on the *Bhagavad Gita* and Mataji was extremely generous in giving darshan that day and also on the few days that followed.

From Varanasi Mataji proceeded to Allahabad, where She spent three nights at the Ashram of the late Sri Gopal Thakur. Her sojourn in Allahabad was as delightful as it was short. Mataji was in an excellent, expansive and inspiring mood and the devotees of Allahabad felt themselves singularly blessed.

On December 30th, Mataji entrained for Vrindaban, reaching there the next morning. Only a few people are now in the Ashram and Mataji could have a certain amount of rest. On January 6th She visited Delhi for a day only.

Mataji was expected to go to Modinagar for a day on the 24th of January and from there to Sukhtal (near Muzaffarnagar) for the consecration of a temple of Goddess Durga.

We are glad to announce that Mataji's next birthday will be celebrated at the cordial invitation of the Jaipurias at Swadeshi House, Kanpur in the month of May.

Vrindaban as Centre of Ma's Activities

This winter, Vrindaban had been as it were Mataji's headquarters. Having reached there on November 5th from Bhopal, She had remained until March 8th, with several short interruptions such as *Divali* in New Delhi (Nov. 10th-12th), a visit to Agra (Dec. 19-21), Her stay in Varanasi (Dec. 22-27) and Allahabad (Dec. 28-30) and a few hours in Delhi on Jan. 6.

Mataji had left Vrindaban again for a week on January 24. She first went to Modinagar for one night, proceeding from there to Sukhtal on the 25th to be present at the consecration of a temple dedicated to *Shakamvari* (Durga) that took place on the 26th. While at Sukhtal She visited the Ashram of Swami Sri Vishnuashramji at his special request. Returning the same evening to Modinagar, She drove to Delhi the next morning. Instead of going to our New Delhi Ashram, She graced the house of Sri J.N.Dutt with Her presence, resting for a few hours in a room reserved for Her use. From Delhi She took the night train to Lucknow on January 27. A tremendous crowd came to see Her off at Delhi station. Sri Gurupriya Devi with a few others had arrived in Lucknow from Varanasi the previous night and met Mataji at the residence of Sri Rameshwar Sahai where Mataji and the whole party had their midday meal. Then everyone left for Naimisharanya, reaching there the same evening.

Foundation stone for Purana Mandir

This time, Mataji had come to be present at the laying of the foundation-stone of the Purana Mandir. Sri Prayag Narayan of Sitapur had made excellent arrangements for the stay of Mataji and Her party. They were housed in five cottages directly on the banks of the Gomati river, where Mataji had also stayed in 1960 for a few days after the functions were over. Mataji remained for three nights. She was in joyful mood in those sacred, peaceful and charming surroundings of great natural beauty. A number of officials and devotees came from neighboring towns for Mataji's darshan or to talk to Her. Mataji had brought only a handful of companions with Her. Sri Gurupriya Devi and those who had come from Varanasi returned there again when Mataji left for Vrindaban, where She alighted in the morning of January 31.

Saraswati Puja at Delhi

A few quiet days followed. Then Mataji responded to the clamouring of the Delhi *bhaktas* to be in their midst during the celebration of the Saraswati Puja on February 14. She spent five very busy days in Delhi, almost constantly besieged by throngs of people. Pandit Sundarlal, an old devotee of Sri Haribabaji, who had been coming to Mataji for many years, had requested Her to take him to Delhi, where he wanted to join Sri Haribabaji and go to Bandh. He thus accompanied Mataji in Her car. This turned out to be his last journey, for the aged Pandit fell ill and left his body in Bandh.

And back to Vrindaban

On returning to Vrindaban, Mataji had a comparatively quiet time, although visitors kept on pouring in. Among them were quite a few from various foreign countries, as for instance the Ambassador of Czechoslovakia. One day some camera men of the British Television came to film Mataji. She was very gracious and sang "Krishna Chheliya" for them. Mr. and Mrs. Desjardins with their two children stayed for 3 days. Their little son, not yet three years old shouted joyfully whenever he was taken to Mataji who gave much attention to him and his sister. The little boy had been 4 months old when he first had Mataji's darshan. Even then he had seemed to recognize Her. A painter from Finland who used to come to Mataji almost every year arrived with a young man from

Switzerland. Melita Maschmann, the German novelist was already with Mataji in Bombay during Puja and accompanied Her to Vrindaban. Her last book (in German of course) has just appeared. It is about Mataji and contains a dedication to Her in Bengali. The authoress presented the first copy to Mataji in Dehradun in the beginning of April. An American young lady had stayed with Mataji from the middle of January for a long time.

On March 2, Swami Chidananda, the Head of the Divine Life Society, Rishikesh, arrived for a short visit. He gave a talk and also sang kirtan.

Holi and Shivaratri at Bandh

For the last several years Mataji had made it a point to be with Sri Haribabaji on his birthday, which fell on *Holi* and is also the birthday of Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu. This time, Sri Haribabaji requested Mataji to spend not only *Holi* but also *Shivaratri* with him at Bandh. It was also his 82nd birthday. Mataji responded to his call. On March 7, Mataji's party travelled there by bus from Vrindaban and Mataji with three or four companions followed by car on the eighth morning.

Story of Haridham Bandh

Sri Haridham Bandh is a unique place, situated in the interior of the U.P., at a distance of 12 miles from Anupsahr, the nearest Railway Station. The road is bad for the last 4-5 miles negotiable only by bullock-carts and, with difficulty, by jeeps. Until nearly 40 years ago the villages of that area were inundated by the over-flowing Ganga every rainy season. The State Government built a dam, which, however, proved inadequate to stem the impetuous floods and finally broke down. So the plight of the villages continued. Sri Haribabaji used to wander about in that area, doing *tapasya*.

Moved by their misery, he organized the inhabitants of a number of villages and together with them erected a strong dam made of sand and earth with the labour of their own hands and out of their own resources. He taught them to build in the name of the Lord and to sing "*Hari Nama*" all the time while working. The constant repetition of *Hari Nama* became a special feature of the place. Someone remarked this time: "In Bandh the very earth is singing kirtan." It is believed that the power of this uninter-

rupted kirtan has made strong the dam which stretches for miles and has ever since it was built withstood the yearly onslaught of the floods.

40 villages deeply devoted to Haribabaji

The population of about 40 neighbouring villages are deeply devoted to Sri Haribabaji, in fact they regard him as an incarnation of the Lord Himself and implicitly obey his bidding, putting themselves completely at his disposal. Bandh has many houses, a satsang hall, and a temple with *vigrahas* of Radha Krishna and Nitai Gouranga. There are several tube-wells, electricity and proper sanitation. The whole place is kept spotlessly clean and the spirit of service of the villagers is unequalled. Having been in Bandh before, nearly 20 years ago, Mataji found the place greatly developed and improved. She was always happiest in unsophisticated rural surrounding. She simply loved Bandh.

Ma simply loved Bandh

The few people who had come with Mataji deemed themselves singularly fortunate to see Mataji in this delightful, carefree mood, perfectly at ease. They felt that Mataji would have liked to remain in Bandh forever. Being such an inaccessible place even for cars, there were no visitors at all. The villagers had been asked not to disturb Mataji in Her house and to come for darshan at satsang time. So, for once the door of Mataji's room could be kept open without anyone intruding.

Unforgettable Shivaratri

Even for Shivaratri, which fell on March 9, only seven visitors arrived from outside. Twenty people in all celebrated that all-night puja in the room next to Mataji's. The door was kept open and She was thus present throughout. Between 2 and 3 a.m. when most people were about to doze off, notwithstanding the kirtan that was being sung in the intervals between the pujas, Mataji started singing loudly and with great fervor, clapping Her hands all the while. She continued for about 10-15 minutes. Instantly everyone was fully awake and alert, filled with new inspiration. The attendance was a record in smallness of members, but the night will remain unforgettable to all who were present.

Mataji's party at Bandh included a young artist from Los Angeles. We quote from her letter: "...Every day at about 10.30 a.m. we accompany Ma to the *Rasalila*, which by the way is fabulous. It really is superb! Inspiring. At 4.30 p.m. we again are with Mataji in a huge tent and sit on the stage with Her and Sri Haribabaji who reads and discusses the scriptures. At 6.30 p.m. we all take a walk with Mataji on the Bandh (dam). It is a most peaceful moment. At 7.30 we have kirtan and at about 8.30 Mataji goes again to the tent for Haribaba's kirtan and talk. One evening Mataji talked for half an hour with the microphone. I just happened to have brought my tape recorder and got a perfect recording There is much kirtan going on here all the time — and so unique. Whenever Haribabaji goes anywhere, a small village band accompanies him with blaring trumpets playing 'Hari bol' or the *Mahamantra*. Mataji and Haribabaji often cross paths on their evening walks on the bandh. They speak but little, only a gentle *pranama* and walk on. At 9 p.m. they both go into the Mandir and Ma every night touches all the statues with Her hands and puts Her head on their feet....."

Very special Sri Gouranga Lila

The *Rasalila* was actually the *Lila* of Sri Gouranga, which had been written by Swami Premanand of Manipur. He took 14 years to get it ready, scanning all the literature on the subject and then trained the actors also. It truly was very special. The audience forgot that a drama was being enacted and followed with breathless attention. Even Mahatmas were moved to tears. It seemed real, not a play. By chance a sculptor from Navadip (Sri Gouranga's place) arrived and made beautiful statues representing Sri Gouranga, Radha Krishna, and the *sakhis* etc. that served as a background during the performances.

Moradabad, Kalyanvan, Kankhal

Mataji was to go to Dehradun immediately after *Holi*, but at the last moment She accompanied Sri Haribabaji to Moradabad for 5 days, leaving Bandh on March 29. She and Haribabaji were put up in a new house that was opened thereby. Their host was Sri S.N. Khanna, Principal of the K. G. K. College. On April 4, Mataji alighted in Kishenpur for a short visit of 6 days only. Didima and Didi arrived from Varanasi on the 5th. At Moradabad and

Dehradun Mataji's health was not very satisfactory. In spite of this, Mataji went to Kalyanvan twice to visit Ram Mandir and to inspect in detail the new building behind the temple which is nearing completion. Large crowds came daily for Ma's darshan, among them also more than half a dozen foreigners. On the 7-8 April *Akhand Ramayana* was chanted in Rama Mandir and on the 9th the Hanuman Chalisa from sunrise to sunset.

Didima's Sannyasa Utsava

On April 10, Mataji motored to Kankhal where Didima's *Sannyasa Utsava* was celebrated on the 14th. At Kankhal Mataji's health improved visibly. She was up and doing during the whole day of the festival, supervising everything and came downstairs twice for several hours. In spite of the very limited space in our small Ashram called 'Santiniketan' everything proceeded beautifully. Many arrived from Dehradun and quite a number also from distant places. Didima is over 90 years old and it is our very good fortune that she seems to have grown younger instead of older during the last few years. Guru puja was performed to her as usual on that occasion. A number of sadhus and all present were entertained to a feast at midday, while kirtan was kept up all along. From 4.30 - 6.00 p.m. three Mahamandaleshwars of Hardwar gave lucid talks on renunciation. Early morning and in the evening *arati* was performed. The next day, being the Bengali New Year's day, the door of Mataji's room opened again and again to allow everybody to do *pranama*. Mataji was therefore late for the evening darshan held on the Ashram roof. A touching little incident took place. An old woman came and, to the amusement of the congregation, did *pranama* to an American lady who was sitting near Mataji's armchair. When, towards the end of darshan time the old woman went up to Mataji and caught hold of Mataji's feet, which is forbidden, she was severely rebuked, by those sitting nearby. To comfort her, Mataji patted her and said: "What a joyful face you have! How simple you are! This is why I could pick you out from the crowd."

There is only Janardana — none else

Mataji then asked her name and address, about her family, etc. Her name was Simla Devi and she stayed at Harki Pauri in Hardwar. Someone then told Mataji that Simla Devi had bowed

to the American lady. Mataji: "You are quite right. There is only *Janardana*, none else. To whomever, you bow, you bow only to Him. Even animals, trees, stones — all are He." It then came to light that Simla Devi had fasted all day, as she had decided to eat only after having Mataji's darshan. In the morning she had tried in vain for it, now at last she had succeeded.

Today you got a daughter

Mataji gave her a large *papita* and a bag full of oranges, saying: "You have not taken even a piece of fruit all day, now go home and eat all these." Then She added: "You say you have four sons but no daughter. Tell your husband that today, on New Year's day, you got a daughter. Come and see me again." Needless to say that Simla Devi was beaming with happiness and moved to tears by Mataji's affection.

3 days Satyanarayana Puja

From April 14 - 16 Satyanarayana Puja was performed in front of a picture of Lakshmi Narayana. On the 17th early morning Mataji had a 'vision' of a wonderful building not of this world. Several Mahatmas were staying in it. There was also a thatched hut for Mataji. In one of the rooms of the house a woman was singing kirtan with deep feeling, entirely absorbed in it. Mataji heard: "*Bhava bandhana mukti karana*," the next word was not clear and then "*dukha hari*." Mataji decided on "*sarva jaya shiva*" for the missing word since Kankhal is the place, of Shiva and later changed it to "*Lakshmi Narayana*" because of the puja that had been performed for three days.

And beautiful new kirtan

Mataji went on singing to Herself for about half an hour and then asked the Ashram girls to sing *akhanda* kirtan of the second version until 9 a.m. The kirtan has a very beautiful melody. The next morning they sang the first version with "*sarva jaya Shiva*" until 3 p.m. Mataji remarked: "Lakshmi Narayana has given this kirtan to this Ashram and it will remain here forever."

Among the girls who sang was also Moroni, Bholanath's niece,

¹"The world is bondage!
The cause of liberation
(is the) perfect victory of Shiva-Shakti!
Which ends all sorrow."

whom he had adopted when she was one year old and who was thus brought up by Mataji Herself. She had come with her two grown-up children, her husband having passed away about a year ago.

On April 19 everyone dispersed and Mataji shifted to 'Santi Nivas', a house on the road between Hardwar and Rishikesh belonging to Sri J.K. Birla. Mataji reached Dehradun on the full moon day, which was on April 24, just before the lunar eclipse set in.

Almost immediately after Her arrival kirtan was started in the Kishenpur Ashram hall and kept up for four hours with half an hours silent meditation in between. Mataji, however, went upstairs to rest in Her room. After the eclipse was over She sprinkled Ganges water on all present.

Ma kept mouna for 2 weeks

From April 26th to May 5th Mataji kept *mouna* all day long talking only in the evening after the completion of the *arati* in the temples. Yet it was not a stone-like silence, such as She observed on occasions for long periods in Her youth, when one could neither from Her facial expression nor even from Her eyes guess whether She recognized the people around Her. This time Mataji communicated with Her companions by signs and gestures whenever convenient. During darshan time nobody dared to utter a sound and so there was pin-drop silence. Many delighted in the deep hush that would envelop the gathering.

On April 28th Sri Gurupriya Devi with a number of ashramites left Dehradun for Lucknow, proceeding from there to Kanpur on May 2nd to commence Mataji's birthday celebrations.

On April 29th, Mataji paid a visit to the Raipur Ashram, returning to Kishenpur the next day. On May 1st, the newly built kitchen for Rama Mandir at Kalyanvan was inaugurated and *kitchuri* distributed on leaf plates to all present. Mataji remained in Kalyanvan from early morning until the afternoon, supervising every detail. *Rama Nama* was kept up for several hours in the open space in front of the temples.

Birthday celebration divided between Kishenpur, Varanasi and Kanpur

As far as we remember, Mataji Always used to be present for the whole of the period wherever Her birthday celebrations were

held. This year, however, She came to Kanpur only on May 12th. The devotees of Dehradun, highly pleased at their good fortune of having Mataji in their midst on Her birthday, May 3rd, arranged for an all-night kirtan and for a solemn puja in the Matri Mandir in the beginning of the kirtan. In the small hours She came to the hall to see to the preparation for the *Akhanda Ramayana* that was started on May 4th continuing until 1 p.m. on May 5th. On May 4th feast was given to all. On the 5th evening, Mataji, Didima and a few companions entrained for Varanasi. There also Mataji's birthday was celebrated by the girls of the Kanyapith and others. On the 11th night Mataji proceeded to Kanpur with a large party.

You have made Simla¹ here

In Kanpur the Jaipuria family had made very elaborate and excellent arrangements for the birthday celebrations that were held in the extensive compound of their property called "Swadeshi House." In the midst of a lawn a very charming thatched hut had been erected for Mataji's use, with a lotus pond and a picturesque little bridge just behind it, which reminded one of a Japanese painting. The cottage was air-conditioned and Mataji jokingly remarked, "You have made Simla here." But She hardly used the air-conditioning. In front of the hut there was a place under canvas for Mataji to meet small groups.

12 day's discourse on Ramayana

A very spacious, beautiful pandal which served as a Satsang hall had been put up at a short distance. It was equipped with coolers, fans, loudspeakers, etc. and proved most comfortable in spite of the broiling heat of May. There was another huge lawn where satsang could be held in the open and attended by countless people. Pandit Ram Kinkar gave very lucid and interesting discourses on the Ramayana there for several hours every evening from May 3rd to 15th. Mataji's party and some of the visiting Mahatmas were accommodated in buildings within the compound, while several hundred guests stayed in a Boys' college half a mile away. In spite of the large crowd and the excessive heat, everyone was comfortable, fit and in excellent spirits.

¹Simla is a hillstation founded by the British which has a cool climate.

Mataji's health was not very satisfactory. In spite of this She was unbelievably active and not only attended the satsang for long hours every day, but also gave darshans privately and in small groups to innumerable people.

Hail storm destroyed Pandal

On May 12th, the day Mataji reached Kanpur, the well-known saint Sri Sitaramdas Omkarnath came to see Her with some disciples. He left for Vrindaban the same evening. In the afternoon of May 13th, Kanpur experienced one of the heaviest hail storms within living memory. Some of the hail stones were the size of small oranges. The pandal had to be abandoned and partly dismantled, but in no time, another one was temporarily erected on a different lawn and the programme continued.

No rain fell on her

A lady from Allahabad who during the raging storm was sitting in a corner of the pandal doing *Japa*, refused to budge from her place and persevered in her practice undaunted. Believe it or not, no rain fell on her and the spot on which she sat remained dry.

On May 15th, Sri Haribabaji Maharaj arrived and with him the *Rasallila* party. From May 16th Sri Gouranga *Lila* was performed every day from 9 to 11 a.m. and Sri Krishna *Lila* from 9 to 11 p.m. During those performances all available space was tightly packed and at night the tent had to be opened out and the crowd overflowed into the spacious lawns.

Almost all Ma's Mahatma Friends arrived

Almost all the Mahatmas, who do so much to make our yearly *Samyam Vrata* a success, gradually arrived. Sri Chetan Giriji, Sri Maheshwaranandaji, Sri Vishnuashramji, Sri Krishnanand Avadhutaji and others daily delighted the audience by their inspiring talks, while Sri Krishnanandaji of Bombay put in short humorous interludes in his original way singing kirtan.

New light on the efficacy of the Name

Swami Akhandanandaji of Vrindaban delivered a series of most interesting talks on the efficacy of the Name.¹ An amazing lot

¹Name means here the repetition of a holy name, called "*Nama Japa*".

of new light was thrown on the subject of what he said. For a few days Mataji replied to questions at the end of the programme and several times she sang. *Arati* was performed early morning and late at night. In a special room in the garden *japa* was kept up without interruption from May 3rd to 27th.

On May 19th, *Kumari Puja* was performed and 108 little girls were entertained to feast. Mataji sat among them, played with them for awhile and distributed presents to them. On May 20th Mataji visited a famous Radha Krishna temple which contains scenes from the Ramayana of inlaid stone work, that are exquisite pieces of art. During the full-moon night, on May 23rd perpetual *kirtan* was sung by women devotees. Mataji was present until midnight and returned again towards morning. The *Tithi puja* that marks the climax and end of the functions was celebrated from 3-5 a.m. on May 27th. The evening before, satsang was shifted to another pandal, so that preparation for the puja could be made and the platform suitably altered and decorated.

The Attendance was enormous

The attendance was truly enormous and but for the efficiency and foresight of our hosts, chaos might well have resulted. However, everything proceeded in order and solemnity and everyone was given the chance to ascend the platform after the puja and do *pranama* at Mataji's feet.

Mataji remained lying without the slightest movement until 2 p.m. while the *Rasalila* was performed at the usual time in the other pandal. About a thousand people partook of the dinner served at midday under canvas. The satsang continued daily until Mataji and Sri Haribabaji left for Dehradun on May 29th. On May 27th, late at night, *Nama Yajna* had been started by our Delhi Kirtan party and others. Mataji had not left Her room the whole afternoon and evening, still under the impact of the state that She appeared to enter during the *Tithi puja*.

Ma's Bhava-kirtan at Midnight

At midnight, when most people had dispersed, some of the Kirtan singers went to entreat Mataji to come to the pandal. She responded and joined the kirtan in one of Her rare moods. After midnight the women continued the *Nama Yajna* up to sunrise and then the men took over until sunset. The celebrations at Kanpur will remain unforgettable to all who took part.

With Haribabaji at Kalyanvan

When Mataji arrived in Dehradun on May 30th, She went straight to Kalyanvan where Sri Haribabaji and his party were put up in 3 houses. Mataji remained at Kalyanvan all that day, attending Sri Haribabaji's satsang at 4 p.m. and 7.30 p.m. In the first days Mataji used to go to Kalyanvan often two to three times daily for Haribabaji's satsang, but later She attended only the evening function that was held in the open air as long as weather permitted. Towards the end of June the monsoon broke with great vigour and the evening satsang had to be shifted to the Ashram hall. Sri Haribabaji, as usual, daily related a new story from the life of *bhaktas*. His stock of these often stimulating and inspiring stores seems inexhaustable.

Rather put your faith in God

Many devotees arrived by turns from all over North India to be with Mataji in Dehradun for varying periods. About the middle of June Swami Sadanandaji of Paramarth Niketan came to invite Mataji to Rishikesh, but She declined as She would not leave while Sri Haribabaji was at Dehradun. Sri Sitaramdas Omkarnathji came one evening for a short time. Mrs. Talyarkhan of Tiruvannamalai arrived for a couple of days with a relative who had in vain sought cure of disease in the U.S.A. Mataji enjoined on him and his wife to put their faith in God rather than in doctors, to renounce all personal desire and surrender their lives completely to God's Will, whatever it be. Within two days the gloom had disappeared from their faces.

Special visitors from India and Abroad

Amongst the visitors there were two or three from South India and a good number from various foreign countries. Occasionally questions would be asked by them and several times interesting conversations ensued that were greatly relished by everyone present. The Charge d' Affairs of the Embassy of Peru with his aunt came three times from Mussoorie, and one day remained for the evening satsang. The Desjardins family arrived by "Landrover" for a few days. Mataji never got tired of playing with their two children. Mr. Desjardins told us an interesting detail which we failed to report at the time.

The Tibetan Karmapa Lama came to Ma

In December 1965, while His Holiness, the Tibetan Lama Gyalwa Karmapa of Rumtek Monastery in Sikkim was in Delhi as the guest of the Indian Government, he paid a visit to Mataji at our Kalkaji Ashram together with the senior interpreter of His Holiness the Dalai Lama, and had a lengthy private interview with Mataji. Mataji, as She always called Himself his little daughter, to which His Holiness objected saying that She was the mother and he Her son. They cheerfully wrestled over this for a little while. The famous Lama invited Mataji to Sikkim for the opening of his new monastery.

On June 27th the Mahant of Radhavallabh Temple, Vrindaban, Sri Vraj Jivan Goswami arrived and remained until July 15th. He is a good speaker as well as a fine musician and both his talks and melodious singing were greatly enjoyed by the audience.

On July 2nd, Sri Kalyandevji of Sukhtal arrived with some others to invite Mataji to Hastinapur, a new refugee town, on behalf of Swami Vishnuashramji who was holding a *Bhagavat Saptah* there, ending on July 19th.

On July 5th the birthday of Sri Haribabaji's Guru was celebrated by kirtan and a feast. During the satsang Sri Haribabaji related many interesting details from the extraordinary life of his Guru. On July 9th, the day of the *Rathayatra* (car festival) at Jagannath Puri, kirtan of the *Mahamantra* was sung all day by Karanpur Kirtan party and the ashramites. Sri Swami Chidanandaji, the Head of the Divine Life Society, Rishikesh came to see Mataji and remained with us for several hours. Late that night, when only very few people were present, Mataji of Her own *kheyala* sang four kirtans.

Japa and Kirtan for Ma's health

Both at Kanpur and at Dehradun, Mataji was quite often running a high temperature. One day at the beginning of July Sri Haribabaji told the assembled people that he had made up his mind (*sankalpa*) that Mataji's health should again become perfect. He requested everyone to join him in this determination and to dedicate at least 15 minutes of every day to *japa*, *dhyana* and reading of scriptures, etc. for Mataji's recovery. From that day on, 15 minutes kirtan of Rama Raghava were added to the daily evening programme. On July 13th Ram morchha was performed for

the same purpose. On July 24th the 3rd anniversary of the consecration of Rama Mandir was celebrated at Kalyanvan. On July 16th there was again all day kirtan attended by a large number of devotees from Dehradun.

Mataji left Dehradun on July 18th, early morning after more than six weeks stay in our Ashram at Kishenpur. She first motored to Hastinapur and stayed there for one night reaching New Delhi Ashram the next afternoon. Although Mataji was there for a very short period, the Prime Minister came to meet Her.

Guru Purnima at Vrindaban

Mataji reached Vrindaban on July 20th by car from New Delhi, where She had spent one night. *Guru Purnima* was celebrated on the 21st. In the morning Didima's puja was performed by a brahmachari of the Ashram in front of the Chhaliya Mandir. Sri Krishnananda Avadhutji and Sri Chakrapaniji attended the function. As usual people came in large numbers to offer fruits and flowers and to perform Didima's and Ma's puja.

Ma sang the Dwadash Akshara Mantra

In the evening Mataji was present for the satsang in the hall and gave darshan for quite a while. A devotee had arranged for Satyanarayana Puja in the Nital-Gouranga temple. Mataji was in a gay mood and started singing the *Dwadash Akshara Mantra* out of Her own *kheyala*. Everyone was thrilled to hear Her sing it twelve times. Mataji also related the incident that made Her sing it for the first time when Haribabaji was ill. We are not allowed to sing this *mantra* in our Ashram except in Mataji's or Sri Haribabaji's presence. As soon as the Satyanarayana Puja was completed, Mataji took the plate with *batasha* (sugar-puffs) into Her hand and showered us with '*Hari loot*', chanting '*Hari bol*.' It was wonderful and inspiring.

A fairly quiet period

A fairly quiet period followed after *Guru Purnima*. Most of the visitors from outside had left. Mataji's health was not very satisfactory and hours of darshan were short and limited. Visitors such as Sri Haribabaji, Sri Chakrapaniji, Sri Avadhutaji and Sri Vraj Jivan Goswamiji often dropped in to see Ma. Occasionally Mataji would attend Sri Haribabaji's satsang at the Oriya Baba Ashram, where Haribabaji stayed.

From August 8th onwards *Rasalila* was performed daily in the Ashram hall. Mataji was present every evening. Crowds poured in to see the *Rasa* and the hall was usually packed tightly.

Ma would swing the Vighras on a Jhula

The *Jhulan* (swing festival) celebrations started on the 16th. An extremely beautiful swing had been erected in front of the Chhaliya temple. Puja was performed daily by one of the brahmacharis, while the brahmacharinis were chanting *stotras* (Sanskrit hymns). After the puja Mataji would swing the *vighras* of Krishna and Radha that were placed on the *jhula*. One evening eleven swings were erected all around the hall and on each one the members of the *Rasalila* party dressed up as Radhas and Krishnas would swing simultaneously.

A cheerful Raksha Bandhan

The 19th of August, *Jhulan Purnima* marked the end and culmination of the festival. That day the Swami of the Gouriya Math paid a visit to our Ashram. This is also the festival of Raksha Bandhan. After the puja was over, devotees were allowed to tie *rakhis* (bracelets) round Mataji's wrist and Mataji blessed everyone by tying *rakhis* round their wrists as well.

... and midnight meditation

Since this is the anniversary of the memorable night when Mataji gave Herself *diksha* in 1922, it is always celebrated by midnight meditation from 11.45 to 12.15, in Ma's presence, preceded and followed by kirtan or chanting of hymns until 12.30 or 1.00 a.m.

On the 20th *Maharasa* was performed in the open space in front of the hall. Ever since August 16th it had been raining heavily, but fortunately it cleared up on the 20th and bright sunshine broke through the clouds, so that the performance could take place in the open. Vast multitudes attended. The compound was entirely packed.

Puja during two nights

Then again a fairly quiet period followed, but as Janmastami (Sri Krishna's birthday) came nearer, devotees from Bombay, Ahmedabad, Calcutta, Delhi and other places started pouring in.

This Janmastami was the first anniversary of the consecration of the beautiful Chhaliya Mandir. Its special feature was that Puja was performed on two nights, on the 27th and 28th August respectively. Rajmata Vijay Raje Scindia of Gwalior and Raja Durga Singh of Solan who had been instrumental in having the Chhaliya Temple built, were to be present for both functions, but due to heavy floods on the road to Mathura Raja Durga Singh reached only in the afternoon of the 28th.

Janmastami puja at midnight

In the evening of the 27th, at about 8 p.m., a *Nama Yajna* was started by our Delhi Kirtan party who had arrived the same morning. After the *adhivasa* the kirtan continued for about an hour. It was stopped when the Janmastami Puja started which had to be performed round midnight. *Abhisheka* (bathing) was given to the *vighras* in the temple. During the ceremony the girls sang for some time and then the portion of the *Srimad Bhagavata* which describes Sri Krishna's birthday was read out by two Dandi Swamis of our Ashram. In the early hours of the morning the puja was followed by the distribution of *prasada*.

Delhi Kirtan party "created bhava"

The *Nama Yajna* was resumed at sunrise and continued throughout the day until after 5 p.m. Mataji took part in the kirtan on both days and even sang towards the end. She was very pleased with the beautiful and inspired kirtan of the Delhi party, remarking that they created *bhava* (an atmosphere of divine love and devotion). She suggested that other devotees also should gather friends and neighbours and conduct similar *Nama kirtanas*.

Ma rolled near the Tulsi plant

The Maharani of Gwalior took Mataji and Haribabaji to visit the temple built by her family. On Her return Mataji sat near the tulsi grove. She then rolled near the tulsi plant and explained that Didima had rolled Her in a similar way soon after She was born. Didima repeated this daily, invoking the blessing of the sacred tulsi on Mataji. When Mataji was big enough She used to go occasionally Herself and roll in front of the tulsi. That she did it because it was Sri Krishna's birthday.

Jamuna water poured into the tank

Another feature of the day was the distribution of *prasada* to all the workmen who had taken part in the construction of the large new water tank in the compound behind that of the main Ashram. It is to hold Jamuna water. It so happened that the first Jamuna water poured into the tank on August 27th, just before the first Janmastami puja commenced. Its water was used for the *abhisheka*. After the ceremony it was collected in buckets and distributed among the devotees.

In the morning of the 28th, there was again *abhisheka* in the temple. This time it was a long and elaborate ceremony, which was witnessed only by a few. The main temple door was occasionally opened to give darshan to the multitude.

Again midnight puja

The midnight puja was very much like the one of the previous night except that it was carried out on a more elaborate scale. After the Sanskrit hymns and the recitation from the *Srimad Bhagavata*, Sri Narayan Swami read out an account of the history that led to the construction of Chhaliya Mandir and also of the consecration ceremonies last year. After the completion of the puja in the early hours of the morning Mataji distributed garlands and *prasada* to all present. Some devotees had to leave immediately after.

On the 29th Nandotsava (the celebration that expresses the riotous joy of the cowherds over Sri Krishna's birth) was observed. The morning satsang was held in the open, on the platform under the neemtree in Mataji's presence. As every year on that day a few devotees dressed up as cowherds and milkmaids and performed a short comic play and dance amidst much laughter. Mataji joined in the fun and sang kirtan with great abandon for awhile. Large earthen vessels full of curds were placed before Her and Mataji threw curds into everybody's mouth. It was an amusing sight to see everyone spattered with *dahi* (curds).

Krishna Chhaliya Ananda Sarovar

In the evening Mataji visited Govinda Mandir. After returning She again sat down under the neemtrees and later went to the new water tank. Part of the *abhisheka* water was poured back into the tank with the recitation of *mantras* in a short ceremony. Just at

the close of it, a pandit arrived with a tray full of Behariji's *prasada* and Mataji Herself distributed it to everyone. Mataji had named the tank "Krishna Chhaliya Ananda Sarovar."

A Flower boat for Sri Krishna

A large number of visitors left after Janmastami but it cannot be said that a quiet time followed. On September 2nd Sri Haribabaji's devotees performed Ram morcha in our Ashram hall. On the 4th there was another exciting function. The Goswamiji of Radhavallabh Mandir had recently dreamt of Chhaliya sitting in a bower made up entirely of flowers and banana leaves. He expressed the desire to arrange for such a bower to be constructed in the Chhaliya temple itself. The flower bungalow was made in the shape of a boat. The whole day long workmen were busy putting it together. The Jamuna was in spate at the time and some people felt that the floods would subside after Chhaliya had his "*nauka vihara*" (trip on a boat). The flower boat was extremely beautiful, a real piece of art. The *vigrahas* of Chhaliya and Krishna were clad in the attire of boatmen and adorned with ornaments made of flowers. A number of Mahatmas came to have darshan, amongst them were Sri Haribabaji and Swami Sharananandaji.

On September 7th a *Bhagavad Saptah* started. Mataji occasionally attended the Sanskrit readings in the morning and the Hindi lectures in the evening. On one day of the *Saptah* which happened to be the *Bhagavata Jayanti* (birthday anniversary of the *Bhagavata*) we were fortunate to have Sri Akhandanandaji speak to us.

After the *Saptah* there was a short spell of comparative quiet. But as Durga Puja was approaching guests began to arrive from great distances and Mataji would occasionally favor us with some words of advice or tell stories from the past.

On October 1st Mataji, at the request of devotees, began to sing the '*Dwadasa Akshara Mantra*' on condition that the singing of it would be continued for twenty-four hours. The kirtan ended on the 2nd afternoon when Mataji again sang for the last 10 minutes. It was followed by kirtan of '*Krishna Chhaliya Ananda Lal Braja Ramana Prana Gopal*' for a short time. On October 3rd kirtan was again kept up for 12 hours, 6 hours of '*Jai Shiva Sankara*' and 6 hours of '*Ma Durga*.....'

The *Navaratri* was performed from 4th to 13th October. The Puja was specially held this year in Vrindaban Ashram at the cordial invitation of Sri Suresh Mahindra of Bombay and his wife Raj Kumari Indira, daughter of H.H. Raja Saheb Jogendra Seri of Mandi State.

Navaratri in Vrindaban

The actual Durga Puja began on the 9th evening with the *prana pratistha* of the traditional image representing Durga, Lakshmi, Saraswati etc., which was placed in the hall in the square between the three temples. Until then a *ghata* (a pitcher full of Ganges water with a coconut on top, symbolizing the deity) was set up in the Shiva mandir and worshipped daily. During those 9 days the Durga Sapta Sati was also recited daily in the different places in the Ashram.

A great many devotees had gathered from all over North India and a few even from the South. A number of functions, not directly connected with the festival, took place as well.

Spellbound and moved to Tears

On October 5th, Mahaprabhu *Lila* was enacted in the hall by a new *rasa* party. It was a performance of a rare beauty and perfection. Mataji remained present throughout the play which took 4-5 hours. The audience was spellbound and moved to tears. A *Sannyasi*, Sri Swami Purushottamananda had composed the *Lila*. The subject matter was taken from a book called "*Swapna vilasa*", dealing with the advent of Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu. The Swami had taken great pains to train the actors. This was their first performance. Only after the *lila* had been hallowed by being staged in front of our Nitai-Gouranga-temple in Mataji's presence, it was shown to the general public everywhere.

On October 6th evening *akhanda* kirtan started and was kept up 24 hours. Mataji Herself joined and was walking round the Gauranga temple with the singers for some time on the 7th midday.

October 10th-13th were the main days of the Durga Puja. As usual Mataji made sure that every detail of the worship and the preparation of the food offered were carried out with utmost care and precision, and that the audience was fully occupied with kirtan, *japa*, meditation and so forth. Thus everyone was able to drive the maximum benefit from the celebrations. In the

afternoon, *Mahatmas* would deliver talks appropriate to the occasion. On Dassera day (October 13th) Mataji sang Herself for quite a while in the morning and again in the evening. Afterwards She distributed *prasada* to all present.

On October 18th night, Lakshmi Puja was observed. On October 19th, Mataji quite suddenly left for Varanasi where She remained for one week. During Her sojourn there the opening ceremony of a recently acquired additional building was held.

Prize distribution to Kanyapith Students

Another very enjoyable function took place in Mataji's presence. Dr. G.N. Shastri, Vice-Chancellor of the Varanasi Sanskrit University came in person to our Ashram to distribute prizes to the students of the Kanyapith (a girls-school run by Shree Shree Anandamayee Sangha). They had, one and all, passed their exams very creditably this year. By the merest chance, Dr. Gopinath Kaviraj happened to pay a visit to Mataji just then and the illustrious Sanskrit scholar was therefore present during the little informal function.

A number of years ago, when nobody was particularly keen for girls to learn Sanskrit, Mataji had had the *kheyala*, that the Kumaris should take up Sanskrit seriously. Ma's suggestion was followed and some of the girls have by now become Sastris, even Acharyas. In the meanwhile many women all over India have also become interested in the study of Sanskrit.

It is our painful duty to record with profound sorrow the sad demise during the current year of two distinguished children of Mataji, who always used to take active interest in the welfare of our Ashram.

Dr. Panna Lal, Bar-at-law, D.S.I., C.I.E., I.C.S., who retired as Adviser to the Governor, U.P., was a great scholar too and was immensely respected by all concerned in different parts of the country for the nobility and integrity of his character and various other qualities of his head and heart. He came in contact with Mataji nearly thirty years back and was a regular visitor to our Ashrams ever since then. Dr. Panna Lal was a devout Vaishnava also and he installed the exceedingly beautiful statues of Nitai-Gouranga in the Vrindaban Ashram temple. He always urged his numerous friends and relations to come in close contact with Mataji and have Her blessings. After protracted illness he passed away in New

Delhi on 27th May at a ripe old age after having lived the fulness of his illustrious life.

The cruel hands of death have snatched away from us another sincere and staunch devotee of Mataji, Sri Jatindra Nath Banerjee, a renowned advocate from Varanasi. He was known to Mataji from the thirties and rendered invaluable service to the Ashram in various capacities. For several years he was also a Vice-President of our organization, Shree Shree Anandamayee Sangha. After a very short illness he suddenly left this world on 4th October.

(October 1967 — October 1968)

Navaratri was observed in Vrindaban from October 4th to 13th. The actual Durga Puja began on the 9th evening with the *Prana pratistha* of the traditional image representing Durga, Lakshmi, Saraswati etc, which was placed in the hall in the square between the three temples. Until then, a *ghata* (a pitcher full of Ganges water with a coconut on top, symbolizing the deity) was set up in the Shiva Mandir and worshipped daily. During those 9 days the *Durga Sapta Sati* was also recited daily in three different places in the Ashram.

A great many devotees had gathered from all over North India and a few even from the South. A number of functions, not directly connected with the festival, took place as well.

On October 5th, *Mahaprabhu Lila* was enacted in the hall by a new *Rasa* party. It was a performance of a rare beauty and perfection. Mataji remained present throughout the play which took 4-5 hours. The audience sat spell bound and moved to tears. A *sannyasi*, Sri Swami Purushottamananda had composed the *Lila*. The subject matter was taken from a book called "*Swapna-vilasa*" dealing with the advent of Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu. The Swami had taken great pains to train the actors. This was the first performance. Only after the *Lila* had been hallowed by being staged in front of our Nitai-Gouranga temple in Mataji's presence it was shown to the general public everywhere.

On October 6th evening *akhanda kirtana* started and was kept up for 24 hours. Mataji Herself joined and walked round the Gouranga temple with the singers for some time on the 7th midday.

October 10th - 13th were the main days of the Durga Puja. As usual Mataji made sure that every detail of the worship and the preparation of the food offered were carried out with the utmost care and precision and that the audience was fully occupied with *kirtan*, *japa*, meditation and so forth. Thus everyone was able to derive the maximum benefit from the celebrations. In the afternoon, *Mahatmas* would deliver talks appropriate to the occasion. On *Dassera* day (Oct. 13th) Mataji sang Herself for quite a while in the morning and again in the evening. With Her own hands She distributed *prasada* to all present.

On October 18th night, Lakshmi Puja was observed. On October 19th, Mataji quite suddenly left for Varanasi where She remained for one week. During Her sojourn there the opening ceremony of a recently acquired additional building was held. Another very enjoyable function took place in Mataji's presence. Dr. Gouri Nath Sastri, Vice-Chancellor of the Varanasi Sanskrit University came in person to our Ashram to distribute prizes to the students of the *Kanyapith* who had, one and all, passed their exams very creditably this year. By the merest chance, Dr. Gopinath Kaviraj happened to pay a visit to Mataji just then and the illustrious Sanskrit scholar was therefore present during the little informal function.

A number of years ago, when nobody was particularly keen for girls to learn Sanskrit, Mataji had the *kheyala* that the *Kumaris* should take up Sanskrit seriously. Mataji's suggestion was followed and some of the girls have by now become *Sastris*, even *Acharyas*. In the meanwhile, many women all over India have also become interested in the study of Sanskrit.

On October 27th Mataji returned to Vrindaban in good time for *Divali*, when Kali Puja was celebrated in the night from 1st to 2nd November from 10 p.m. to 3-30 a.m. There were not too many people and the worship of the beautiful, life-like image of the goddess Kali was deeply felt and impressive. It was accompanied by music throughout. We had the rare pleasure of hearing the *bhajan* sung by Didima, who was still up and doing inspite of her 90 years of age.

When the puja was over at 3-30 a.m. Mataji sat down in the main hall and everyone collected round Her. She said: "To-day is *Divali*, so I shall tell you a story: Some puja was going on somewhere. Among the audience there was a woman with her little daughter, a child of three or four. The little girl was very restless and kept on disturbing her mother, who finally lost her patience and said angrily: "*Mar jao*"! The child went outside and when a little later the mother went to look for her, the child was not to be found anywhere. After a frantic search her clothes were discovered. Perhaps a wild animal had attacked and devoured her?

¹The literal meaning of the word is "die"! But it is often said meaning "leave me in peace!"

"During puja everyone should take great care never to say anything in anger or hate, for it may bear fruit. In fact, people should at all times be vigilant as to their words, remembering that "*svasti*, *svasti*" goes on constantly on a subtle plane. Whatever is pronounced by anyone while '*svasti*' is said, is bound to come true, while what is said in the intervals will be of no consequence. Therefore never say anything in anger, for your words may have very serious repercussions."

That afternoon someone did Lakshmi Puja in Rama Mandir. Mataji sat there dressed in a white silk sari with a broad red border. It was one of the even now, not rare occasions when Mataji looked amazingly young. One could have sworn She was not a day older than 40.

The next day, '*Annakut*', a sumptuous *bhoga* was offered in Chheliya Mandir and a feast given to all at about 3 p.m. Until then kirtan was kept up in front of the closed temple. Mataji gave darshan at intervals, but mostly She was inside, supervising arrangements in the kitchen and the temple.

On the 3rd morning the image of Kali was taken in procession to the new tank, named "*Krishna Chheliya Ananda Sarovar*" and immersed in it. The tank is 100 ft. long and 20 ft. deep.

From November 9th to 15th, the 19th *Samyam Mahavrata* was observed. Every *Samyam Vrata* is a spiritual experience. Many of the participants look forward to it from one year to the other and make it a point never to miss it. Those who have come for the first time and perhaps only for part of the week, express the desire to come again the following year for the whole period. Almost all the *Mahatmas* who grace this yearly function with their presence and enlighten the *vratis* with their brilliant and profound talks, came also on this occasion. Swami Akhandanandaji who resides in Vrindaban, very generously talked to us every day for an hour. Among those who had taken the trouble to come from outside were Mahamandaleshwara Swami Chaitanya Giri of Hardwar; Mahamandaleshwara Swami Maheshwarananda of Bombay; Swami Chidananda, the Head of the Divine Life Society, Rishikesh; Swami Vishnu Ashram of Sukhtal; Swami Sharanananda of the Manav Seva Sangh. Only Sri Haribabaji was unfortunately absent due to indifferent health. Swami Krishnananda Avadhutji gave the preliminary lecture on the 8th evening, besides his talks during the Saptah. Several Goswamis of Vrindaban delivered very fine

and spirited discourses. Not only the speeches were excellent and highly interesting but also the music. Chhabi Banerji, Brahmachari Brahmananda, Brahmacharini Pushpa, Srimati Malati of Rae Bareilly were among us and this was in itself a guarantee that this part of the programme would be exquisite. Over and above, we had a special treat on November 14th when Mrs. Taleyarkhan of Ramanashram brought the famous singer Sm. Subhalakshmi with her husband and daughter for Mataji's darshan. The great singer and her daughter sang *bhajans* for about 70 minutes at the end of the morning session. It was truly superb. Everyone forgot that their only meal within 24 hours was delayed by over an hour and would have gladly listened much longer. The kitchen staff also could be seen standing at the back, listening entranced. Mataji sat in the hall until 12-30 that morning. Our illustrious guests seemed to enjoy singing in that atmosphere and expressed the desire to come again and again for Mataji's darshan.

On November 12th, distinguished guests of a different order attended the morning meditation and satsang, namely Sri Gopal Swarup Pathak, the Governor of Mysore, and his wife. They arrived by car from Delhi at 7-30 a.m. and stayed over lunch.

It is impossible within this limited space to give even faint idea of the contents of the discourses, which have however all been preserved by tape recording. Swami Maheshwaranandaji specialized on the *Mahavakyas* and gave his final talk the day after the *Samyam Saptah* was completed. Swami, Vishnuashrama, who stayed only for two or three days, once said: "If you want to meet God, you must give up meeting others. You think your father, wife, son are yours and therefore you suffer. In actual fact only God alone is yours and you are His. But you are under the illusion that God is far away and that you have no connection with Him."

A significant story was told: "A rich man dreamt that he was poor. In his dream, everyone was going to a circus that had come to the town. So he also joined them. When he got there he was not allowed to enter as he could not even pay for cheapest ticket costing 8 as. He asked everyone who came along to pay for him, but none responded. Deeply pained, he woke up, to find himself a millionaire. "If all my riches are useless even in a dream, of what worth will they be in the next world?" he exclaimed. He abandoned his life of luxury and began to search for that which has real value."

During *Matri Satsang*, the last half hour of the evening session, Mataji sometimes replied to questions and sometimes related interesting incidents from Her life. The first three days, She gave part of Her time to Pd. Kapindraj, the well-known, witty expounder of the Ramayana, who kept everyone amused and relaxed after the many serious and thought-provoking discourses of the day. On the 11th night, he left for Delhi and promised to return on the 13th. But he did not come. On the 14th night at the end of the programme, he suddenly emerged out of the crowd, and although Mataji requested him to have his meal and rest as he had just arrived, he insisted on ascending the dais. He then related that when he and five other persons had left for Delhi by jeep at midnight on the 11th, he himself drove. As he was rather sleepy, the jeep got out of control and rushed into a ravine, about 50 ft. deep. However, as if by miracle, nobody was hurt and even the jeep remained intact, so that they could proceed to their destination. His daughter began to shriek with fear and then shouted, "Ma has come!" Kapindraj said: "Yes Ma is here." He could see Her distinctly standing in front of him, only She seemed much taller than usual.

Mataji: But how did you lift the jeep out of the abyss?

Kapindraj: You yourself lifted the wheels, I saw it clearly. You saved us, you did everything.

Mataji: There is only ONE. God saved you. Since you have faith in this little girl, He appeared to you in her shape to save you.

Kapindraj: My body was in Delhi for three days, but my mind has been here at your feet all along. I could not think of anything else.

Here is one of the incidents Mataji related to the vratas. When Mataji went to South India for the first time with Bholanath, Bhalji, Swami Akhandananda¹ and Didi, they had darshan of Kanya Kumari at Cape Comorin. At night the goddess was decorated with sandalpaste and in the morning plain. When some time later Mataji stayed at Raipur, one day, Kanya Kumari, looking as they had seen her in the morning, came and sat on Mataji's left knee. The goddess was doing *japa* and Mataji could perceive the *mantra*. Then Bholanath came and talked to Ma. In the course of the conversation, Mataji took a book into Her hands to look at the

¹ Didi's father.

pictures. She opened the book and instead of on a picture, Her glance fell on the very word which Kanya Kumari had been repeating. When Mataji went to Cape Comorin again with Sri Haribabaji and others in 1952, the *panda* of the temple explained to them that the goddess was doing *japa* to obtain Shiva and he disclosed the *mantra* to them. It was the one Mataji had observed her repeat at Raipur.

Another day Mataji talked again about Her trip to South India in 1952. One thing She said was that somewhere, where a statue of Krishna was, She saw Shiva and thus had the *kheyala* to instal a Shiva Linga in the then newly started Ashram at Vrindaban. It was first put into *Shiva Kutir*, the small house at the gate. Later, when the hall was built, it so happened that in the town of Sri Krishna the first temple erected in our Ashram was the *Shiva Mandir*. The *Linga* was shifted to it from *Shiva Kutir*. Mataji also related the story of Nital Gouranga temple. The Radha Krishna temple which had been planned first, materialized last.

Of the questions and answers during *Matri Satsang*, we shall mention here just two:

Question: If someone worships Krishna, he will finally come to realize Him. Suppose a man worships God in all humility and serves human beings, won't He realize Him?

Mataji: Yes, provided he sees *Janardana* in everyone and serves God in human beings. In this case his mind will be purified (*chitta suddhi*) as a result. But not if he serves human beings as such. Because in that case his ego will get the better of him. He will feel proud and elated about his good deeds and this will harm him.

Question: During the hour of silent meditation we all concentrate on our *Ista*. Whom or what does Mataji contemplate?

Mataji (smiling): Whatever anyone imagines her to contemplate; be it any *Ista* or person or object. There is only ONE.

Sri Maheshwarananda: If there is only ONE, who meditates and on what?

Mataji: Yes, where there is a meditator and an object of meditation, there one can speak of meditation. But this small child (Mataji) knows no *japa*, no *achman*, no meditation, nothing at all. Therefore, whatever her fathers, mothers and friends do in their meditation does its work also for her.

The last day, midnight meditation was observed by candle light, with the *Narayana Sila* enthroned on top of the staircase

behind the dais. Mataji came for the evening satsang at 8-30 p.m. and never left Her seat until 12-30 a.m. She asked Kapindraji to speak for an hour after 9 p.m. Then Mataji began to sing '*Rama, Sitarama*' in ever new variations and modulations with great enthusiasm and everybody repeated in chorus. Mataji was in great form that night and kept the whole congregation enthralled. After a while She asked Chhabi and later Malati to continue the singing until it was time for the meditation.

Havan started early on the 16th morning on the platform under the neem trees and after its completion, Mataji distributed garlands, fruit and sweets to all the *vratīs*. A substantial and delicious meal was served that day after a week of austerity.

If however anyone had imagined that a period of rest and relaxation would follow the strenuous *Samyam Vrata*, he was mistaken. On the 17th midday *Akhanda Ramayana* started in the *Rama Mandir*. The whole of the *Ramayana* was sung in beautiful ever varying tunes to the accompaniment of harmonium, cymbals and drums for two days and two nights. The function ended on Nov. 19th at 2-30 p.m. Many *vratīs* had left but quite a number remained for a few more days. The singing of the *Ramayana* was organized mainly by Sm. Malati and her family who are experts in it. Mataji had the *kheyala* that Kapindraji should be present as well. Sure enough he turned up just before the *purnahuti*. Immediately after, Mataji sat down in the hall and related that the Vrindaban Ashram was originally to be built in the grounds opposite to where it actually is. The plot had been acquired and two huts opened ceremonially and Mataji had spent one night there. Then the Ramakrishna Mission claimed the land to build a large modern hospital on it. The plot was abandoned in their favour and the Anandamayee Sangha purchased the land on which our Ashram, comprising now about 12-15 large and small buildings, is now. The Ramakrishna Mission Hospital is doing excellent work. Incidentally it is invaluable to us also to have expert medical aid, rendered in a spirit of service, just across the road.

A few days later Sri Haribabaji arrived in Vrindaban. He paid one short visit to our Ashram. Mataji used to go almost daily and attend the *Mahaprabhu Lila* at the Uriababa Ashram where Sri Haribabaji stays.

Throughout Mataji's stay at Vrindaban a regular stream of

foreign visitors, mostly French and American kept on pouring in. Two French ladies took part in the *Samyam Vrata*. As soon as they left, a Japanese lady who is studying yoga in India came for two days. On November 23rd, Dr. Jacques de Marquette arrived with his secretary, Madame Langevin. Dr. Marquette, an earnest seeker after Truth is a remarkable scholar in comparative religion and a doctor of two Universities. He has written a number of books on comparative mysticism and similar subjects. This was his seventh visit to India. He and Madame Langevin had had Mataji's darshan already four years ago in three different towns. At present they are editing a French Monthly called "*Panharmonie*" in which Mataji's "*Matri Vani*" appear by instalments in every issue since September, 1967. A portion of "*Words of Sri Anandamayi Ma*" has also been rendered into French and is to be published in the same magazine. Later the entire French translation is to appear as a book.

On November 30th the Governor of the U.P. Dr. B. Gopala Reddi paid a visit to Mataji and had a private talk.

On December 2nd, Swami Akhandanandaji started to expound the *Srimad Bhagavata* in Hindi at the Uriababa Ashram. Mataji attended daily for full five hours until She left in the afternoon of December 4th for New Delhi, after having been in Vrindaban since July 20th, with an interruption of only eight days in October.

Mataji remained in our New Delhi Ashram for two nights. The Prime Minister Sm. Indira Gandhi and the Ex-Home Minister Sri Nanda came to see Her. The crowd that clamoured for darshan was too huge to be manageable. On the 6th, *Name Yajna* was held in the hall of the Ashram from sunrise to sunset. Mataji left immediately after for Lucknow, from where She motored to Naimisharanya the next morning.

* * *

Naimisharanya is one of the most sacred places of India. It is said that all the 18 *Puranas* were composed there. When in 1960, a *Samyam Mahavrata* was observed there it was discovered that not even one copy of each *Purana* was available in the whole town. It seemed appropriate that at least one full set of the *Puranas* should be kept in Naimisharanya permanently and a portion read daily throughout the year. It was therefore decided to erect a small

Purana Mandir on behalf of our Ashram. The daily reading was begun immediately in 1960 in Mataji's presence and a pandit engaged to continue.

A plot of land was acquired at Hanuman Tila, the highest spot in Naimisharanya and a Gujarati devotee Sri Manubhai Bhimani volunteered to be responsible for the expenses of constructing a temple. The opening ceremony of the *Purana Mandir* was performed from 9th to 11th December, 1967 in Mataji's presence. Sri Prabhudatta Brahmachari and Swami Naradanandaji had come specially for the occasion and delivered talks on Naimisharanya. Adjoining the *Purana Mandir*, a small room has been built for Mataji, in which She stayed for three nights. For the rest of the time She and Her small party were accommodated in huts in the Prayag Narayan Kshetra, which is a charming place situated on the bank of the Gomati river. Mataji extended Her sojourn up to December 18th, when She left for Lucknow to spend two nights at the residence of Sri Rameshwar Sahai, Retired Chief Conservator of Forests. U.P. From there She proceeded straight to Vindhyachal.

Our Ashram at Vindhyachal is still a solitary place, not too easily accessible from any big city. Water has even now to be carried up the hill in earthen pitchers and there is no electricity. Mataji was at Her best in such surroundings and the people who could be with Her deemed it a great privilege. Dr. Gopinath Kaviraj spent a few days there with Mataji. Mataji was in a communicative mood.

On December 29th She came to Varanasi and after about a week's stay She left for Rajgir on January 5th with only a few companions.

On January 6th Mataji arrived in Rajgir from Varanasi with a very few companions. She had a fairly quiet time there. Many improvements had been made in the Ashram since Mataji's last visit. Mataji visited a few sites where the Lord Buddha is supposed to have dwelt.

On January 16th Mataji proceeded to Katrasgarh Colliery at Dhanbad, where She spent two nights. Sri Morarjibhai Thacker, the owner of the colliery, a Gujarati devotee of many years' standing, made excellent arrangements for Mataji and Her whole party. Satsang was held daily and many came for Mataji's darshan.

On the 18th Mataji left for Dubrajpur to visit the "Niramoy" T.B. Sanatorium where about three years ago a *Shiva Mandir* had been consecrated in Mataji's presence. On Her way to the Sanatorium Mataji halted at Durgapur for a couple of hours at the invitation of a devotee who gave *bhoga* to Ma and entertained the whole party and many local guests. The General Secretary of the T.B. Hospital had requested Mataji to grace "Niramoy" with Her presence for the uplift of the patients. Mataji remained for three nights. She enjoined on the patients to practise the presence of God by the repetition of any *mantra* or name that appealed to them most. She sang "*Jai Shiva Sankara*", "*Jai Rama Sri Rama*", the *Mahamantra* and various other well-known *mantras* to them, asking them to choose any one of them for their daily prayers. They should try to feel that God had come to them in the guise of disease. All who could walk attended the satsang. Many were moved to tears. To the doctors and nurses Mataji said that all service was His service only and that they were serving God in the guise of sick men and women. Mataji who visited the bed-ridden patients who felt greatly comforted. One day Mataji was taken to the famous Shiva Temple at Bakreswar near Dubrajpur. Bakreswar has hot springs.

On January 21st Mataji travelled to Tarapith.¹ It is a place in Bengal where many *tantrik sadhakas* have practised austerities. The legend has it that Rishi Vasistha, while in China, North of Kailash, was ordered in a vision to go to Tarapith and take *diksha* from the Goddess Tara. At Tarapith, while sitting under a cotton-tree, he had a vision of the Goddess. The image for the temple was sculptured according to his vision. The head of the sculpture is detachable and is removed every night. It is said that Satl's third eye fell down at Tarapith. The great *tantrik sadhaka* Vamadeva also did *tapasya* there. This is historical.

At Mataji's advice Sri Bholanath went to Tarapith to practise meditation in the temple. He had many beautiful experiences there and reached a state of complete absorption. In 1929 Sri Bholanath and Sri Jogesh Brahmachari took some of the holy fire to Tarapith which had been lit in a particular way and been kept alive in Dacca for several years. It is the same fire by which the

¹See Ananda Varta, Vol.XV/No.3, November 1967, which contains a note on Tarapith and several pictures.

Mahayajna held in Varanasi from 1947-1950 was lit and which is being preserved to this day in our Ashrams at Varanasi and Agarpara. At first the people of Tarapith used to light funeral pyres from this fire. But later the fire somehow became polluted and the practice had to be abandoned. A *Shiva Mandir* was erected in memory of Bholanath. For several years it contained only Bholanath's picture. Only in 1961 Brahmachari Kamala Kanta brought a Shivalinga from the river Narmada which was installed in the temple.

Mataji used to visit Tarapith almost regularly once a year from 1929 to 1936. She was greatly revered and loved by the Pandas and their wives and children. Her visit this time occurred after an interval of about 32 years. It is in Tarapith that Mataji sang for the first time "*Krishan Kanhaiya bansi bajaiya etc.*" and She sang it again there this time. A small Ashram has recently been built near the Shiva Temple and Mataji came for the opening ceremony. A large crowd of devotees had arrived from Calcutta to be with Ma on this special occasion. A pandal had been put up near the burning ghat. The Ashram is near the Tara Mandir and Mataji went there twice on the first evening. Km. Chhabl Bannerji delighted everyone present by her beautiful songs. Villagers flocked in their thousands from all the neighbouring villages and also from a distance by bullock carts with their whole kith and kin to welcome Mataji after all those years. Mataji was visibly moved by their genuine affection and faith. She was in a great mood throughout those three days and related many interesting incidents that had taken place at Tarapith. She pointed out the places where She had slept, where Bholanath had sat for his *tapasya*, where Gurupriya Didi and Marani¹ received their sacred threads, etc. On a Tuesday a special puja was celebrated at the Tara Mandir and mataji presented a costly sari to the deity.

Tarapith had been a rough and very primitive place when Mataji went there in the early days. Through Mataji it became known and developed considerably. A proper motor road has been constructed and the temple renovated. It is a fact that Mataji by Her mere presence revived places of pilgrimage. Mataji was always at Her best in rural surroundings. Her short visit to Tarapith was treasured by all and will not easily be forgotten.

¹Bholanath's niece who was brought up by Mataji.

On January 24th, Mataji motored to Deoghar. Nine cars, carrying most of Her companions, drove in a line. The journey took three hours. At Deoghar Mataji put up at "Deva Sangha", the Ashram of Sri Naren Brahmachariji Maharaj. Mataji had last visited Deoghar in 1953 to be present at the consecration of Halmavati Temple in the grounds of the Deva Sangha. The Ashram is extremely peaceful, well kept and in beautiful surroundings. Sri Naren Brahmachariji had made wonderful arrangements for Mataji and all who came with Her. Mataji also visited the Ashram of the late Sri Balananda Brahmachari. The present head of the Ashram was out on tour. Further Mataji paid visits to "Nirvan Math" (Sri Brahmajna Ma's Ashram) and to the Sri Ramakrishna Mission Vidyapith. On the New moon day Mataji went to Baldyanath Temple near Deoghar where *Rudrabhisheka* was performed by twelve pandits. Mataji sang, *Jai Shiva Sankara* while water was poured over the Shivalinga.

On January 30th Mataji reached Varanasi, leaving the next day for Allahabad where Saraswati Puja was celebrated on February 2nd, *Vasant Panchami* day, in a pandal in the compound of Sri Bindu Mukerji's residence. For two nights Mataji stayed at Satya Gopal Ashram before moving to Mukerji's place, where a small house has been built several years ago for Mataji. In Her absence it is serving as a shrine-room. The puja had been prepared with great care and went off beautifully. The crowd was well managed and very orderly. After three nights at 31, George Town Mataji spent the last night of Her sojourn again at Satya Gopal Ashram. On February 5th, Mataji followed an invitation to the house of Sri Virendra Saksena, who entertained the whole party for lunch.

On February 6th Mataji returned to Varanasi, where she remained over *Shivaratri*, on February 26th. For a number of years Mataji had not been in Kashi for this festival. It was celebrated in great style, many having flocked even from considerable distances for this solemn occasion. As customary, puja and kirtan was performed throughout the night on all the three storeys of the Ashram building by everyone who wished to take part. Mataji gave darshan several times during the night, moving from one place to the other. At about 2 a.m., when many were about to doze off, She began to lead the *kirtan*. Instantly everybody was wide awake.

One day Mataji paid a visit to the aged Swami Swarupanandaji, the present head of the Bholagiri Ashram at Sonarpura.

Soon after Shivaratri Mataji left for Vrindaban, alighting there on February 29th. The first few days Mataji had a comparatively quiet time. Darsan hours were restricted to 15 minutes in the morning and half an hour in the evening. Mataji would however attend Sri Haribabaji's satsang at the Uriababa Ashram two or even three times daily. Among visitors from abroad was a French Trappist monk who stayed for ten days and had some private talks with Mataji. He seemed greatly impressed. We later heard that on returning to his monastery, he felt homesick for the atmosphere of India and her saints.

Holi, on which falls the birthday of Lord Gouranga and also of Sri Haribabaji, was celebrated in our Ashram by special kirtan and a feast. A new cottage in the Ashram grounds and some rooms built above the kitchen and dining-halls were ceremonially opened on that auspicious occasion. On March 15th the society of sadhus of Vrindaban held a meeting in our Ashram to discuss the spiritual welfare and uplift of Vrindaban. Since Mataji welcomes men and women belonging to all sect and religions and our Ashram being entirely non-sectarian, it was chosen as the most suitable place for such a gathering.

On March 16th Mataji returned again to Varanasi. While in former years Mataji came to Varanasi frequently and sometimes for long spells, She had during the last few years been there only rarely and for very short periods. This year at last the holy city of Vishwanath had been favoured by Her presence again. After ten days Mataji left for Hoshiarpur. On Her way She visited Hardwar for a couple of hours on March 27th and from there motored to Dehradun, where She remained for 26 hours, leaving for Hoshiarpur on the 28th. Only very few were allowed to accompany Her. Didima, Didi and most of her party remained in Kishenpur and joined Mataji in April at Hardwar. At the invitation of Sri Haribabaji Maharaj Mataji went from Hoshiarpur to Gandhwal, his native village, and stayed there for two nights. On *Rama Navmi* day, April 7th, a new Rama-Sita-Lakshman temple was consecrated in Gandhwal in Mataji's presence. The whole of the *Granth Sahib*¹ also was read and installed in the Mandir. Thousands of villagers attended the satsang.

On April 9th Mataji reached Hardwar. Due to the *Ardha*

¹Sacred scripture of the Sikhs.

Kumbha Mela the crowd was immense. However, Government had made such elaborate and efficient arrangements that everything proceeded in perfect order and without any mishap. Didima's *Sannyasa Utsava* was celebrated on April 13th by a full programme of Puja, Kirtana and discourses by *Mahatmas* from early morning until late at night. This was also the main bathing day of the *Kumbha* and in spite of very large congregation, the function was beautiful and harmonious. Mataji was very approachable and gave darshan several times daily in spite of indifferent health. On April 15th morning Mataji motored to Rishikesh for the opening ceremony of a new house at Sri Sivananda Ashram, built by Dr. Mrs. Padma Mudholkar, Deputy Director of Health, Maharashtra Pradesh. The house has been named "*Gurukripa*." From there Mataji drove to Kankhal where She spent the rest of the day. The pupils of the Girls' College "Sri Anandamayi Seva Sadan" at Hardwar paid Her a visit and at the end Mataji sang for a short while at their request. By the night train She left for Varanasi with a large party.

At Varanasi preparations for the consecration of the new temple for Gopalji and for Mataji's birthday celebrations were in full swing. Soon after Her arrival some new buildings of this Ashram were inaugurated. On April 22nd, Sri Dayamata, President of the Self-Realization-Fellowship¹ came to see Mataji, accompanied by Sri Mrinalini Mata, the Vice-President and Yogacharya Sri Binoy Dubey. They were the guests of our Ashram until April 24th and had several talks with Mataji.

Brahmachari Mohananandaji, Mahant of the Sri Balananda Ashram at Deoghar, paid two visits to Mataji. One evening, Mataji attended a musical soiree by Sri Dillip Kumar Roy at the residence of Dr. Gouri Nath Shastri, Vice Chancellor of the Sanskrit University. Subsequently, Sri Dillip Kumar and his party sang *bhajans* twice in our Ashram. One day, Mataji paid a visit to the ex-Chief Minister of U.P. Dr. Sampurnanand who was lying ill in hospital. He was deeply moved by Her solicitude. Sri Haribabaji Maharaj arrived with his entourage on the 28th evening.

Akshaya Tritiya fell on April 30th, which by the way is the day on which Mataji was born in 1896, although the celebrations of her birthday usually begins on May 2nd. The consecration of the new

¹A worldwide organization founded by Sri Paramahansa Yogananda.

temple and opening of the Satsang hall as well as the ceremonial opening of the newly constructed wings of the Ma Anandamayee Seva Hospital were scheduled for this auspicious date.

At 8-30 a.m. the opening ceremony of the hospital took place in Mataji's presence. H. H. Maharaja of Benares, who is the President of the hospital, many Government officials of the city, many doctors and other distinguished citizens of Varanasi attended the solemn and dignified function. The rooms on the ground floor were beautifully decorated. *Rudrabhisheka* was also a part of the wellplanned and impressive ceremony.

After 11 a.m. the consecration of the "*Ananda Jyoti Mandir*" took place, followed by an elaborate puja. The beautiful image of Gopalji had been presented to our Ashram in 1954. Before that it had been worshipped for 31 years by a *pujari* somewhere in Varanasi. Its rightful owner, living in Pakistan, and unable to send the necessary funds for three years, Gopalji was about to be immersed in the Ganges, when at the 11th hour, he found a home in the room adjoining the Annapurna Temple of our Ashram. Now, fourteen years later, he has been installed in the magnificent temple designed and personally supervised by Sri P.L. Varma, retired Chief Engineer, Punjab and a renowned architect as well. It was really unfortunate that Sri Varma, who had taken great pains for about six years past to complete the structure, which is an exquisite piece of architecture, could not personally attend the Inauguration ceremony as he had a heart-attack in Chandigarh and was unable to undertake the long journey to Varanasi.

The preliminary rites for the temple consecration took place on April 29th in the *Chandi Mandap* of our Ashram. On the 30th morning at 11 a.m. a small procession started from there for the *Ananda Jyoti Mandir*. Mataji Herself and Sri Haribabaji Maharaj took part in it and together opened the Mandir. Dr. Gouri Nath Shastri entered first, carrying a small *vighraha* of *yogamaya*, emblem of *Shakti*. Second Gopalji was carried on his sandalwood throne by four sadhus of the Ashram, followed by several devotees carrying on their heads sacred scriptures, such as the *Bhagavad Gita*, *Bhagavata*, *Ramayana*. The temple also contains a small Shiva *Linga* and pictures of Krishna, Sita, Rama and Mataji. From the Satsang hall adjoining the temple, one can have beautiful darshan of Gopalji. On the 30th evening 51 Vedic pandits of

Varanasi chanted portions from the four Vedas in the new Satsang hall.

* * *

Mataji's birthday had not been celebrated in Varanasi in Her presence since Her 60th Jayanti celebration in 1956. This time initial puja was performed in her personal presence in the night from 2nd to 3rd May on the terrace of the new temple. Since usually Mataji retires to Her room on that occasion, the attendance was not too large. The function was intimate and of deep concentration and therefore treasured by all present.

A spacious pandal, artistically decorated and equipped with lights, fans and loudspeakers had been erected in the hospital grounds. Satsang took place there mornings and evenings, while the afternoon session was held in the new Satsang Hall. The highlight of the daily programme for the largest number of people was the *Lila*, performed every morning. The attendance was enormous. Many citizens of Varanasi expressed their gratitude for being able to witness those artistic and moving representations of scenes from the lives of Sri Krishna and Gouranga Mahaprabhu saying that they did not feel inclined to go to the cinema anymore, as the *Rasalila* was infinitely more enjoyable.

Sri Haribabaji was present from the very beginning of the birthday celebrations, while other *Mahatmas* came several days later. Among them were Sri Maheshwaranandaji of Bombay, Sri Vishnu Ashram of Sukhtal, Sri Sharananandaji and Sri Krishnananda Avadhutji. In addition to their brilliant and highly interesting discourses, there was an hour of exquisite music programme almost daily from 9-10 p.m. Amongst the artists was Sri Lal Mani Misra who played on the *Vichitra Veena*, accompanied by the famous tabla player Sri Ashutosh Bhattacharya. Sri Jatin Bhattacharya, disciple of the great musician Alauddin Khan, gave a sarod recital. Among singers were the renowned Sm. Jayalakshmi of Madras, called the "Queen of Music in S. India" and Km. Chhabhi Bannerji of Calcutta. The famous sitar player, Sri Ravi Shanker, came for Mataji's darshan twice, but was too busy to give a recital. The music was followed by *Matri Satsang* from 10-11 p.m. Mataji was very generous with Her replies and occasionally also sang. On some days the programme continued until midnight and even later.

Throughout the 15 days and nights, *akhanda japa* was kept up as usual; also kirtan during the intervals of the daily programme. *Sat Chandi Patha* was recited by pandits. Besides there was leper feeding, *Kumari Puja* and a feast and presents given to 108 little girls.

Tithi Puja was celebrated on the 15th night in the specially decorated pandal, which could with difficulty hold the extremely large congregation.

In spite of excessive heat and the strain of a very heavy programme Mataji kept fairly good health at Varanasi.

On May 17th, Mataji, Sri Haribabaji and a large party boarded the train to Dehradun. Mataji alighted in Kishenpur in the early morning of May 18th. She first accompanied Sri Haribabaji to Kalyanvan and in person inspected the arrangements made for Sri Haribabaji and his party's accommodation, before proceeding to the Ashram a couple of hours later.

Mataji had not fixed any time for darshan during the day, but regularly attended Sri Haribabaji's Satsang at 8 p.m. She however met people at irregular hours in Her room or on the veranda and occasionally in the hall.

On Sunday, May 26th, our Delhi Kirtan party came in full force and performed *Nama Yajna* from sunset. Mataji and Sri Haribabaji joined the very inspired kirtan for sometime at midday. Mataji was in an extraordinary awe-provoking mood. Hundreds of devotees from Dehradun had come that day.

On June 4th, *Akhanda Ramayana* started at the Raipur Ashram. On the 5th morning, Mataji and the Ashramites and guests of the Kishenpur Ashram went to Raipur. Mataji was present for the "*Purnahuti*" of the Ramayana at midday. In the afternoon a charitable dispensary for children under 12 years of age was inaugurated in the Raipur Ashram. The first patient, a little girl carried by her mother was examined and given medicine in Mataji's presence. *Arati* was performed to the child. Mataji was never tired in stressing that all service must be performed as a service to *Janardana* (God in the guise of man.) The dispensary was thus given the name "*Paramatma Swarupa Parabrahma Balgopal Kumari Seva*." A young brahmacharini of our Ashram, who is an M.D. and a Specialist in child diseases, has been put in charge of the dispensary, which will be open for 3 hours daily on 6 days of a week.

One evening during Sri Haribabaji's satsang Mataji 'saw' a small boy with long wavy hair sitting near Her. He was singing with intense absorption, his whole body moving from side to side in rhythm with the tune. It seemed to be the same boy who had sung "He pita, he hita, etc." during the first *Samyam Vrata* at Varanasi in 1952. Mataji could hear the melody and the rhythm of the song very clearly, but the words were indistinct. Mataji then composed them herself which run as follows:

*Nara tana paya ayaao pyare bolo Ram nam
 Ram nam lekar mast hokar chalo Ram dham .
 Tana mana bharke ha payre liyo piyo Ram
 Ram nam lekar sant hokar chalo sakat dham.
 Ram Ram Ram aram
 Ram pranaram.*

It was first sung to Sri Haribabaji at Kalyanvan. Mataji had asked the girls of the Ashram to sing it daily after the *Ramayana Patha*. On June 8th *akhanda kirtana* of the song was held in the Ashram hall for 12 hours.

On June 12th Mataji followed an invitation by the neighbouring Sri Ramakrishna Mission to a function in honour of one of their seniormost Swamis who had recently passed away.

Mataji was expected to stay in our Ashram at Kishenpur till atleast the end of July. The programme thereafter still remains indefinite. The next Durga Puja is, however, scheduled to be held in Kishenpur, Dehradun from 28th September.

On July 1st and 2nd, the fourth anniversary of the consecration of Rama Mandir in Kalyanvan was commemorated by the recitation of the whole of the *Ramayana* for about 26 hours. Mataji was present at the *Purnahuti* (completion of the function.) Fruits, sweets and cooked *prasada* were distributed to all. On July 6th Sri Haribabaji and his party left. Immediately other visitors came from various places to do puja to Mataji and Didima in anticipation of *Guru Purnima*, which was celebrated on July 10th. On that day Mataji was up and doing from early morning until late at night. Her health then was not at all what we would like it to be, nevertheless on such occasions Mataji literally sparkles with energy. On *Guru Purnima* day She untiringly attended individually to every single person who approached Her, distributing *prasada* and bestowing blessings all the while. First She was besieged in Her own room, later went to the temple where Didima was giving *diksha* and from

there to the hall. Again, at midday She saw that everyone partook of the feast that is served as part of the celebrations. In the evening She was present at the kirtan and at night, when most of the crowd had dispersed, She sat down in the hall and told us stories with a vivacity, as if She had rested all day.

On the 11th afternoon She motored to Kankhal, where She could indulge in a comparative holiday. Of course, some of the devotees who had come for *Guru Purnima* from distant places, accompanied Her and remained for a few days. A few other visitors also came from far and near. Amongst them was Sri Haridatt Vasudeva of Bombay who had recently lost his wife. With deep regret we mourn the loss of two ardent devotees of many years standing, namely Srimati Amrit Vasudeva and Smt. Lalita Deogan, who passed away in August in Dehradun. Both of them, however, must be deemed very lucky, each in her own way. Srimati Vasudeva was suffering from cancer. In spite of her really deplorable physical condition she was, after a spell of unconsciousness for several hours, able in full consciousness to ignore completely her suffering body at the end. To the amazement of her doctors and of all present, she repeated with a clearly audible and distinct voice her *mantra* for more than an hour and literally to her last breath. A near relative, up to then a confirmed sceptic, has been converted to believe in divine power by witnessing this miracle and has since then himself taken to spiritual practices.

Srimati Deogan had the rare good fortune of discovering Mataji as far back as 1932, when Mataji was staying in a dilapidated Shiva temple in Raipur (the site of the present Ashram) with Sri Bholanathji and Sri Bhajji. Mataji was then quite unknown in the U.P. Raipur was a small village, difficult of access, with a very bad road leading to it, part of which became a surging river during the rains. But Lalita Bahin braved it, often walking the whole distance of several miles with her little daughter, bringing *rotis* and other eatables prepared by herself for Mataji and Her companions. Her devotion, into which gradually the whole of her family was drawn has never wavered. Although she had a stroke about two years ago and was partly paralyzed, she managed to come to Kishenpur for Mataji's darshan during Mataji's stay there this summer. The last time she saw Mataji just before Mataji left for Varanasi in the beginning of August. Mataji gave her a lot of attention. Three weeks after that she passed away.

Mataji remained in Kankhal until July 25th. Gradually She had sent away most of Her companions and at the end only a handful of people were left.

On the 25th She motored to Dehradun stopping on Her way to visit a sick person, then to see the students of our Vidyapith who are at present at Baghat House, Hardwar. Nobody knew to which Ashram at Dehradun Mataji would proceed. Just before reaching the town, Mataji said She was going to Raipur. She remained there for one night, proceeding to Kishenpur on the 26th morning. On the 28th *Akhanda Ramayana* was held in the Ashram hall. On the 30th a new house that has been built for Mataji's use in the compound of Mr. & Mrs. M. L. Khaitan (which adjoins Kalyanvan) was ceremonially inaugurated. Mataji spent most of the day there. The morning satsang followed by kirtan was held there. In the main building in the grounds the whole of the *Ramayana* was chanted the whole day and night and completed in Mataji's presence the next day after midday. Durga Puja is to take place in the same compound from September 28th.

On August 2nd Mataji boarded the train for Varanasi. In former years Mataji would be there almost regularly for the *Jhulan* and *Janmastami* festivals, while in recent years these celebrations were held mostly in Vrindaban and Dehradun. In 1960, Mataji was in Vrindaban for *Jhulan*, but went to Varanasi just for *Janmastami* at the special request of the Ashram girls. In 1956 Mataji had for the last time spent the whole of that festive time in Varanasi. A very elaborate and lively description was published in *Ananda Varta*¹ immediately after. This year the olden times seemed to have revived with additional vigour and impetus. Already Mataji had in February graced Varanasi with Her presence at *Shivaratri*, also during Her birthday celebrations after the consecration of the magnificent Ananda Jyoti Mandir, now the swing festival and Krishna's birthday proved another climax. Mataji was in an excellent mood throughout. She stayed in Her room in the temple building.

From 4th to 8th August *Jhulan* was celebrated every evening in Ananda Jyoti Mandir, Sri Gopalji sat on his swing while Puja and Arati were performed and Mataji would pull the cord of the swing. After 9 p.m. Mataji was daily the special guest of the Kanyapith. A

¹See *Ananda Varta*, Vol. VI, No.3, "Matri Lila".

semi private function was arranged in their hall. They have a large swing reserved for Mataji only, which had not been used for twelve years. It was profusely and very artistically decorated in a different style every night. They then put garlands round Mataji's head, neck, wrists etc. and Mataji sat on the swing watching their dramatic performances which were alternately in Hindi, Bengali and Sanskrit. One evening on the spur of the moment, She called one of the older girls, told her an amusing incident from the lives of Sri Krishna and his brother Balaram and asked her to have it enacted. It was improvised on the spot to the amusement of the whole audience.

On the 8th of August, the full-moon night, there was as usual soft music followed by midnight meditation in Mataji's presence to commemorate the *Jhulan Purnima* night in 1922 when Mataji had given Herself *diksha*. It was held on the open terrace on the first floor of the new temple. The next day was *Raksha bandhan*. Mataji made it a point to tie a *rakhi* (bracelet) round everybody's wrist and went in person to the rooms of some patients who were too sick to walk.

The day after, Tripurari Chakravarti arrived quite unexpectedly from Calcutta. He delivered talks every evening throughout his stay. Every night after supper, Brahmachari Virajananda used to read out of the newly published book "Amar Vani" in Hindi and Mataji often made long and highly interesting comments.

On August 15th and 16th *Janmastami* was celebrated in Ananda Jyoti Mandir in great style with puja and kirtan. In the first floor rooms of the temple the students of the Kanyapith had with remarkable artistic skill built up a miniature landscape depicting various scenes from Sri Krishna's life, as is the tradition on that festival. There was Gokul, Nandagram, Vrindaban, Mathura, Mount Govardhan, the river Jamuna with the snake Kalladaman and all the rest, to capture the imagination of every onlooker. *Nandotsava*, the anniversary of the riotous rejoicing of the cowherds the morning after Sri Krishna's birth, was also celebrated on two mornings. The first day for the Ashramites and guests, starting in the house of Mataji's brother, which adjoins the Ashram. The next morning on the veranda of Gopalji's Mandir. Mataji tied a cheap towel round Her head and in a hilarious mood fed all the people of the locality with curds (*dahi*) and sugar puffs (*batasha*). She called the neighbouring fishermen, their wives and children, the

labourers from the streets, the servants to join in the mirth. Mataji sang and danced and was full of fun.

On August 20th Mataji motored to Vindhyachal for a rest, with only very few companions returning to Varanasi on the 24th. The next day, Sri Swami Satchidananda, a disciple of Sri Swami Sivananda of Rishikesh with 25 of his American disciples, men and women, came for Mataji's darshan. He is the head of an "Integral Yoga Institute" at New York and at present is on a pilgrimage through India with his disciples. They sang kirtan before Mataji, who showed much interest and asked many questions about their Ashram routine and similar things.

On August 27th Mataji left Varanasi by the morning train with only 3 or 4 attendants. Her itinerary was kept a closely guarded secret. She got down at Lucknow and paid a flying visit to Naimisharanya. The next day, after visiting the Ashram of Swami Naradanandji, and a few other places She left Naimisharanya by car, halting on Her way at Lucknow for a few hours at the residence of Sri Rameshwar Sahai and at Kanpur to see Sri Mangtaram Jaipuria, who was seriously ill. Mataji boarded the train at Kanpur on the 28th night for Mathura reaching Vrindaban the next morning.

In Vrindaban She had a fairly quiet time. On the 31st, *Radhas-tami* (the birthday of Sri Radha) was celebrated in Chheliya Mandir in Mataji's presence at 3-30 a.m., which is supposed to be the hour when Sri Radhika was born. Later in the morning Mataji went to Sri Haribaba's Ashram, and the evening Sri Haribabaji held his satsang in our Ashram. Swami Sharananandaji was also present at 3-30 a.m. in Chheliya Mandir.

On September 6th Mataji motored to New Delhi. She had come at the pressing request of the Delhi *bhaktas*, who were eager to perform *Nama Yajna* of *Mahamantra* in Mataji's presence. The function started on Saturday, the 7th September after sunset. At about 10 p.m. the women took over and circumambulated all night round a very beautifully decorated circular altar, singing with great enthusiasm and abandon. The next morning it was again the turn of the men for the whole day. Mataji joined the kirtan for a while and sang once in the day and also at the end. Mataji was, both on Saturday night and on Sunday, in one of Her special moods which were rarely to be noticed then. The devotion and sincerity of the Delhi *bhaktas*, especially of the Kirtan party, are always

inspiring and their *Nama Yajnas* unforgettable experiences. A feast was given at midday to all present. Throughout Mataji's sojourn in Delhi, the number of people clamouring for Her darshan and for private talks was as usual enormous. Among the distinguished visitors were Dr. Triguna Sen, Education Minister to the Govt. of India and the famous Mohammedan saint Srimati Rehana Tayabji, who brought two American gentlemen with her. They also witnessed the kirtan towards the end. Two American ladies had a long interview with Mataji in Delhi.

On September 9th, Mataji left for Dehradun by the night train. On Her way to the Railway station Mataji visited the Prime Minister's house at the special request of Sm. Indira Gandhi. Mataji sat on the lawn for about half an hour along with Sm. Gandhi, her two sons and daughters-in-law and was in a very jovial mood. From there Mataji paid a short visit at the house of Sri Lalit Mohan at Motibagh. Sri Lalit Mohan, a staunch devotee of Mataji, has recently suffered from a heart-attack.

Mataji alighted in Dehradun on the 10th morning. She went first to Kalyanvan and to inspect the site for the coming Durga Puja in the adjoining grounds which was celebrated from September 28th. Divali too was to take place at Dehradun on October 21st. The next *Samyam Saptah Mahavrata* has also been scheduled to be observed in Dehradun from October 29th to November 4th. Immediately after the conclusion of the *Samyam Saptah* Mataji was expected to leave for Naimisharanya, where a *Bhagavat Saptah* was to be held for a fortnight, namely, from November 21st to December 4th. Swami Akhandananda Saraswati of Vrindaban has kindly consented to give daily discourses on the *Bhagavata* during that period.

Mataji alighted in Kishenpur from Delhi on September 10th. On the 12th She went to stay in Raipur for two nights. On the 13th Sri Gurupriya Devi commemorated the anniversary of her father Sri Akhandanandaji's *Mahasamadhi* by giving a feast to Sadhus at the Kishenpur Ashram. There was kirtan for a few hours round midday. At 12 o'clock Mataji suddenly appeared quite unexpectedly in the hall of the Ashram. When the feast was over She returned to Raipur for another night and the next day. On *Mahalaya* day, September 22nd, special kirtan was performed during the solar eclipse. Mataji was present for two hours and at the end of the eclipse sprinkled *Gangajal* on everyone.

On the 23rd of September, the first day of *Navaratri*, Mataji shifted to Her charming new cottage in the compound of Mr. & Mrs. Khaitan, next door to Kalyanvan. Durga Puja, Lakshmi Puja, Kali Puja and the 19th *Samyam Mahavrata* were all celebrated in a large and beautiful pandal in the same compound and Mataji remained in Her new house until November 8th. On the 23rd of September an earthen pitcher (*ghata*) filled with sacred water brought from the Ganga, Jamuna, Gangotri and Jamnotri, etc was installed in the Mandap constructed of bricks that opened out into the pandal. The *ghata* was worshipped daily as a symbol of the deity until the installation of the traditional image of Durga, Lakshmi, Saraswati, etc., on September 28th, *Saptami* day. On the first day of *Navaratri* Professor Tripurari Chakravarti arrived from Calcutta and started that very evening a course of highly interesting talks on the Valmiki Ramayan that continued for full 21 days. He stayed on for the *Samyam Saptah*, and after the Ramayan talked on the Mahabharat. His lectures attracted many people from Dehradun who attended regularly. Mataji was always present and thus we had darshan every evening for two hours and longer even in the intervals between the festivals, during which Mataji was visible most of the time until late at night. One day Professor Chakravarti was invited to talk about Vivekananda at the Kishenpur Ramakrishna Mission. Mataji also paid a visit to the R. K. Mission on that occasion. A large gathering was held there in the open air.

From September 28th to October 1st Durga Puja was celebrated. Many guests had arrived from various places, as far even as Calcutta and Bombay, and some remained for several weeks. Two ladies, hailing from Germany and France respectively, also participated. A huge crowd flocked from Dehradun on the main days of the Puja. On *Ashtami* and *Navami*, feasts and presents were given to 108 *Kumaris* each day. As always in Mataji's presence, every detail of the puja was performed to perfection. Mataji was extremely active and saw to everything in person, paying no attention to Her unsatisfactory health. There was exquisite music during the ceremonies. Over and above the proceedings in the pandal, one hundred *Durga Sapta Satis* were chanted in the puja room of the yet unfinished house of Mr. & Mrs. Khaitan, and on *Navami* day this part of the function was duly completed by a *yajna* performed in front of the house.

Mahamandaleshwara Sri Swami Maheshwaranandaji arrived on *Saptami* and stayed for three days in one of the cottages at Kalyanvan. He delivered three brilliant, very witty and entertaining talks on the significance of Devi, of Durga Puja and so on. But actually all his discourses were on *Advaita*, the one theme he discussed in endless variations. "Do not imagine", he said that the devotees of Krishna and those of Durga worship different gods. These are different aspects of the One. Just as different organs have different functions. The eyes cannot hear and the ears cannot see, yet they belong to one body. When you injure your foot, your eyes weep, your tongue shouts for help and your hands attend to the wound. Why should this be so, if they were not one?" He used parables and amusing stories to illustrate and make intelligible profound truths.

Every evening for half an hour Brahmachari Nirmalananda would explain the meaning of Durga Puja. What he said was in fact for many a necessary part of the celebrations. It was interesting, instructive and thought provoking. There are two sides to the puja: the inner and the outer. In actual fact Devi resides within the heart of every human being. She is outside only by projection. The priest has to identify himself with his object of worship to make the puja effective. The worship is different on each day. On *Saptami* the bathing of the deity is the main item, that is to say, purification. On *Ashtami* the actual, most elaborate worship of the goddess is the central idea; and on *Navami* one is to dedicate oneself with all that one is to the object of worship. What God wants as offering from us all is the ego, that and nothing else. All offerings are but symbolic of the variegated aspects of the I-ness. Mataji often told a story in which someone asked: "What does God eat?" The reply given was: "God eats ego." On *Dasami* the living presence of the goddess is withdrawn from the image, so that we may feel Her presence within our own being. The goddess has been projected outside only to remind us, to make us aware of Her constant presence within us. Why is the image immersed in water? It is said that the gods reside in water. Thus the image is not thrown away into water, but returned to the realm to which the goddess belongs.

At the end of the evening programme Mataji daily replied to questions or told stories with great vivacity. Responding to a general request, Km. Chhabi Bannerji sang special Bengali kirtan

for three and a half hours on October 3rd. On the 5th night, full moon, Lakshmi Puja was performed to a beautiful image of the goddess. On the 6th a lunar eclipse was observed by kirtan. The next morning, during darshan time in Her room, Mataji talked at length about Naimisharanya, urging everyone to attend the forthcoming function there in our new Ashram from November 21st to December 5th. Naimisharanya is a very special place. It is said Kali Yuga cannot touch Naimisharanya. Mataji, amongst other things, related about the floods there in October 1960, just before our *Samyam Vrata* was to be held. The whole area was deep under water and the officials who had undertaken to assist with the arrangements suggested the shifting of the function to Lucknow. Wires and trunkcalls were sent to Mataji to obtain Her permission. In the meanwhile, Swami Paramananda was in Naimisharanya in order to prepare for the gathering. "Since Mataji has sent me here," he said to the officials, "I shall not give up the attempt to arrange here itself." They felt that he must be either crazy or lacking in intelligence to attempt the impossible. One day, Mataji, who was in Dehradun, asked for a glass of water and drank it up to the last drop, saying: "Just as it takes no time to empty a glass of water, so God, if He so wills can withdraw the floods in no time." Within three days the water had all flown off. People said that they had never before witnessed floods subsiding at such speed. However, the place where the pandal was to be erected was just a mass of deep, soaking wet mud. Swami Paramananda hired a hundred kulis and had the whole area covered with a thick layer of sand. Only the night before the *Samyam Saptah* started, could the pandal be completed. Many of the tents were pitched after the vratis who were to occupy them had arrived. But the function took place as scheduled and was one of the best and most memorable we had ever known. Mataji remarked jokingly that the Gomati had come in person to cleanse and purify the whole place with her waters in preparation of our gathering, which comprised the reading of 108 *Srimad Bhagavatas* by 108 pandits for a week, following immediately the *Samyam Vrata*.

Practically during the whole period of about four weeks between Durga Puja and the *Samyam Vrata*, Mataji gave darshan in her room from 11-12 midday. The lovely, spacious room, which commanded a panoramic view of the mountains, was always packed, with people overflowing into the corridor and the adjoining

rooms. Varied and interesting conversations often ensued. The above is only one example.

The same evening at dusk, a young devotee who is an electrician, was called to do some repair. He ran down to Mataji's house by a shortcut without path. On his way he put his foot on a thick piece of wood (as he thought) but found it to be a king cobra! It stood up, waving its huge hood and slapped his leg but did not bite him. He stood quite still for some time, fearing that the snake might chase him if he moved. At long last, shouting 'Ma' he bolted away. The cobra remained where it was. Mataji asked him to sleep in Her house that night.

SEVENTEEN

(Oct. 1968 — Oct. 1969)

One morning an old English gentleman came for Mataji's darshan who had been a Government official at Dacca when Mataji lived there over forty years ago. Now having taken up work at the Welham School in Dehradun, he asked permission to bring his students. Thus, on October 18th evening, 41 boys arrived with one of their teachers. Mataji asked them questions about themselves and their school and then talked to them as She usually talked to children. They sang to Mataji. At the end they expressed the wish to put a picture of Mataji up in their school. It was presented to them. Mataji distributed sweets and flowers to them and touched each boy's head.

Another evening a bus full of Europeans hailing from various countries came for Mataji's darshan, led by their Guru, an Indian Swami who is running an Ashram in Germany. Yet another day Sri Swami Chinmoyananda, who has an Ashram near Bombay came from Uttarkashi with a number of his disciples and delivered a talk.

On October 19th-20th the Delhi Kirtan party performed *Nama Yajna* of *Mahamantra*. All present took active part, the men singing all day and the women all night. On October 21st, *Divali* night, Kall Puja was performed until the small hours of the morning. In the evening of *Annakut*, Mataji distributed trays and trays of sweets to all who approached Her in a very orderly queue. It took hours. After the *Divali* functions, the *Mandap* was converted into a dais to seat the speakers at the *Samyam Mahavrata*, which took place from October 29th to November 4th.

Each *Samyam Vrata* seems more wonderful than the preceding ones and each has its own distinctive note. Most participants look forward to it from one year to the other. The fasting on *Gangajal* on one or two days, the restricted diet on the other days, the very strenuous programme, foregoing many comforts, sitting still for hours together, are not felt as hardships anymore. A great abiding joy and a rare sense of unity were the keynote of the whole gathering, which was remarkably well organized and disciplined. There was no crowding round Mataji in the pandal at any time. However, after the morning session, Mataji would sit in the open and those who wished could approach Her individually to

do *pranama* and offer garlands or flowers to their heart's content. Of foreigners five American gentlemen and two French ladies took part in the function. There were fewer talks and more music this time, since a few of the *Mahatmas* who usually grace the *Samyam Saptah* with their presence were unfortunately unable to come. The discourses by Mahamandaleshwara Sri Chaitanya Giri, Sri Swami Vishnuashram, Sri Swami Sharananandaji, Sri Avadhutaji, Swami Govind Prakashji of Ramatirtha Ashram, and others were all of a high order and much relished by the Vratis. Mataji was truly indefatigable. Not only did She sit through most of the satsang, but She guided and supervised all arrangements. Every day during meal time She would, for instance, go to kalyanvan, where food was cooked and served, and make sure whether everything was as it should be. She would in person welcome and see of every visiting *Mahatma*. Needless to say, She made time for private interviews and attended to visitors who came for part of the week or just for a few hours from distant places. There were a thousand and one things that She did. Notwithstanding unsatisfactory health, Her energy seemed unlimited and neither the limits of time and space existed for Her, then as before.

On the day the *Samyam Vrata* started, Dr. Mukerji, an ardent and much loved and respected devotee of many years' standing, to our deep regret passed away in Dehradun. How great was our astonishment when we heard that Mataji had been to see him a few hours before he left his body during that busiest of busy times!

Mataji was very generous in Her replies to questions during "Matri Satsang", the last item of the daily programme. Everything She said has been preserved by tape recorder and we hope to publish some of it and also some of the talks given by the *Mahatmas*.

Mataji was expected to leave Dehradun on the 5th of November, but at the last moment decided to remain for three more days. Sri Goswamiji, Chakrapaniji and Swami Ananda stayed on and talked to us every evening in the Ashram Hall. On the 8th evening Mataji boarded the train to Lucknow from where She motored to Naimisharanya the next morning.

On several occasions we have written about Naimisharanya in the pages of *Ananda Varta*,¹ since our eleventh *Samyam Vrata* was

¹See 'Ananda Varta' Vol.VIII, No.4, February 1961, "Samyam and Bhagavata Saptahas in Naimisharanya" by K. G. Ambegaokar.

held there in the grounds of Sri Naradananda Ashram in 1960. In 1961 a plot of land measuring about 15 bighas was acquired by the Sangha on the Hanuman Tila, the highest spot of Naimisharanya. A beautiful little Puran Mandir was built there and inaugurated in Mataji's presence in December 1967¹. Since then a regular small Ashram has grown up round the Mandir, which opens out into a fair sized circular hall. The hall has so far a canvas roof. To the right and left of the hall, there are two sets of living rooms that were occupied by Sri Haribabaji Maharaj and by Sri Swami Akhandanandaji during the recent function. A small house has been constructed for Mataji, Didima, Didi and the attending girls, and at some distance another house for the general kitchen with a few small living rooms. A generous *bhakta* has donated a motor for the well and pipes have been laid on for water supply. The beautiful pandal from Dehradun, originally brought from Calcutta, was shifted to Naimisharanya with all the workmen, loudspeakers and other equipment. There also it proved a great success, although the enormous crowd of local visitors had partly to sit outside. A large number of tents were pitched in the Ashram grounds and nearby to accommodate guests who arrived from all over North India. Two *dharmaśālas* and other rooms in the neighbourhood were also at our disposal besides the Prayag Narain Kshetra on the banks of the Gomati just below the Ashram, which houses sadhus in thatched huts among idyllic surroundings.

In 1960, 108 pundits led by Sri Agnishwatta Shastri (Batuda) had recited the *Bhagavata* in Sanskrit, while Sri Swami Vishnu-ashram had expounded in Hindi. This time Batuda alone was responsible for the Sanskrit reading while Sri Swami Akhandananda Saraswati explained in Hindi for full 15 days, from 9—11 a.m. and from 3—4.45 p.m. Profoundly learned, a brilliant speaker as well as an expert on the *Bhagavata*, he made clear the symbolism of many passages that seem obscure or even devoid of meaning to the ordinary person. His exposition was really masterful. The whole audience listened spell bound day after day. Mataji was present throughout and also for Sri Haribabaji's satsang from 7.30—9 p.m. Some *Mahatmas*, such as Swami Sharananandaji, Sri Govind Prakashji and others came from distant places, listening to the *Bhagavata* and also gave short talks in the evening. It was

¹ A picture of the Mandir will be found in 'Ananda Varta', Vol. XV, No. 4, April 1968.

altogether the most beautiful and concentrated gathering, fully worthy of the sacred spot where thousands of Rishis are said to have lived. It will not easily be forgotten by those who had the good fortune to be present. Among the visitors there were high Government officials and several Rajas and Ranis.

On December 6th everyone dispersed. Mataji, together with Sri Haribabaji and Swami Akhandanandaji, motored to Lucknow where satsang was held in the compound of the residence of Sri Rameshwar Sahai, Retd. Conservator of Forests. At night Mataji boarded the train to Delhi and remained there till 16th.

On December 7th Mataji arrived in Delhi from Naimisharanya via Lucknow, accompanied by Sri Haribabaji Maharaj and Sri Akhandanandaji with their disciples. She had come at the urgent request of Sri Haribabaji and his devotees who had arranged for a grand religious function called "*Brihat Hari Sammelan*" on the vast Subhas Maidan from 7th to 16th December. On arrival at Delhi Station, Mataji was profusely garlanded by the devotees. With an affectionate smile She accepted offerings of fruit and flowers. For those ten days Mataji stayed at Her Ashram at Kalkaji, a beautiful, quiet and fairly solitary place, far away from the hub of the city. Every morning and evening She used to attend the satsang at Subhas Maidan. A large number of the population of Delhi could thus avail themselves of the opportunity of Mataji's darshan in the open pandal. One hour of daily satsang was managed by our Delhi Kirtan Party who sang the *Mahamantra*. Almost every evening Mataji would lead the kirtan for a short while, singing mostly *Rama Nama*. A few times She also replied to questions. Day by day the crowd grew larger and more enthusiastic. People patiently waited for hours in order to have blessing of Mataji's darshan for half an hour and to hear her sing. The function proved a great success, mainly due to Mataji's gracious presence. This was the general feeling. On December 17th Mataji boarded the train to Varanasi, reaching there on the 18th midday.

Her health being indifferent and having been extremely busy both at Naimisharanya and Delhi, Mataji, for the first few days remained mostly in her room behind closed doors, giving darshan only for one hour in the evenings. The outstanding event during Mataji's sojourn at Varanasi was on December 26th, the opening by the Prime Minister of the three main blocks of the newly constructed Mata Anandamayee Hospital.

The hospital has been run on a small scale since 1965. Several years before that, Dr. Gopal Das Gupta had started a charitable homoeopathic dispensary in our Ashram. It was attracting an ever increasing number of patients, both Hindus and Mohammedans. It was his great desire to build in Mataji's name a first class hospital equipped with all upto date amenities that would cater to the destitute and needy of all communities without distinction of creed or caste. This project was taken up with great zeal and enthusiasm by the organizers of the Shree Shree Anandamayee Sangha. Unfortunately Dr. Das Gupta passed away at the age of 70 even before the foundation stone of the hospital could be laid.

The opening of the new double-storied western block, housing a number of out-patients departments, took place in July 1965. Since then this part of the hospital has been functioning very efficiently, thanks largely to the selfless service rendered by several well-known physicians of the city, especially Dr. U. N. Mathur, Dr. S. N. Mathur and Dr. G. S. Bhargava. About two hundred fifty patients are being treated daily. The report shows that already during the year 1967, 38,567 patients received medical aid. Within the short span of three and a half years and although as yet incomplete, the hospital has already become quite famous and earned high praise from Indian as well as foreign visitors for its unusual standard of cleanliness and efficiency.

In November 1965 the Chief Minister of U.P. Srimati Sucheta Kriplani and the Union Health Minister Dr. Sushila Nayar came to visit the hospital. They took great interest and Dr. Nayar suggested that the in-patients department should have not less than 170 beds, more than double the number of the original plan. Sri J. D. Shastri, Senior Architect of the Ministry of Health, who is recognised as one of the foremost hospital designers of this country, was requested to make the design. The Central Govt. has since then sanctioned more than Rs. 5.50 lakhs for construction purposes and purchase of essential hospital equipments. Several lakhs of rupees have been collected from private donations and spent, while more than half of the construction has yet to be accomplished.

On December 26th, the ground floors and first floors of the three main blocks were formally opened by Sm. Indira Gandhi in the presence of Mataji. The elite of Varanasi as well as many

distinguished guests and devotees of Mataji from all over India and even from abroad attended. The function was excellently organized and proceeded with great dignity, in perfect order and pindrop silence. On the southern side of the hospital a large pandal had been erected and beautifully decorated with garlands and flower-rings. The dais was all in white with a flowery background. There had been heavy rainstorm in the morning and the Prime Minister's plane could therefore not take off from Delhi at the scheduled time. The function thus started one and a half hours later than originally planned. Srimati Indiraji arrived by motor boat. She was accorded a hearty welcome. The Maharaja of Benares, who is the President of the hospital, led her up to the dais. After bowing to Mataji, she took her seat. The speech of welcome to the Prime Minister by the Maharaja was followed by the reading of the Hospital Report by the Maharaja of Tehri Garhwal. Then Indiraji delivered her inaugural address. She spoke for five minutes with great simplicity, dignity and charm. She remarked that the ground on which the hospital stands has some connection with Gandhiji, with her father and therefore also with her. She then stressed the point that the patients of this hospital would not only be cured from their bodily ailments but would return to their homes filled with the peace and inspiration that is derived from Mataji's influence.

When the function was over, the Prime Minister cut the garland and was shown round the hospital buildings. Then she came to the Ananda Jyoti Mandir. Didi presented her with a silk scarf and with garlands from Sri Gopalji's neck and tulsi leaves. After this she had a few minutes alone with Mataji upstairs. Indiraji seemed very pleased to be able to have a short while with Mataji even on this official occasion. Refreshments were served to her, while beautiful *bhajans*, sung in the Ashram hall by Chhabbi Bannerji and Pushpa, could be heard through the amplifier placed outside of the room. To the accompaniment of the sweet music, she took leave of Mataji and boarded the boat.

Mataji remained in Varanasi until January 9th. Every night Brahmachari Virajananda would read out of the book "*Amar Vani*" and usually lively discussions ensued, Mataji often making lengthy comments. On January 3rd, fullmoon day, a

¹Discussions with Mataji with a commentary by Dr. Gopinath Kaviraj, recently published in book form in Hindi and Bengali.

special puja was performed in the course of which the *Narayana Sila* of Annapurna Mandir was bathed in 50 litres of pure cows milk. Tumblers full of this *prasada* were distributed to everyone who asked for it, fishermen and their families, labourers, beggars—all the poor of the locality had their share.

On January 9th, Mataji motored to Allahabad, where She remained for two nights in the Ashram of the late Sri Gopal Thakur at Allenganj. At Allahabad, Mataji was always in a special mood. Her visits were short but very intense. On the 10th morning there was puja. At night films were shown of the consecration of the Chheliya Mandir at our Vrindaban Ashram and of the last Gita Jayanti that Sri Gopal Thakur had performed in our Varanasi Ashram. Mataji also sang.

On January 11th, She left for Naimisharanya with a very few companions. In the atmosphere of this hallowed abode of ancient Rishis, Mataji relaxed and was in a jolly mood, laughing and joking, walking about or lying in the sunshine, occasionally cooking—"like a child on holiday" someone remarked. Here also the daily reading of *Amar Vani*, followed by discussions, was continued. Off and on devotees would come for short spells from Sitapur or Lucknow. Dr. Gouri Nath Shastri, Vice-Chancellor of the Sanskrit University, Varanasi, stayed for two days. In the mornings he would read out from the *Srimad Bhagavata*, seated under a *tamal* tree.¹ On January 22nd, Vasant Panchami day, Saraswati Puja was performed in the hall in front of the Purana Mandir, the most fitting place to propitiate the goddess of art, learning and the highest knowledge. A beautiful small *vighraha* was brought from Varanasi. A few professors of the Benares Hindu University had come for the occasion. Mataji herself supervised all preparations. It was a charming, very intimate function. In the evening Mataji related in great detail the story of the Purana Mandir. Since Mataji had left Naimisharanya in December, the well and the new electric pump had been in good order and so Swami Paramananda had with the help of an efficient gardener laid on a lovely garden with a variety of beautiful multi-coloured flowers that were in full bloom to welcome Mataji. Vegetables of the best quality had also been grown and baskets-full could be sent to Varanasi and also to neighbouring Ashrams. One day the boys of Sri Naradananda

¹The tamal tree is sacred to Sri Krishna.

Ashram was entertained to a feast. On every new moon day there is always a special puja at Lalita Devi Mandir at Nimsar town and huge crowds of pilgrims assemble at Nimsar on that occasion. About a lakh of people had come this time and large streams of them flowed in and out of the Ashram grounds for Mataji's darshan.

On January 25th, Mataji again alighted in New Delhi where She remained over Shivaratri which fell on February 15th. Her stay was interrupted by a short visit She paid to Dehradun and Hardwar. She reached Kishenpur on February 10th morning, leaving by car for Hardwar on the 11th at midday. She did an incredible amount of work in those 27 hours, visiting twice Kalyanvan where a *Yajnasala* is being built. On Her way to Hardwar, She also halted at our Sadhan Ashram, Jakhan. In between She had any number of private interviews, gave darshan several times and arranged for everything conceivable. Time never existed for Mataji, She could compress any amount of work into the shortest span. At Hardwar She went to Baghat House, Kharkhari, where the Boys' School of the Ashram is stationed at the moment, and also to Santiniketan our Ashram at Kankhal, where a small shrine for a Shiva linga is being constructed under the bel tree in the garden. On the 12th morning, Mataji was again in Delhi.

Shivaratri in New Delhi was an event of the first order. People who took part said they would never forget that night. While two years ago when Shivaratri had been celebrated at Bandh, the attendance was a record in smallness of numbers (although the function was equally unforgettable), this time the attendance was enormous, as can easily be imagined. The spacious circular hall of the Ashram is exceptionally well suited for this function, only it proved too small. Vratis were seated in 13 circles round Shiva linga and there were other circles on some of the verandas as well. The *Panchavati*, that had recently been converted into a room with glass walls and a proper roof and had been opened in Mataji's presence, was also used for the Puja. From one of the verandas just opposite Mataji's seat, about a dozen devotees hailing from foreign countries, mostly Americans, were watching the proceedings with unfaltering interest. Brahmachari Nirvanananda who conducted the Puja, not only dictated to the participants what to do and what to say, but also along with every *mudra*, *mantra*,

offering, etc explained its significance, so that nothing was done mechanically or thoughtlessly. This was an innovation, heartily welcomed by all. The kirtan between the four pujas was exquisite. In the interval between the first and second puja a Madras kirtan party gave a wonderful performance, Mataji playing the cymbals in rhythm with their music. Later Pushpa and others sang, surpassing themselves. In the small hours Mataji Herself led the kirtan for a while. Mataji was not only present throughout the whole night, but She never even once reclined. She sat in Her place or moved about among the circles of the vratis, encouraging, inspiring and seeing whether everyone had all the ingredients necessary for the ritual. Among those who took part in the puja were some very high Government officials such as Dr. Triguna Sen, Minister of the Central Govt. and Sri Subimal Dutta, I.C.S. (Retd), Chief Vigilance Commissioner. Those who intended to perform only the first puja and then break their fast and vigil could not tear themselves away and remained until the morning. To their surprise they felt neither strained nor fatigued. The sacred night and the fast without a drop of water or food for 36 hours ended with the distribution of fruit by Mataji to all present. The next day also Mataji was very generous in giving darshan.

On the 18th morning She left for Bundh. A car took Her up to Anupsahar. From there the road is not suitable for cars, only bullock carts or jeeps can be used. Mataji was taken in a closed jeep along the very dusty path of about 12 miles. Sri Haribabaji as usual gave Her a spectacular welcome with elephants, horses, gunshots and a band playing religious tunes. Mataji had taken only very few people with Her. Swami Sharananandaji was among those who welcomed Her, but had to leave the next day. Sri Haribabaji had arranged for a very fine programme of satsang for the whole period of Mataji's stay. Swami Akhandanandaji had come from Vrindaban, Swami Naradanandaji from Nalmishar-anya, Sri Ramdas Baba from Gwalior and Pt. Kapindraji from Delhi. Every morning a *Rasalila* partly enacted scenes from the life of Sri Gouranga. Every evening after Sri Haribabaji's kirtan and talk the *Mahatmas* as well as the entertaining Ramabhakta Kapindraji gave lectures. The gatherings became longer every day and continued until 10-30 p.m. On March 3rd and 4th, Holi as well as the birthdays of Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu and of Sri Haribabaji were celebrated in great style. Sri Sitaram Sharandas of Ayodhya sang

'*vadhai*', the story of Sri Rama's birth, beautifully and with deep feeling: At the end he spread out his cloth in the gesture of begging and said to Mataji: "When Rama was born, Kaushalya Ma in her joy took off her jewellery and distributed it to those present. Mataji what will you give me?" Without a moment's hesitation, Mataji left Her seat and went near Sitaramji. With a graceful gesture She folded Her hands and bowed into the cloth, saying: "This little child is giving Herself." The whole congregation was deeply thrilled and people gave lavishly to the inspired singer who kept nothing for himself. The next day Mataji procured 108 volumes of scriptures such as *Upanishads*, *Bhagavata* etc, and presented them to Sri Sitaram Sharandas, for free distribution.

Sri Haridham Bundh is a unique place. We have written about it at length two years ago, when Mataji spent Shivaratri as well as Holi there. Mataji was at Her best in such unsophisticated rural surroundings, and even more so when the atmosphere is surcharged with heartfelt devotion and a rare spirit of service as in Bundh.

On March 5th, Mataji accompanied by Swami Akhandanandaji and Her small party, left for Gwalior at the urgent invitation of Rajmata Vijayaraje Scindhia to be present at the installation of a Shiva linga on the 6th morning and the unveiling of a statue of the late Maharaja the same evening. Arrangements were excellent and Mataji's short visit was relished greatly by one and all. Swamis Akhandanandaji, Sharananandaji and Govind Prakashji of Ramatirtha Ashram spoke in the evening. The young Maharaja gave a moving talk about his deceased father. He related how Mataji's influence had brought about a complete change in his father's attitude to life. Before meeting Mataji, he had never had faith in any religion or *Mahatma*.

On March 7th morning, Mataji and Her people were taken by cars to Vrindaban where Mataji attended the inauguration of a new Radha Krishna temple built by one of Sri Haribabaji's devotees. Mataji remained in Vrindaban only for four days. While Mataji had been in Bundh, Didima and Didi were waiting for Her in Delhi, proceeding to Vrindaban on March 1st. While at Delhi, Didima's health deteriorated considerably, so that her attendants felt quite

¹See Ananda Varta, Vol.XV, 1, May 1967, pp. 48-50.

alarmed, as Didima is 92 years old. But Mataji, although no physical information had reached Her, at once had the *Kheyala* that Didima should get well again and so Didima recovered. Didima accompanied Mataji to Naimisharanya on the 11th and we are happy to state that she kept well there. Only a handful of people were allowed to go with Mataji and so She could have a delightful rest in our youngest Ashram, which seemed to be Mataji's favourite at the moment. One day during Mataji's stay there, Sri Prayag Narayan arranged for a reading of some part of the Ramayana under a banyan tree just outside of the Ashram boundary. Mataji asked him to see that a similar function should take place at least once a year under the same tree, which seems to be rather special.

On March 17th Mataji left for Varanasi. From Naimisharanya She motored to Hardoi Railway Station. The train was late and She had to wait at the station for one and a half hours. There were very few people with Her. Mataji at first walked about on the platform all by Herself and then sat down under a tree. She was in a playful mood. She called a vendor who was selling Sandila laddus (sweets) in earthen pots, bought all the seven pots he had with him and distributed them to everyone who came along: kulls, vendors, passengers, railway staff, etc. Then She got some savoury from another vendor, and at last fruit distributing with full hands. Finally She started singing kirtan of Her own *kheyala*. Now only a large crowd collected, sat down around Her and joined into the singing. Mataji continued for about half an hour, chanting Rama's names, then Krishna's, Shiva's and so forth. She also talked to the people, asking them to repeat God's name and keep their minds on God. None of the people had any idea who Mataji was. It was a delightful interlude, witnessed by only three or four of Her companions. At last the train arrived and carried Her off to Varanasi where She alighted on the 18th morning to be present at Vasanti Puja, the Durga Puja in spring. Navaratri started on March 19th, ending with *Ram Navami*, Sri Rama's birthday on the 27th. The Puja was celebrated in great style and Mataji was in excellent form. She sang for quite a long time on *Ram Navami* day and again the next day, when the image of the goddess was removed to be immersed in the Ganges.

Mataji was expected to leave Varanasi on April 10th for Ranchi where Didima's *Sannyasa Utsava* was to be observed on April 13th. Mataji was due to return to Varanasi on the 17th

morning. On April 19th the first anniversary of the consecration of Ananda Jyoti Mandir was to be celebrated in Mataji's presence. On April 25th Mataji was to leave for Bombay where Her birthday was to be celebrated from May 2nd to May 5th. It was likely that Mataji would spend the rest of the summer in Poona.

Mataji arrived in Varanasi from Naimisharanya on March 18th, in time for *Navaratri* which started on the 19th. The yearly celebration of Vasanti Puja, the Durga Puja in spring has always been a special feature of the Varanasi Ashram. In 1945, when only a small portion of the Ashram had been constructed, Mataji together with Sri Chakrapaniji and Sri Prabhudatt Brahmachariji and others were present at the first celebration. On the occasion special puja for Rama had been performed on *Ram Navami* day, similar to the one described below.

This year the puja started on March 24th (*Sasthi*) in the Chandi Mandap. The traditional *vighraha* of Durga, Lakshmi and Saraswati etc, was small but extremely beautiful and alive and charmed everyone. Mataji was present almost throughout the ceremonies on those four days. She even daily attended the *Mangal Arati* at 5 a.m. which was not at all usual with Her. Mataji was in a wonderful mood and of Her own *kheyala* sang in great ecstasy more than once. Every evening after the *arati*, a Bengali singer used to recite from the Ramayana for about three hours in the courtyard in front of the Chandi Mandap. His rendering was greatly appreciated and attracted a large audience. Mataji remained present daily for the whole of this programme as well.

Quite unexpectedly the grand-daughter of one of Mataji's oldest devotees arrived from Calcutta. At her request a special puja to celebrate Sri Rama's birth anniversary was performed on March 27th, *Ram Navami* day. This function took place in Sri Gopalji's temple called "Ananda Jyoti Mandir". Sri Narayan Swami cut a papaya fruit in half and after removing its seeds, placed a *Narayana Sila* into it. Wrapping the closed fruit into a silk cloth, he kept it in Gopal Mandir near Mataji. At exactly midday, which is the time of Sri Rama's birth, Narayan Swamiji produced the *Narayana Sila* from inside the papaya, to the blowing of conch shells, and put it in Mataji's lap. Under great rejoicing, the *Narayana Sila*, representing Sri Rama, was bathed in curds and turmeric and offered durba grass. Mataji then put a mark of curd and turmeric on the forehead of each one present. Mataji was all inspiration. For

nearly an hour She sang Rama Nama with raised hands, swinging from side to side like the boy She had seen last summer at Kishenpur and also heard him sing: "*Nartan paya, ao pyare, bolo Ramanama.....*" People felt as if Kaushalya Ma and the newly born Rama were actually among them and deemed themselves singularly blessed to have been able to witness this blissful occasion. The next day Mataji sang again before the goddess was taken to the Ganga for immersion.

Mataji remained at Varanasi until April 10th. She would give darshan every evening on the open terrace on the first floor of Ananda Jyoti Mandir. Dr. Gourinath Shastri, Vice-Chancellor of the Sanskrit University used to deliver interesting as well as learned lectures on the *Srimad Bhagavata* every evening. Sometimes there were also questions and answers.

On April 10th, Mataji and Didima with a small party left for Ranchi, where Didima's *Sannyasa Utsava* was observed on April 13th. Mataji had not visited Ranchi for several years. Many devotees arrived from far and near and the residents of Ranchi daily collected in large numbers throughout Mataji's stay. Didima's puja was performed by Swami Bhagavatananda Giri in the morning of the 13th to the accompaniment of kirtan and *bhajans* that were sustained all day whenever there was no other satsang. At midday a feast was given to *sannyasis* and to all present. A renowned Swami of the Ramakrishna Mission had been invited to talk on *sannyasa* in the afternoon. At night Mataji sang and also replied to questions.

On April 15th, Mataji all of a sudden decided to go to Calcutta for a day only. She left by the night train, reaching Calcutta the next morning. Only two persons were allowed to accompany Her. It was Her express wish to keep Her visit strictly confidential. Nobody was therefore informed of Mataji's arrival. From Howrah Station Mataji proceeded straight to Her Ashram at Agarpara. Since Her arrival was completely unexpected She was alone and able to rest for a couple of hours. A few people of Calcutta were now given the good news that Mataji had come. Those devotees had been waiting (some of them for four or five years) for Mataji to grace their newly-built houses with Her presence before occupying them with their families. Like a whirlwind Mataji rushed by car to those various places one after another — eleven in number! and also went to two hospitals to see some sick devotees who had been

sorely longing for Mataji's darshan. At the end She paid short visits to the houses of Prof. Tripurari Chakravorty and Sri Ganga Charan Das Gupta. Sri Das Gupta is now full 100 years old. He and his whole family are deeply devoted to Mataji. From there Mataji motored to Howrah Station to catch the evening mail to Varanasi, where She alighted the next morning after two nights in the train and a very hectic day in between.

On April 19th, the festival of *Akshaya Tritiya*, the first anniversary of Ananda Jyoti Mandir was celebrated in great style by a special puja, performed by Brahmachari Nirvanananda, in the course of which Sri Gopalji was bathed in milk. Mataji was present from beginning to end. The temple was beautifully adorned with flowers and coloured lights. Kirtan was kept up all the time. Mataji Herself distributed the *prasada*.

On April 25th Mataji left for Bombay reaching there on the 26th afternoon. She was met at Dadar Station and taken straight to Her pagoda at Sri B.K. Shah's residence at Vile Parle. From May 2nd to 5th Mataji's birthday was celebrated there itself. All arrangements were quite first class. The atmosphere was full of joy and happiness and everything proceeded without a hitch notwithstanding the enormous attendance. The whole space between Mataji's cottage and the main house was taken up by a pandal which looked very picturesque with some of the trees of the garden serving as pillars. The dais was decorated in Kathiawar style in a really exquisite artistic manner. The guests from outside who had flocked in great numbers even from considerable distances, including Madras, were accommodated mainly in two school buildings in the close neighbourhood. Several devotees hailing from foreign countries such as France, Germany and U.S.A. also took part in the whole of celebrations.

As customary in our Ashram, uninterrupted *japa* was kept up day and night; one hundred *Durga Saptah Satis* were recited by some Pandits in a special room, ending with a fire sacrifice. One morning there was Kumari Puja and a feast and presents given to 108 little girls including a few boys, Mataji taking a very active part in this item of the programme as She always does. It goes without saying that the lepers of Bombay were not forgotten on Mataji's birthday. A feast was arranged for them at their own place. And first and foremost there was of course the main programme in the pandal, which continued from early morning until 10 p.m. or

later, with Kirtan in the intervals. The Rasalila was performed in the morning in the hall of a school in the vicinity. The stage was elevated and very spacious. Mataji would be present daily for a whole sitting on one side of the stage and Sri Haribabaji on the other. So one could enjoy very good darshan of Mataji and Sri Haribabaji as well as the extremely well done dramatic performances simultaneously. After the *Lila* Mataji would give darshan in the pandal. In the afternoon and evening several well-known *Mahatmas* delivered talks. The day ended with *Matri Satsang*, when Mataji either replied to questions or there was music by renowned artists, with a song by Mataji as the climax. *Arati* was performed daily both at midday and at night after the satsang.

On May 4th music continued all night until the 'Tithi Puja' began at 4 a.m. of May 5th. That night the very spacious pandal was not large enough but people sat all over the garden and the verandas and everything as always proceeded with great dignity and solemnity. Mataji lying on a couch in deep *Samadhi* until noon, when She was taken to Her room. After the puja at about 6 a.m. everyone was allowed to ascend the dais to offer his *pranama* and flowers at Mataji's feet while Mataji lay in awe-inspiring silence and complete immobility. The queue of people seemed unending and it took about two hours until the curtains of the dais could be drawn and Mataji left Herself.

For the late afternoon of the same day Mataji had accepted an invitation to Sannyasa Ashram, Vile Parle. Mahamandaleshwara Sri Maheshwarananda showed Her round the various temples of the Ashram. This was followed by satsang in the large open hall. Several *Mahatmas* gave short talks and at the end Mataji sang for a short while. Her *bhava* had not quite worn off and She looked unearthly beautiful and incredibly young on the day She completed Her 73rd year. On returning from Sannyasa Ashram, we found the preparations for the *Nama yajna* of *Mahamantra* to be performed the next day by our Delhi Kirtan party in full swing. After the usual evening satsang, *adhivasa* began and Mataji was of course present throughout and at about midnight started the women's kirtan before retiring to Her room. She came out again an hour or so later and stayed for a little while with the women who were singing kirtan all night, circumambulating round the traditional circular altar. When at 4-30 a.m. Sri Haribabaji arrived for his daily morning kirtan, Mataji was present once more, and after the men had taken

over the *Mahamantra*, Mataji distributed *prasada* to the women. The *Nama yajna* ended at sunset on May 6th. Mataji always sang for the *Purnahuti*.

Originally Mataji was to leave for Poona immediately after the birthday celebration. But She actually remained in Bombay until the 20th of May. Thus Bombay devotees were amply rewarded for their generosity and splendid selfless service to all, by Mataji's presence among them for full 25 days.

The birthday celebrations had been terminated, but as long as Mataji stayed on, the *Rasalila* (which was shifted to the pandal and changed into "Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu Lila"), Sri Haribabaji's satsang at 4 p.m. and evening session from 8-10 p.m. continued in Mataji's gracious presence. Almost daily Mataji replied with great vivacity to very interesting questions after 9 p.m. and one can well imagine that large numbers of people came daily from all over Bombay. Mataji's cottage besieged practically all day, and half the night by those clamouring for darshan and private. However, during the later half of Her sojourn Mataji was taken for a drive to the sea shore or some other solitary place every evening for an hour and a half. This was the only daily holiday she had from the multitude. At midday, after the *Rasalila*, Mataji would sit on the veranda of Her cottage and everyone could line up and offer his individual *pranama* to Mataji and thus had the chance of a short word with Her, or to ask for a private interview and receive her blessing. As a rule She would immediately after grant a number of short interviews in Her room.

On two occasions the evening satsang was held in the centre of Bombay, once at the house of Sri Thakorebhai Patel and once on the lawn of Sri Mafatlal's house at the Cumballa Hill. Both evenings were extremely well arranged and proved a great success.

One morning Mataji visited the Ashram of Swami Akhandanandaji of Vrindaban.

One evening, Ex-Minister Sri Gulzarilal Nanda suddenly appeared in the audience of the evening gathering. Mataji sent one of our sadhus to request him to give a talk, which he did very successfully after a good deal of hesitation.

Another evening a well-known christian saint, who has lived in India for 37 years, Mother Anna Huberta, hailing originally from Germany, attended the evening satsang. The next morning she,

together with an English Reverend Father of the Catholic Church and two nuns had a long private with Mataji. Anna Huberta was deeply impressed and delighted. The next evening 15 of her young novices (who are being trained to work in the slums without converting people) attended our evening meeting and listened with great interest to Mataji's replies. The day before Mataji left for Poona Sri Kamubaba, a famous Mohammedan saint, came to see Mataji. An informal meeting was held in front of Her cottage and Mataji requested him to reply to questions.

A few days before Mataji left, some Bengali and Gujarati devotees' sons received their sacred threads in Her presence.

On May 20th early morning Mataji and Sri Haribabji motored to Poona. A large number of Mataji's party had gone ahead by train the day before, others followed by bus. Mataji had not spent the summer there since 1961. Then the Ashram was new and very small. This time also it could accommodate only a few of Mataji's companions, the rest staying in various houses in the vicinity. Poona is of course more restful than Bombay, but there also Mataji was kept extremely busy.

Early in the morning Mataji usually took a brisk walk in the open grounds adjoining the Ashram. At 10 a.m. She attended the *Rasalila* for one and half hours and then gave darshan for some time. At 4 p.m. and again at 7-30 or 8 p.m., She would come for Sri Haribaba's satsang and after that usually sat on the veranda of the Ashram with a smaller group. A large pandal has been erected in the Ashram compound, where the *Rasalila* and the satsang are held. In the late afternoon Mataji almost daily went for a drive, sometimes to a lake, or up to Kharakvasla gate or some other place, where She took a walk. Sometimes She drove to the Poona University which is near the Ashram. One day She and Haribaba visited Alandi, the *samadhi* of Saint Dhyaneswar, the author of the world famous "Dhyaneswari" (a commentary on the *Bhagavad Gita*). This place is 16 miles distance from Poona. Another day they went to a Shiva Temple at Bhageshwar at the other end of Poona. Mataji also accepted invitations to residences of various devotees.

One day the famous singer Srimati Hirabai Barodekar came to see Mataji and delighted everyone by her inspired singing. Sri Dilip Kumar Roy came several times. Once he gave a recital of his beautiful songs and another day he recited his poetry. Swami

Akhandanandaji paid a visit to Poona and talked in our Ashram about *Bhakti* on three successive nights. On four nights films of Mataji and Sri Haribabaji were also shown.

Mataji was expected to remain in Poona until July 15th and then go to a place near Pandarpur for a few days. She would probably reach Ahmedabad on the 27th where Guru Purnima was to be celebrated on July 29th. Before going to Ahmedabad, She was expected to return to Poona again for a few days, to be present at the opening ceremony of a new cottage that is being constructed for Mataji's use in the Ashram grounds. After Ahmedabad She was likely to visit Bhavanagar and Bhopal in the first week of August before proceeding to Vrindaban where the *Jhulan* and *Janmasthami* festivals were expected to be celebrated this year.

On June 30th the *Rasalila* party left after having enacted at Poona the complete life of Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu with many interesting details that were new to most people. On the last day there was a special celebration. For the next fortnight, Sri Haribabaji was reading out from the life of Sri Chaitanya Deva in place of the dramatic performances.

In the afternoons, Mataji would sometimes go for a stroll in the grounds of the Poona University. There is a beautiful place surrounded by banyan trees there. One day, Mataji sat down under a very old banyan tree. The branches of a banyan tree stretch down to the earth and take root. In this way the tree gradually assumes a gigantic size and can give shade to thousands of people. Mataji pointed out how the branches at first are at a loss where to get rooted until they finally reach the ground. Similarly, the *sadhaka* goes on practising, feeling as if in a void until at last he touches ground. Then only his *sadhana* proceeds purposefully and with new strength. Mataji then became silent and sat in a contemplative pose like a Buddha. All present sat in meditation for sometime. It so happened that not a single person passed by during that period. Then Swami Saswatananda read out an episode from the life of Lord Buddha, when he sat down under the Bodhi tree, saying : " I shall not rise until I have attained to Enlightenment." Another day Mataji took Didima and Didl with a few others to see the tree. Again all stood meditating in silence. In the close vicinity there is the Old Government House, which had to be abandoned because several unfortunate accidents

happened to people staying there. It was believed to be a haunted house. One day Mataji saw the apparition of an Englishman who looked rather pitiful at first but changed into a figure of light. It may be that this was the spirit who had haunted the house and had now been released. On July 15th, just before Sri Haribabaji left Poona, Mataji took him and his party to the banyan tree. Again all stood in silent meditation for a few minutes.

On July 16th Mataji left for Barsi. It is a town in Sholapur District near Pandarpur, which is the most sacred place of Maharashtra. All pilgrims to Pandarpur have to pass through Barsi. Mataji and Her party were the guests of Sri Kantilal Madhvani, a Gujarati family, related to one of the ladies of our Ashram. For the first time they had come for Mataji's darshan recently in Bombay. The old mother dreamt that Mataji had come and stayed in her house with a large number of devotees. Thereupon the old lady pressed Mataji and Sri Haribabaji to visit Barsi, but Sri Haribabaji was not willing. However, as soon as he left Poona, Mataji gave in to the entreaties of the old lady, who by the way is a heart patient and one of her sons is also very ill. A new room had been built specially for Mataji on top of an outhouse which was entirely renovated to accommodate the Ashram girls. Elaborate arrangements were made for the comforts of the large party that accompanied Mataji. Two daughters of the family had arrived from Africa to welcome Mataji in their home at Barsi. The wonder was that both patients kept quite fit and active during Mataji's visit. At Kurudwar, 20 miles from Barsi, Mataji was received by a profusely decorated car, with a band playing religious tunes, with garlands and fruits and a considerable assembly of people waiting eagerly for Mataji's darshan. At Barsi, satsang was held twice daily, attended by a large crowd. Mataji was in a very communicative mood and also sang every single day. There is a *Chakratirtha* and an old well at Barsi and connected with them a legend about the pious King Ambarish, an ardent devotee of Lord Vishnu, who is supposed to have thrown down His *Chakra* in defence of the King. Mataji laughingly remarked that "*Chakradhari*" (Holder of the *Chakra*, namely Lord Vishnu) had drawn Her to this spot like a magnet; so the dream of our hostess bore fruit in the material world.

On July 18th Mataji visited the temple which contains a statue of Lord Vishnu in black stone with King Ambarish sitting at His

feet. The Lord's hand is placed on the King's head in blessing. When offered a boon, he had prayed that the Lord's hand might always remain on his head, he had no other desire. Special puja was performed at the temple in Mataji's presence, attended by an immense throng of pilgrims. On the 20th Mataji again went to the temple, and stood near the image. Unfortunately people have the bad habit of throwing offerings at the deities. A beetle-nut meant for Lord Vishnu struck the back of Mataji's head. She said: "The Lord wanted to teach you not to throw things at Him. It hurts Him just as it hurts me".

Before Mataji left Barsi, the old mother of the house performed an elaborate puja exactly as she had done in her dream.

On July 22nd, Mataji with entire party halted at Sholapur for a few hours at the invitation of Sri Pratap Singh. There also a room had been specially built for Mataji and painstaking preparations made for Her visit. At the satsang Mataji sang and related about Barsi. From Sholapur She returned to Poona, where She stopped from 23rd to 26th July. On the 25th the opening ceremony of a new self-contained cottage for Mataji's use took place. *Akhanda Ramayana* had already been performed there in Sri Haribabaji's presence. On the 26th, foundation stones were laid for a Satsang hall and a Krishna Temple in the Ashram grounds. The same evening Mataji and Her party left for Ahmedabad via Bombay where Mataji halted for a few hours.

Mataji visited Ahmedabad after several years. She put up, as usual, in the compound of the Munshaw family. A very beautiful artistic ceremony to welcome Her had been arranged. Young girls, dressed in Gujarati style, carrying brass pitchers on their heads, stood in two long lines on both sides of the path, singing Gujarati songs. A conch was blown at Mataji's approach. Everyone was deeply moved. A large pandal had been erected for the satsang. On July 29th, *Guru Purnima* was celebrated from early morning. Didi's puja was performed and people queued up to do individual *pranama* to Mataji. Everything was extremely well-planned. Many had come from great distances to pay homage to Mataji and Didi on that auspicious day.

One day, the Governor of Gujarat, Sriman Narayan had a private interview with Mataji for a whole hour. Mataji followed his invitation to Government House where the Gujarati Congress of men and women born in free India had assembled for Mataji's

darshan At the age of 21 they all pledge themselves to serve India. The entire elite of the city was present on the occasion of Mataji's visit. Brahmachari Brahmananda and Pushpa delighted them by their *bhajans* and Mataji also sang. At the request of the young people Mataji spoke to them. She enjoined on them to lead lives dedicated to the service of God in man. Mataji then asked them to fix 15 minutes at a definite time of the day or night to be given to the contemplation of God or Reality for their whole lives. If possible one should sit in meditation during that time, but even if one happened to be travelling or sick or attending on a patient or in any other way prevented from sitting still, one should, under all circumstances whatever, sustain the remembrance in one's mind and refrain from speaking during those 15 minutes. By the strict and punctual adherence to this practice, one would finally be automatically reminded of it even in the event of extreme joy, sorrow or accident. Moreover, everyone participating in this stream of unbroken meditation would be benefited by the combined efforts of all others taking part. Wherever Mataji had gone, in Bombay, Poona, Barsi She urged people to take part in this "*Akhanda Bhagavat Smriti*" (The Perpetual Remembrance of God). A young girl came to Mataji at Ahmedabad, who was shortly going to study at an American University. Mataji asked her also to make propaganda amongst her fellow students for this cause.

Mataji further accepted an invitation to an orphanage called "*Shreyas*", which is run by Srimati Madalasa Narayan, wife of the Governor and daughter of the late Jamnalal Bajaj. Mataji was shown round the entire institution. Mostly widows are employed to act as mothers to the orphans. The children sang to Mataji and for a few minutes there was silent meditation. Mataji asked the children whether they were Her friends and then told them to observe five things as She usually asked children to do, viz (1) To remember God first thing on waking and last thing before to sleep. (2) To obey their parents and elders. (3) To speak the truth. (4) To study well. (5) Having observed those four things, to play, run and jump as much as they pleased.

On August 1st, Mataji travelled to Bhavnagar at the invitation of the Maharaja and Maharani of that State. Mataji and Her companions were put in a very spacious Girl's School, which was renamed "*Matri Mandir*" in Mataji's honour after Her visit. All

arrangements were excellent. Satsang was held twice daily : in the morning on the lawn of the palace called "*Nilam Bagh*" and in the evening in the huge school compound. Several thousands of people flocked every evening. The enormous congregation was well organized and everything proceeded in great quiet and order. Several hundred students of the school requested Mataji to talk to them. On this occasion also Mataji advocated the "*Akhanda Bhagavat Smriti*". At the end She distributed sweets to all.

On August 5th, Mataji returned to Ahmedabad for one night, leaving for Bhopal on the 6th evening.

On the 7th morning, Mataji alighted in Bairagarh near Bhopal and occupied the Ashram, which Sir and Lady Datar Singh had built for Her on their estate in 1965. This was Mataji's third visit to the Ashram situated in beautiful natural surroundings. In spite of the unabating rain throughout Mataji's sojourn, all the dignities of Bhopal came to pay their respects to Her and some of them had private talks : Sri Reddy, the Governor and his wife, the Chief Minister with his family, some other Ministers and Ex-Ministers, several high officials as well as Rajas and Ranis of neighbouring states. A few old devotees arrived from Jubbulpore and other places in the M.P. to spend a couple of days with Mataji. Every morning Sir Datar Singh would read out from a Sikh Scripture. At night after *arati* Mataji replied to questions. The night before She left, some of the people of Bhopal complained that they felt very lonely after Mataji's departure. In response, the Ashram was opened by a simple ceremony and kirtan inaugurated as a permanent-one. It was decided to continue regularly the daily reading of Sikh scriptures and to hold every 2nd Sunday of the month a meeting with *kirtana patha*, silent meditation etc. for all who wished to gather. On the night of August 10th Mataji left for Vrindaban, remaining there from 11th to 13th of August only. She met Sri Haribabaji. *Ramalila*, *Rasalila* and *Ramarcha* were performed during Her stay. From August 15th to 20th Mataji stopped at Varanasi.

It had been expected that Mataji would spend *Jhulan* and *Janmastami* in Vrindaban. Instead of this She was present for both festivals in Kishenpur. Mataji usually blessed Dehradun with Her presence during the two hot months after Her birthday celebrations. This summer Mataji had been to Poona and came to

Dehradun only for sixteen days, namely from August 21st to September 6th. She resided in Her new house in Mr. and Mrs. Khaitan's compound next to Kalyanvan where She could enjoy a certain amount of much needed rest and privacy after travelling. At 6 p.m. She would daily give darshan in the Kishenpur Ashram daily. However, there were so many festivals and celebrations that Mataji was available for very much longer than one hour on most days. Mataji was in an excellent mood throughout Her stay, full of energy and intensity, notwithstanding Her indifferent health. She seemed to compress into those sixteen days what She usually gives to Dehradun in two months. So much happened that was interesting and remarkable, it was difficult to keep pace. From the 23rd to the 26th *Jhulan*, (the swing festival) was celebrated every evening. A new and much appreciated item of the programme was a daily talk by Brahmachari Nirmalananda. On the first day he very beautifully explained the significance of this festival. It is the human mind which is symbolized by the swing. The four strings by which it is held and the fifth by which it is pulled may be likened to the five senses, sight being the sense that has the strongest pull. When God occupies the ever swinging mind it becomes dedicated to Him and thus stilled. After the talk there was beautiful music, puja and *arati*. On August 26th, *Jhulan Purnima*, the kirtan continued all night, interrupted only by half an hour's midnight meditation, which was held in Mataji's presence in the open space in front of the temples. In the evening and all next day *Raksha Bandhan* was observed. Mataji accepted *rakhis* with great patience and in exchange gave another *rakhi* to each one approaching Her. On the 27th morning the swing was dismantled while all joined in the song: "*Jhule, Jhule Nandalala*" with great alacrity and Mataji distributed the fruits that had been suspended from the swing. In her joyous mood She moved around the hall swinging with every woman and blessing the men by touching their heads. On August 28th *Akhanda Ramayana* started in the Ashram hall ending on the 29th at midday. On August 31st and September 1st there was another recitation of the whole of the *Ramayana* at Sadhan Ashram, Jakhan. There is an interesting story to it.

Several years ago, Sri R.C. Sood made a gift of his house and garden (at a distance of about half a mile from the Kishenpur Ashram) to the Shree Shree Anandamayee Sangh and called it

"Sadhan Ashram". His aged mother, he and his wife remained there as *vanaprasthis* and caretakers. He built a set of rooms for Mataji's use on top of the house, the rest of the roof serving as a suitable place for satsang amongst picturesque surroundings. Mataji had stayed there on several occasions. When Mataji came to Dehradun for one day last February, She halted at Sadhan Ashram for a few minutes before proceeding to Kankhal. She had the *kheyala* that She would not see Sri Sood's wife again, who was ailing. In the second half of June, while Mataji was in Poona, Sri Sood dreamt that Mataji told him: "You have not had any reading of the *Ramayana* in your house for a long time. Do it every Sunday". Sri Sood therefore promptly started *Akhanda Ramayana* on the following Sunday and his wife, in spite of her failing health, attended. On July 4th she peacefully passed away in her sleep. When Mataji received the news, She decided that a recitation of the whole of the *Ramayana* should be held at Sadhan Ashram during Her next visit to Dehradun. On August 31st the day the *Ramayana* was started, Mataji went to Sadhan Ashram at 8 a.m. to supervise herself all arrangements and was present at the opening ceremony before the reading. She returned there again in the afternoon. The evening satsang and kirtan were held on the roof, while the *Ramayana* continued downstairs. Mataji spent the night in Her room there. In the morning She again attended the *Ramayana*. When Udas rolled up Mataji's bedding, she found a small white snake below the bedsheet and durrie, just where Mataji's feet had been. Wrapped in paper she took it to Mataji and then had it thrown into the jungle. Mataji knew that a snake had lain curled up below Her feet all night. Mataji asked for the snake and strangely it was found still moving about on the paper. Someone suggested to keep it in a glass jar with a little *Gangajal*. At about 10 a.m. Mataji went to Kishenpur to receive Sri G. S. Pathak, the new Vice President of India, who with his wife and other members of his family was paying a visit to Mataji, first thing after having taken over office. He and his family have been in close contact with Mataji for many years. They arrived during the morning satsang, listening to *bhajans* with great delight. Mataji also sang herself for a few minutes and then told them about the Sadhan Ashram and the snake. We can only presume that the spirit of the late Sm. Sood had come in the guise of the snake to lie under Mataji's feet and be present at recitation of the *Ramayana*. At nearly

midday Mataji and many people present returned to Sadhan Ashram to witness the completion of the reading. No sooner was the *arati* over than someone brought the news that the snake had just died. Mataji at once sent Dasu to Brahma Kund at Hardwar to give *jalsamadhi* to the snake wrapped into the red silk cloth that had been offered at the *arati*. Mataji said : " That day the body died, but this was the death of death". Scarcely ever have we heard Mataji make a statement of this kind. Everybody was profoundly moved.

Sri G.S. Pathak and his family as well as his staff, including the security staff had lunch at the Ashram and took leave of Mataji at 3.30 p.m.

On September 3rd, *Janmastami* (Sri Krishna's birthday) was celebrated. Mataji gave darshan in the packed hall for an hour in the evening and sat by the side of the priest throughout the elaborate puja that started at midnight and took full three hours. Kirtan was sung from the early evening until 3.30 a.m. A *Narayana Sila* had been placed into a large hollowed and closed up cucumber, which Mataji held in Her hands. At midnight the *Narayana Sila* was taken out and worshipped in the traditional way alongside with *vigrahas* of Sri Krishna and Radha. At 3.30 a.m. Mataji sat down in the hall and distributed *prasada* to all present.

Later in the morning, at about 11 a.m., *Nandotsava* (the festival of the riotous joy of the cowherds over Krishna's birth) was observed in the open in front of the temples. Fortunately the heavy rain had subsided for a while just at the right time. As usual, a few devotees were dressed up and danced and as the climax let fall a pot full of curds that was smashed into thousand pieces. Everyone stood round singing merrily. Then Mataji stood on the temple veranda and threw curds into everyone's mouth amongst much laughter and cheering and finally distributed fruits.

One afternoon during Mataji's sojourn at Dehradun, some of the *sannyasis* of the Divine Life Society at Rishikesh came bringing with them about fifteen South American members of the Divine Life Society of Venezuela. They sang to Mataji in Sanskrit, although this was their first visit to India. Mataji said a few words to them and blessed them all.

Another day an old American gentleman, the head of a Yogic School in New York came for Mataji's darshan. He related, how years ago he had been fascinated by a picture of Mataji found on

a piece of old newspaper. He kept the picture with him ever since, although he had no idea whom it represented. Only three years later someone told him whose photo it was, but he did not know where Mataji could be found. Much later he learnt a few details about Ma and now at last he had come from Rishikesh to meet Her in person.

Mataji was expected to leave for Varanasi via Kankhal on the 7th. Only on the 6th morning we heard that due to Sri Haribabaji's illness, Mataji had changed Her plans and was leaving that very afternoon by car for New Delhi where Sri Haribabaji had been brought down from Vrindaban.

Mataji stopped in Kankhal for a short while and alighted in our Delhi Ashram at about midnight. Sri Haribabaji was waiting for Her. She persuaded him to stay at the Willingdon Nursing Home for a few days for medical examination and subsequently went to see him there daily. Sri Haribabaji's devotees performed uninterrupted kirtan in our Ashram day and night for his recovery while he was at the Nursing Home. We are happy to say that his condition improved and he has returned to Hoshiarpur. Sir Datar Singha also happened to be a patient at the same hospital. Mataji paid a visit to him too. Thereafter he suddenly began to recover and he was soon able to leave the Nursing Home.

During Mataji's short stay in Delhi, Sm. Indira Gandhi, the Prime Minister, in spite of her hectic programme, paid a visit to the Ashram at Kalkaji and was closeted with Mataji for about half an hour.

Mataji left for Varanasi on the 10th morning reaching there at night. During the period from 12th to 25th two *Bhagavata Saptahs* were held one after another from September 12th.

Durga Puja, Lakshmi Puja, and the *Divali* are all expected to be celebrated in Varanasi this year in Mataji's presence while the twentieth *Samyam Mahavrata* is proposed to be held at Vrindaban from 17th to 23rd November.

On September 10th night, Mataji reached Varanasi from Delhi. From September 12th to 25th two *Bhagavata Saptahs* were held, one after another. The first one was performed for the late Raja Saheb of Achrol by his widow and brother. The Raja Saheb had been a staunch devotee of Mataji. Sri Srinath Shastri had been specially called from Vrindaban. In the mornings he recited the Sanskrit version in the decorated Chandi Mandap, in the afternoons

he would explain in his lucid, lively and entertaining Hindi. This was the first *Bhagavat Saptah* held in the Anand Jyoti Mandir in front of Sri Gopalji's presence. On the day Sri Krishna's birth was described, there was special *bhoga* in the festively decorated *mandir* and Mataji Herself distributed *prasada* in the evening. The second reading of the *Srimad Bhagavata*, also by Sri Srinath Shastri, was the *Bhagavata Jayanti*, which is a yearly function of the Varanasi Ashram, observed in remembrance of the original *Bhagavata* that was related in ancient times by Sri Sukhdeva to King Parikshit at Sukhital. After many years Mataji once again blessed this celebration by Her holy presence.

At the same time several other functions went on in different parts of the Ashram. One day there was *abhisheka* of the *Narayana Silas* with fifty seers of milk and another day, one thousand and eight tulsi leaves were offered to *Narayana* by Sri Narayana Swami, which took about eight hours. Both rites were performed in Mataji's presence and dedicated to Sri Haribabaji's recovery. There was also *Rudrabhisheka* going on simultaneously.

On September 22nd, Mataji went to see Mahamahopadhyaya. Dr. Gopinath Kaviraj who was lying ill at the B.H.U. Hospital. She asked him to convalesce in our Ashram after leaving the hospital. He accepted Mataji's invitation a few days later and we are happy to say that his health had improved. Ashramites and visitors were permitted to go and ask him questions at fixed hours and the great scholar used to give enlightening replies.

On September 28th, a much loved and revered devotee and ashramite of many years' standing left her ailing body at a ripe old age in Ma's presence. She was known under the name of "Mouni Ma", which had stuck to her since she, long ago, had *mouna* for seven whole years. As is fitting for a *sannyasini*, her body was taken in sitting posture on a boat and immersed in the midstream of the Ganga with a stone slab.

On October 3rd, Mataji went to Naimisharanya with only two companions for three days' rest. Swami Paramananda was there to supervise some building work and a few of the Ashram girls had gone there earlier for solitary *sadhana*. There was no programme, no crowd, and Mataji could relax. On the 7th afternoon she was back at Varanasi. Reports of Sri Haribabaji's condition used to arrive daily by phone or wire. On receiving the news that Sri Haribabaji was leaving Hoshiarpur for Bundh and passing through

Delhi on October 14th, Mataji started for Delhi on the 13th, only to find that Haribabaji had been unable to come owing to a sudden set back in his health. Mataji returned to Varanasi on the 15th.

EIGHTEEN

(Oct. 1969 — Oct. 1970)

Mataji had agreed to be present in Varanasi for Durga Puja at the newly built house of a devotee, Sri Harish Chandra Banerji. The house opening ceremony was performed in Ma's presence. Durga Puja started on October 16th. It was celebrated in great style before a beautiful image of Durga, Lakshmi, Saraswati, etc. as tradition demands. Sri Banerji himself officiated, prompted and assisted by Brahmachari Nirvanananda. A pandal had been erected for the daily satsang in the evening. Dr. Gourinath Shastri, Vice-Chancellor of the Sanskrit University, delivered lectures and Dr. Govinda Gopal Mukherjee, son of the late Sri Prangopal Mukherji, Postmaster General of Dacca,¹ talked and sang beautiful *bhajans*. A large number of devotees had gathered from Calcutta and other places. They put up at the Ashram, but spent most of the time at Sri Banerji's house. On *Ashtami* day, Puja was done to forty Kumaris. On *Vijaya Dasami*, October 20th, Mataji, in a special mood, sang very beautifully for quite a long while.

In our Ashram there was no pratima²; however, regular puja was performed for the whole of *Navaratri*.³ Mataji would visit the Ashram daily, giving a round at all those ceremonies and also seeing Dr. G. Kaviraj who was improving steadily. On *Mahashtami* day, Puja was performed of 108 Kumaris at Ananda Jyoti Mandir and a feast given to them. A devotee dressed up and decorated Mataji along with the Kumaris and Mataji moved about among them playfully with a childlike smile and also ate with them.

On coming to stay in the Ashram after the immersion of the deity, Mataji occupied Her old tiny room in the 2nd floor of the Kanyapith and kept silence without signs or gestures for three days. During darshan time, twice daily, Mataji would stroll up and down the roof and visitors would stand downstairs in the courtyard gazing up to Mataji. Lakshmi Puja was celebrated before a beautiful image of the goddess in the Chandi Mandap on full moon night, October 24th.

On October 25th, Mataji declared that She was leaving for

¹Sri Prangopal Mukherji was one of the first to "discover" Mataji.

²Image of the deities.

³The nine days from New moon to Dusserah.

Delhi again. Haribabaji had in the meanwhile arrived there and was very anxious to see Mataji, but unable to move. Mataji remained in Delhi for three days, proceeding to Kanpur on October 29th. For one day and one night, She stayed in a new cottage which Sri Sitaram Jaipuria had built for Mataji's use. From there She was taken by Sir Padampat Singhania and his wife to the Ashram they had recently built for Mataji. Lady Singhania who is greatly devoted to Ma, had wanted to invite Her for the last few years, but not without building a place worthy to be offered to Mataji. Now at last she had, near the famous Radhakrishna Temple, erected a building consisting of a very spacious hall for satsang and five large rooms with accessories, kitchen and dining-room for the use of Mataji and Her party. The house is far from the hub of the city, in the midst of a beautiful garden with flowers, tulsi shrubs and a fountain, and the roof of the hall commands a full view of the Radhakrishna temple. The new structure was opened with great solemnity and Mataji welcomed by an elaborate Puja. Huge quantities of flowers, fruits and sweets were offered which Ma freely distributed all round. Jokingly, yet very seriously, Mataji called the building "*Vanaprastha Ashram*" and enjoined on her hosts to spend in that Ashram all the time they could spare from their worldly duties. *Vanaprasthis* live a frugal life dedicated to God, practising *sadhana*, reading sacred scriptures, listening to sacred music and religious discourses. The large congregation seemed deeply impressed by Mataji's words. The Singhanias expressed the hope to be able to follow Mataji's instructions by Her blessing.

Satsang was held daily and the large audience would listen spell-bound to the inspired *bhajans* and *stotras* sung by Chhabi Bannerji and Kumari Pushpa, which transported them into a world of joy and peace. In the evening Mataji would sometimes sing Herself. Then Sir Padampatji and others used to ask many intelligent questions to which Mataji responded by beautiful, straightforward replies as they occurred to Her spontaneously, interspersed with stories and parables. At night Mataji was taken to witness the grand *arati* in the Radhakrishna temple. This temple was built as the fulfilment of a long cherished desire of Srimati Rampyari Devi, the deceased mother of Sir Padampatji.

On November 5th, Mataji again returned to Varanasi. During *Diwali* night, on November 9th, Kali Puja was celebrated with

great splendour and there was brilliant illumination all over the Ashram.

On the 10th there was Annakut at the Annapurna Mandir. At this festival of Annapurna, the goddess of plenty, 108 preparations have to be offered to the deity. Hundreds of people partook of the *prasada* and there was poor feeding on a large scale. The following day, Didi performed the ceremony of giving "*Brahma bindu*" (a mark of sandal paste on the forehead) to all present, putting a flower on each one's head and a sweet into their hands.

On the 11th November Mataji departed for Vrindaban, alighting there on the 12th morning. That very afternoon, 65 American disciples of the Himalayan Academy at Nevada, U.S.A., arrived for Mataji's darshan with their Guru, Master Subramuniya. Mataji replied to their questions and then distributed fruits and sweets to them all. They were on a pilgrimage through India and Ceylon. On the 14th, a group of thirty students of Hathayoga from Finland turned up with their Indian Guru. They also were visiting holy places and ashrams and had come specially from Delhi for Mataji's darshan. Their Guru translated Mataji's replies from Hindi into Finnish.

* * *

Ever growing numbers of westerners are being attracted to Mataji. During Her sojourn at Varanasi, there was a regular stream of foreign visitors to the Ashram. So also in Delhi and Vrindaban. Recently an Ashram in Ma's name has been opened in the U.S.A. Last year four young Americans took part in our *Samyam Vrata* at Dehradun. One of them had come to Mataji for the first time six years earlier at several places. During that visit to India, he had taken *Sannyasa* from a Swami in Bengal and been given the name Nirmalananda Giri. The others were his disciples. When after seven and a half months in India they had to return to their country, they decided to start an Ashram at Oklahoma city since they were eager to devote their lives to *sadhana*. "As we look upon Mataji as our guiding light", they sought and obtained permission to call it "Sri Sri Ma Anandamayi Ashram." "We do not pretend that we are Indians or Americans. We hope to be only children of Ma." They claim to feel Ma's presence tangibly during their spiritual practices and on occasions even to have seen Her form in the room.

Letters arrive from people in foreign countries who have vivid and elating dreams of Mataji, or visions of Her while meditating, some also claim to receive instructions. Not only persons who have been to India met Mataji, but also some who only read or heard about Her. Although Mataji had never been out of India physically, Her *Lila* was obviously not confined to this sacred land. When people from abroad asked Her to visit their country, Mataji often replied: "I am always there." For those who are open to Her influence, this is no doubt a fact.

* * *

From November 17th to 23rd our *Samyam Mahavrata* was observed at Vrindaban. Being twentieth, it was not surprising that everything proceeded smoothly, harmoniously and without a hitch. Most of the *Mahatmas* who very graciously enlighten the *vratis* every year by their fine, thought provoking talks, were present, with the exception of Sri Haribabji, Sri Chetan Giriji and Swami Chidanandaji. Mataji sat in the hall for many hours daily and yet found time to attend to visitors, "privates" and any number of things. During "Matri Satsang", She gave some wonderful replies to questions. One evening She gave Her time to Dr. Gourinath Shastri of Varanasi and once to Pt. Kapindraji, who had come from Delhi. Mataji sang several times during that week.

On the fourth day there was a message from Delhi to say that Sri Haribabaji's condition was far from satisfactory and that he was eager to see Mataji. As soon as the meditation was over, at 4 p.m., Mataji therefore motored to Delhi, returning at 10.30 p.m. with good news that Haribabaji's health was not so bad after all. Never before had Mataji gone out of station during a *Samyam Saptah*.

On November 24th *havan* under the neem trees marked the successful completion of the *Vrata*. That day our Delhi Kirtan party performed *Nama yajna*, moving round the Nital-Gouranga Mandir. The Kirtan had already started the previous evening and was kept up all night, also almost inaudibly, during the midnight meditation that proceeded solemnly by candle light. The *Nama yajna* ended on the 24th after sunset with the usual procession of the singers round the compound. When they returned to the hall, Mataji sang "*Dhara lao*" as She often did on similar occasions.

While the number of men and women taking part in the

Samyam Vrata is always more or less equal, we are glad to state that the week is observed with great zest and enthusiasm in several of Mataji's ashrams and also by some families in their homes. There is, for example, a Girls' school run in Mataji's name in the Savitri Devi Ashram at Jullundur where for several years now, the full programme with lectures etc, has been followed. This year some devotees of Dehradun, unable to go to Vrindaban, arranged for satsang from 8-11 a.m. and 3-7 p.m. daily in our Kishenpur Ashram, which proved a full success. Even devotees in foreign countries try to observe the Vrata and the programme as far as possible.

Mataji was to leave for Varanasi on the 27th, but again a trunk call gave the news that Sri Haribabaji, who was strictly confined to bed, wanted to go and see Mataji against the doctor's orders. Mataji thus motored to Delhi on the 26th afternoon, catching the train to Varanasi from there the next morning. Mataji remained at Varanasi for a week leaving for Delhi on December 5th to be with the ailing saint, Sri Haribabaji for one night again. On the 7th night Mataji entrained for Lucknow, from where She drove by car to Naimisharanya on the 8th morning. On the 10th morning, an upstairs room in Mataji's cottage and two guest rooms were ceremonially opened. The *Bhagavata Saptah* also began the same day. Swami Vishnu Ashramji of Sukhtal expounded in Hindi twice daily in the newly completed hall adjoining the *Puran Mandir*, while Pd. Agnihotri Shastri (Batuda) chanted the Sanskrit version in Mataji's room every morning. It was a beautiful, intimate gathering without the usual crowd. Mataji attended throughout. The *Saptah* was followed by a grand *Vishnu yajna* for six days. During that week, Dr. Gouri Nath Shastri read the whole of the *Bhagavata* in Sanskrit in his inimitable way and in the evenings gave an hour's talk in Hindi in the hall. One day *Gita Jayanti* was celebrated in the *Puran Mandir* with Puja and recitation of the whole of the *Bhagavad Gita* in chorus by all present. On the 24th morning Mataji proceeded to Varanasi, reaching the same evening. On the 26th She went to Delhi once more, returning with Sri Haribabaji and his party on January 1st, 1970.

Shri Haribabaji Maharaj, who had been ailing for some time past, was in Delhi for more than two months. He was being treated for his heart trouble by the renowned heart specialist Dr. R. K. Caroli and his able assistant, Dr. D. Sen Gupta. During the course of

Shri Haribabaji's long treatment, both the doctors showed exemplary spirit of service and did their best to give the ailing *mahatma* at least some relief. But in spite of their best efforts, the condition of the 84-year old *mahatma* did not improve and he developed a strong inner urge to be near Mataji. Only to fulfill his wishes, Mataji, in spite of Her indifferent health, paid flying visits to Delhi about 7/8 times during the last four months.

It was, as a matter of fact, not possible for Mataji to remain in Delhi for an indefinite period, as Pt. Gopinath Kaviraj was convalescing in our Varanasi Ashram since October 8, after he had been discharged from the Banaras Hindu University Hospital. Therefore, after considering all the factors, it was deemed convenient for all concerned to shift Sri Haribabaji to Varanasi, so that he could stay with Her at least for some length of time. Necessary arrangements were immediately made and Sri Haribabaji was allowed by his attending physicians to undertake the long journey to Varanasi. We are all the more indebted to Dr. Sen Gupta for taking immense trouble in personally escorting the ailing *mahatma* to Varanasi. He left the next day after explaining the full course of treatment to a team of very competent doctors of Mata Anandamayee Hospital, consisting of Dr. B. R. Thukral, one of the foremost Cardiologists of the city, Dr. U. N. Mathur and Dr. S. N. Mathur.

But it is a matter of deep regret that since his arrival in Varanasi, Shri Haribabaji's condition grew from bad to worse and, in spite of the best efforts of the doctors to save the precious soul, the 84-year old *mahatma* left his mortal coil just sixty hours after he got down from the train at Varanasi. Thus ended the noble and illustrious life of a sadhu, who had been looked upon as the 'Living God' by thousands of simple and unsophisticated villagers of the District of Badaun, for whose service and well-being he had dedicated his entire life. It can be said without the least chance of exaggeration that the last days of the *mahatma*, who was indeed a model of excellence and an invaluable jewel among the sadhus, manifested rather extraordinarily the inner craving of a child to be with his own mother for ever. The passing away of the saint exhibited at the same time the unique and boundless love and affectionate care of the mother for the child, who had all along been so near and dear to her.

At the earnest desire of many of his devotees, the mortal body of Shri Haribabaji Maharaj was taken by road to Bundh in District of Badaun for its funeral on the bank of the Ganges. That tiny and insignificant village had already become hallowed by the presence of the great saint, for the upliftment of which he had laboured and toiled as a part of his *sadhana* during the better part of his life. A week long programme, consisting of various religious ceremonies has been arranged to be held at Bundh from January 12 to 18. At the pressing request of Shri Haribabaji's devotees, Mataji left for Bundh on the 15th afternoon to attend the celebration.

Mataji was expected to leave Bundh on the 19th immediately after the ceremonies were over and reach Varanasi the next day, as Pt. Gopinath Kaviraj, who had been convalescing in our Ashram at Varanasi for the last three months, suddenly developed acute urinary trouble since the first week of January. The latent infection in the bladder also flared up suddenly and the 82-year old great savant was almost in agony. Under medical advice he has been again shifted to the Banaras Hindu University Hospital and is at present under the treatment of Dr. K. N. Udupa, the renowned Surgeon, who happens to be the Superintendent of the Hospital, as well as Principal of the College of Medical Science. We are glad to say that since his admission in the hospital his condition has somewhat improved and the doctors have been trying their level best to alleviate his suffering.

Mataji was likely to pay a short visit to Allahabad in the second week of February, where the Saraswati Puja is proposed to be held on February 10, the Vasant Panchami Day, at the residence of Shri G. S. Pathak, the Vice-President of India. From February 21 to March 7 a fortnight long *Bhagavat Parayan* was to take place in Varanasi Ashram in Mataji's presence with Shri 1008 Swami Akhandanandaji of Vrindaban expounding the original text in Hindi both in the morning and evening. Mataji was therefore expected to be in Varanasi during the *Shivaratri* which falls on March 6.

In the last issue of Ananda Varta we had been obliged to give the sad news of Sri Haribabaji Maharaj leaving his mortal body on the 3rd of January in our Varanasi Ashram. His departure from this world was as beautiful and inspiring as every phase of his extraordinary life of immaculate saintliness. Mataji was sitting by

his side since the evening, while on the veranda outside his room the girls of our Ashram were singing in beautiful modulations kirtan of "Sri Ram, jai Ram, jai jai Ram." Shortly before the end, the picture of his *Ista devata*, Sri Gouranga Mahaprabhu, was taken from the wall and put near him. During the last few minutes Mataji stood up watching the *mahatma* intently. At 1.40 a.m. he suddenly opened his eyes, looked at Mataji and breathed his last. There can be no doubt that it was a passing into immortality, into life eternal. He had been determined to be in Mataji's physical presence at the time of leaving the body and so it was. It may not be by mere coincidence that another well-known *mahatma*, Dandi Swami Sri Somash-ram passed away the same day at Hardwar and that the great, very aged Swami Sri Krishnashram of Gangotri took *mahasamadhi* the same week.

During a quarter of a century, Sri Haribabaji Maharaj played a very special role in Mataji's *lila*. A saint of the highest order, he was utterly childlike and simple and there was not a trace of self-consciousness about the fact that thousands of disciples looked upon him as God-incarnate. He was obviously one of the very few who understood Mataji's real nature. Before Sri Haribabaji's advent, Mataji had been quite unaccountable. She would not commit herself to any time, place or programme. For the sake of Haribabaji She began to attend satsangs at regular hours. He made it a point to take part in Mataji's birthday celebrations and would usually spend the rest of the summer up to *Guru purnima* with Ma. One could then be sure that Mataji would not leave the place during that period. Later he also sometimes attended our yearly *Samyam Vrata* and Mataji would be present at Sri Haribabaji's birthday celebrations at Holi wherever they were held. About four years ago, in January 1966, he had fallen seriously ill and Mataji hurried to Hoshiarpur from Varanasi. When She left Sri Haribabaji ten days later, his health and spirits had visibly improved and he was well on the way to recovery. When during the last few months his heart trouble recurred, Mataji went to Delhi several times to see the ailing *mahatma*. Before proceeding to Naimisharanya on December 7th, She said to him, "Baba, wait for twenty-five days!" Exactly twenty-six days later he left the world on a Saturday. He had been born on a Saturday and his birthday this last Holi also fell on a Saturday. On January 6th his body was given *samadhi* at Bundh.

Mataji remained at Varanasi until January 15th. A number of dignitaries came to visit Ma during that period. One day a group of about 15 German scholars had Her darshan. They asked questions and were delighted with Her simple and straightforward replies. On January 8th the new Vice-Chancellor of the Benares Hindu University, Dr. K.L. Srimali, spent about an hour with Mataji. On the 13th, the Vice President of India, Sri G.S. Pathak, with his wife and grandson, paid a visit to the Mata Anandamayi Hospital. After being shown round and expressing his satisfaction and appreciation of the arrangements and activities of the hospital, he and his family met Mataji and had lunch, at the Ashram.

On January 14th, *Makara Sankranti*, the anniversary of the *Savitri Mahayajna* that had been performed at the Ashram from 1947-1950, was celebrated in great style and with great joy, after a lapse of several years. Mataji was present for the occasion.

The next evening Mataji, accompanied by a few sadhus of our Ashram, left for Bundh to grace with Her presence the religious functions held in honour of Sri Haribabaji. Reaching Anupshar on the 16th morning, She was carried from there to Bundh in a palanquin as the road of several miles is very bad. The festivities had started on January 12th and were in full swing. Swami Krishnanand Avadhutji was in charge of the whole programme. *Rasalila* and *Ramlila* were enacted in Mataji's presence. In the night of the 18th, between 1-2 a.m. *Shiva* and *Visnu Abhiseka* were performed over Sri Haribabaji's *samadhi* which had been beautifully decorated with flowers and banana stems by men from Vrindaban: Fifty-six items of food were offered in *bhoga* to Sri Haribabaji. Sixty-four of the early Goswamis of the *Vaisnava Math* were also worshipped. A sumptuous feast was given to the villagers of the whole district who flocked in their thousands and thousands to pay homage to Sri Haribabaji. They all came and did obeisance to Mataji, imploring Her blessing and guidance since their Guru had left this world.

One evening Mataji related some of Her reminiscences in connection with Sri Haribabaji Maharaj. How he met Mataji for the first time in 1944 at the Sahasradhara near Dehradun. Sri Prabhudatt Brahmachariji had arranged for this meeting. How a year or two later Mataji took Sri Haribabaji to Dacca and to all the places in East Bengal where She had lived (this was before the partition). How She toured the whole of South India together with

Haribabaji and Avadhutji in the winter of 1952-53.

On January 20th Mataji again returned to Varanasi. On Her way, She got down at Allahabad station to see the son of a devotee who was down with polio; Mataji again boarded the same train at the next station. Remaining in Varanasi until February 7th, She usually gave darshan at about 5.30 p.m. but round midday also small groups of devotees would collect outside Her room.

On February 7th Mataji left for Allahabad, spending two nights at the Satyagopal Ashram, which She visited once every year. The first evening She was in an excellent mood, talking animatedly until midnight to an intimate group in Her room. The next day She was in a strange *bhava*. She just did not move. She had to be carried downstairs in a chair to attend the satsang. Everybody was non-plussed and wondering what would happen to the Saraswati puja that was to be celebrated on February 10th. Fortunately, on the 9th morning when moving to the residence of Sri G. S. Pathak, the Vice-President of India, where the puja was held, Mataji walked and during the day became Her normal self again.

Sri G. S. Pathak had come from New Delhi for three days for the occasion and on arrival had at once gone to see Mataji at the Satyagopal Ashram. His daughters had taken immense trouble over the preparations for Mataji's visit and the celebration of Saraswati puja. At the house of Sri G. S. Pathak there is a permanent room for Mataji with a separate entrance from the garden where She had stayed already on previous occasions. On the lawn a charming hut had been constructed for the puja, into which a fine clay image of the goddess of art, learning and *Brahmavidya* (Supreme knowledge) had been placed. A pandal served as a hall for the congregation and for satsang. Since Vasant Panchami is the birthday of Saraswati, a beautiful painting of the *Avatars* singing the praises of the goddess had been specially prepared by an artist and like a fresco covered part of the back wall of the hut, which was decorated with great skill and excellent taste. On the 10th morning the puja was celebrated with solemnity and deep feeling. Swamis Sri Sarananandaji of Vrindaban and Sri Krishnanandaji of Bombay were present and each of them delivered a talk. There was also a musical treat in the form of so-called '*Pala kirtana*' performed by the famous Bengali artist, Sri Ganesh Babu.

108 articles of food were offered in *bhoga* to Saraswati and about 350 people, including a large number of security staff, partook of the *prasada*. Mataji was in a wonderful mood throughout.

On February 11th after lunch She motored to Vindhyachal where She could indulge in two days of comparative solitude and rest until February 13th when She returned to Varanasi. For three days She remained on the 2nd floor of the Kanyapith, occupying Her tiny room with the large roof in front of it. People were allowed to go upstairs only if called and Mataji used this retreat to organize every conceivable detail in preparation of the *Bhagavata Parayana* that was held from February 21st to March 7th. For those three days Mataji gave darshan twice daily strolling up and down the roof for a little, while people were gazing up to Her from the courtyard downstairs and from the Annapurna veranda. On February 16th Mataji descended and thenceforth took up Her abode in Her tiny room on the first floor above the office. She then gave darshan on the veranda in front of Annapurna temple or in the hall of Ananda Jyoti Mandir. One evening the blind Swami Gangeshwaranandaji Maharaj delivered a short talk in the hall in Mataji's presence. Guests had begun to arrive from far and near to listen to the exposition of the *Srimad Bhagavata* by Sri 1008 Swami Akhandanandaji Maharaj of Vrindaban. On the 20th late at night all preparations for the functions were completed.

The Sanskrit chanting of the *Srimad Bhagavata* took place every early morning in the sanctuary of Gopal Mandir, with Sri Agnishwatta Shastri (Batuda) officiating. At dawn on February 21st, Mataji and Swami Akhandanandaji were present at the inauguration of the Sanskrit reading, which was performed to the accompaniment of exquisite kirtan sung by the pupils of the Kanyapith. The *Srimad Bhagavata* wrapped in silk and brocade and placed on an *asana* of sandalwood, was then taken to the pandal in solemn procession. It is believed by the Vaisnavas that Sri Krishna Himself entered the *Bhagavata* on leaving His body. This scripture is therefore worshipped as Sri Krishna Himself.

A spacious, very beautiful and solid pandal had been erected in the hospital grounds to serve as a satsang hall for Swami Akhandanandaji's talks. Walls and ceiling were covered completely with folded orange and white cloth. At the main entrance were placed two life-like clay models of brahmacharis, dressed in

the ochre robe, inviting the audience while high up on top of the gate. Rishi Vyasa sat enthroned to bless everyone who entered. Inside the pandal there were two large platforms at right angles to one another. In the centre of one of them was a carefully decorated wooden couch with a desk for the *Bhagavata* and a cushioned seat for Swami Akhandanandaji. Mataji and Didima as well as several *Mahatmas* had their seats by the side of the lecturer. In the centre of the other platform, lovely sculptures of Sri Krishna and Sri Radha surrounded by coloured lights feasted the eyes. The rest of the platform was daily occupied to capacity by a large assembly of *sadhus* and *sannyasis* who attended with great regularity. The whole function was a unique event. Last winter a similar function had been held for fifteen days at Naimisharanya which is still very fresh in the memory of all who had been present. But this occasion was of a greatly enhanced magnitude. Perhaps this is possible only in Kashi. Swami Akhandanandaji truly surpassed himself. Every day for five hours, namely from 8-30 to 11 a.m. and from 3-30 to 6 p.m. he sat in one posture giving a most brilliant exposition in lucid Hindi of every single chapter of the *Bhagavata* explaining its symbolism and clearing up many doubts. The enormous congregation listened spell-bound day after day. Swami Akhandanandaji is not only a renowned exponent of the *Bhagavata* and very learned, he also has a keen sense of humour and is a master of the art of mixing a funny story or an amusing allusion into very serious and profound teaching just at the right moment to provide relaxation and to keep the interest of his listeners alive.

Mataji was present in the pandal throughout the whole function and often Didima as well. On the first morning She saw Haribabaji in a subtle body sitting next to Swami Akhandanandaji. Sri Haribabaji had in fact planned to take part in this function. Swami Akhandanandaji thus felt that Haribabaji was sitting by his side day after day, which gave him additional impetus and inspiration. A sense of universal love and harmony pervaded the atmosphere. On the day when Sri Krishna's birth was described, there was special *bhoga* in Gopal Mandir and sweets and fruits were distributed to the enormous crowds who attended the talks. Mataji Herself had arranged every detail of it and saw to everything in person.

On March 6th, Shivaratri was celebrated by four pujas during the different phases of the night with kirtan in between. Those who

take active part in the puja have to fast without water for the whole preceding day. In spite of this fact, a record number of 215 people did puja. They sat in circles round Shivalinga in different places of the Ashram, namely in the hall, on its gallery, on the large closed veranda outside of Mataji's room upstairs in Ananda Jyoti Mandir and on the veranda outside Annapurna Mandir. Amongst the participants were even devotees from Madras and Cochin. Mataji was present most of the night, moving from one place to the other at intervals. After midnight She sang with great inspiration, playing the cymbals all the while. Early morning She distributed *prasada* to all.

A few hours later everyone again gathered in the pandal for the last day of the function, while *havana* (fire sacrifice) was performed in the courtyard in front of the Kanyapith to mark the successful completion of an unforgettable religious festival.

* * *

Guests were leaving gradually. Mataji was kept busy from early morning until late at night granting farewell darshan in Her room to every single person before they left for their respective homes. In between She would come outside, either to Annapurna veranda or the hall to meet groups of people who kept on collecting, anxious for a glimpse of Mataji. One morning two Jain sadhus attended the satsang and Mataji had the *kheyala* to disclose for the first time some interesting details of the Jain sadhana She had practised amongst innumerable other sadhanas at the time of her *lila* of *sadhana* at Bajitpur from 1918-1924. Swami Akhandanandaji remained in Varanasi for three more days and on the 10th of March there was a charming farewell gathering for him in our hall in Mataji's presence for the best part of two hours.

A number of foreigners came to see Mataji at Varanasi. Mr. Robert Bosch from Germany with his wife and mother-in-law, devotees of several year's standing, had spent a delightful afternoon with Mataji at Vindhyachal and stayed in Varanasi for the first week of the *Bhagavata*. Several newcomers had private talks with Mataji, amongst them an American journalist and a few French people. Two European Buddhist nuns also came from Sarnath.

On March 11th, Mataji with only three or four companions left by the night train for Lucknow, from where they were taken by car

to Kanpur by Sir Padampat Singhania. Mataji remained for a few hours at his residence where *Maharudra Yajna* was being performed for a week. The whole family had requested Mataji to bless the function by Her presence. Before proceeding to Naimisharanya the same afternoon, Mataji also visited the Ashram that the Singhanias had recently built for Her use.¹

After this followed three quiet days at Naimisharanya. Mataji stayed in Her new room on the first floor and nobody was allowed to go upstairs unless called. On the 15th, Didi, Didi and a party of about fifteen arrived from Varanasi. Even at this secluded spot a French couple managed to find Mataji and the Indian Ambassador in Holland, Sri Dhamiji and his wife paid a visit to Mataji there. One day Swami Naradanandaji came and gave a talk.

Holi was to be celebrated at Naimisharanya from March 21st to 23rd. All preparations had been completed, when all on a sudden on the 19th, one of Sri Haribabaji's disciples, sent by Swami Akhandanandaji came to invite Mataji to Vrindaban for the celebrations of Sri Haribabaji's birthday. Mataji immediately cancelled all arrangements and proceeded to Vrindaban the next day. Trunk calls had to be put through to various places from where devotees were on the point of starting for Naimisharanya to spend Holi with Mataji. They all went to Vrindaban instead.

On Her way to Vrindaban Mataji spent a few restful hours at the residence of Sri Rameshwar Sahai at Lucknow on the 20th evening, reaching Vrindaban the next morning. The same evening there was a function in our Ashram to commemorate Sri Haribabaji's birthday. Mataji supervised decorations and arrangements. A large photo of the *mahatma* was placed on a decorated armchair and puja and *arati* were performed. Sri Swamis Akhandanandaji, Sharananandaji, Sri Ramdas Baba, Sri Chakrapaniji and Pd. Kapindrajji spoke very beautifully on the extraordinary life and character of Sri Haribabaji. The next morning Mataji was present at the *Mahaprabhu Lila* enacted in the hall of Sri Uriababa Ashram. Every one was moved to tears. As in previous years on similar occasions Mataji presented clothes to the actors and also to all sadhus and brahmacharis of Sri Haribabaji. That day about 500 *Vaishnavas* were given a feast in Sri Uriababa Ashram in honour of Sri Haribabaji Maharaj. For the first time *Vaishnava*

¹See Ananda Varga, January 1970, p. 42.

feeding on such a large scale was undertaken by Sri Haribabaji's disciples.

On March 25th, Mataji again left for Varanasi, mainly to see Mm. Pd. Gopinath Kaviraj, who has been convalescing in our Ashram after the recent operation. We are happy to say that the great savant is gradually improving in health.

On March 29th Mataji motored to Vindhyachal, returning to Varanasi after three nights. On April 4th, She boarded the train to Hardwar, alighting at Baghat House, Kharkhari the next morning. Didima and Didi with a few others who had gone to Kishenpur from Vrindaban joined Mataji at Hardwar the same evening. Mataji moved to our Ashram at Kankhal on the 8th. A newly built shrine for Shiva was consecrated there on the 13th and Didima's *Sannyasa Utsava* was solemnly celebrated the next day. Mataji left for Dehradun on the 15th by car.

On the 24th She was to grace with Her presence the consecration of a new temple of Sri Luxmi Narayana at Patlala at the invitation of Rai Bahadur G.M. Modi. Mataji's 74th birth anniversary fell on 3rd May, but the main celebration was to be held this year in our Ashram in Poona from 18th to 25th.

Mataji stayed in Hardwar from 5th to 15th April. The first three days She spent fairly quietly at Baghat House, Kharkhari. On the 8th She shifted to 'Santinketan', our Ashrai at Kankhal. On April 10th She passed the day at Kharkhari where the son of a devotee received his sacred thread in Her presence. That day Mataji visited the Girls' School that is being run in Hardwar in Her name. Many years ago Mataji stayed on that side in "*Pita Kuti*" with Bholanath. It was there that Brahmacharini Udas received her sacred thread. Mataji also visited the Sri Bholagiri Ashram at Kankhal.

At Kankhal She also followed an invitation to the Ashram of Mahamandaleshwara Swami Maheshwaranandaji Maharaj. In spite of his failing health, Sri Maheshwaranandaji agreed to give a short talk in our Ashram on the occasion of Didima's *Sannyasa Utsava*.

We are extremely sorry to say that Sri Maheshwaranandaji suddenly left this mortal world on May 1st in his Ashram at Kankhal. It must be said that the Swamiji, who was not only an erudite scholar but was also widely respected amongst the Mahamandaleshwaras (heads of sannyasi orders) was very much drawn to Mataji during the last few years. He invited Mataji a number of times

to his Sannyasa Ashram at Vile Parle (Bombay), where Mataji was always received with the greatest respect and ardour. It had become almost a regular practice for him to attend in spite of his physical ailments, the annual *Samyam Saptah Mahavratas* as well as Mataji's birthday celebrations every year. The presence in itself of the Swamiji in such functions organised by the Sangha was always an added attraction to all classes of devotees. The masterly discourses which he used to give, whenever he was with us, are still very much fresh in our memory. The sudden passing away of the great saint was all the more poignant as he had kindly agreed to leave for Poona on May 18th to be in time for Mataji's birthday celebrations there. It will be the least exaggeration to say that devotees of Mataji have been very much shocked at the demise of two great saints — Sri Haribabaji and Sri Maheshwaranandaji in quick succession within a short span of five months.

On April 13th, the solemn consecration of a small Shiva Mandir took place at Santiniketan in Mataji's presence. Three *lingas* called Mukteshwara, Amriteshwara and Nilkantheshwara were installed. Many devotees had assembled from far and near since the next day. Didima's *Sannyasa Utsava* was celebrated in great style by her disciples. There was *mangala arati* in the early morning, followed by *Guru Puja* and kirtan. At midday a feast was given to 108 *Sannyasis* and to all guests. In the afternoon some *mahatmas* delivered discourses, among them was the mahant of Sri Bholagiri Ashram. At night Swami Bhagavatananda talked about Didima. The function again ended with *Arati*.

On the auspicious day, which happened to be also *Ashtami* of *Vasanti Puja*, Mataji invested a few of the Brahmacharinis of our Ashram with yellow clothes. A few others received the same colour on May 3rd at Bhopal.

On April 15th, *Rama Navami* day, Mataji visited *Bhagavad Dhama* Ashram and in the evening motored to Kishenpur. She went straight to Kalyanvan, where Sri Rama Chandra's birthday was celebrated since the morning by *Akhanda Ramayana* in Rama Mandir. After some time Mataji alighted at the Kishenpur Ashram. The next morning at 6 a.m. She was again at Kalyanvan, supervising the preparation for the sacred thread ceremony of the Raja of Madhupur which took place later in the morning in Amar Kutir, one of the cottages at Kalyanvan. After the *Purnahuti* of *Ramayana* and the completion of the sacred thread ceremony, everyone

gathered at the Kishenpur Ashram for a feast.

Mataji remained in Dehradun for five days only, yet managed to do an enormous amount in that short period. Her stay was like a continuous festival. Among those coming for Her darshan were inmates of Swami Sivananda Ashram and also quite a number of the European and American disciples of Maharshi Mahesh Yogi. They turned up daily in small groups, as they had already done at Kankhal.

On April 18th evening, Mataji motored to Raipur where She remained overnight. The next morning on Her way to Kishenpur She visited three houses of devotees and the Sadhan Ashram at Jakhn.

On the night of the 20th She left for Patiala at the invitation of Rai Bahadur Sri G.M. Modi, to grace with Her presence the consecration of the *Lakshmi Narayana* temple, constructed in the vicinity of the Sanskrit College which Sri Modi had started some years ago. Festivities had been in full swing already for several days in a pandal adjoining the new temple.

On April 24th evening Mataji left for Delhi where She remained only for a few hours. On the way to the railway station She went to a hospital to cheer up a devotee who had recently undergone an operation.

On the 25th morning Mataji alighted at Balragarh near Bhopal, in the Ashram which Sir and Lady Datar Singh had in 1965 built for Her in the grounds of their farm.¹ Just then the heat wave that was scorching the plains of India had reached its climax. Bhopal experienced its hottest day within ten years. Mainly for the sake of Didima who is 94 years old, our hosts felt deeply anxious and fervently prayed for cooler weather. Lo and behold, the temperature fell by six degrees the next day and it remained pleasant throughout Mataji's stay. In those quiet and beautiful surroundings, Mataji had a really restful time for a few days. At last She was able to get through piles of correspondence. Darshan time was only in the evening after 6 p.m. At night Brahmachari Virajananda used to read out from "Amar Vani" and in that peaceful, undisturbed atmosphere Mataji related generously about olden times when the *Lila* of *sadhana* was going on.

On the night of May 3rd, Mataji's birthday was celebrated by

¹See Ananda Varta, October 1969, (Matri Lila).

the usual puja accompanied by sweet songs. Mataji's wooden couch was right in the open, decorated with strings of *bela* flowers with a curtain made of lines of the same kind of fragrant jasmins. Mataji, as always on these occasions, lay perfectly motionless. *Kumari Puja* of a little Kashmiri girl was performed along with the main Puja. The next day sweets were distributed to all patients of the local hospital. Many people had come from 'Bhopal to witness Mataji's birthday celebration, also several Rajas and Ranis from neighbouring states.

During Mataji's sojourn, most of the dignitaries of Bhopal came for Her darshan. Sri K. C. Reddy, the Governor and his wife stayed quite a long time in Mataji's room. Several Ministers of Madhya Pradesh Government also paid their respects to Mataji. Many of the people of Bhopal had private talks with Her and a few took even *diksha* (initiation) from Didima.

On May 6th Mataji left for Delhi. It had originally been planned to celebrate Ma's birthday in Her presence in Poona during the whole period from Her solar birthday on May 3rd to the lunar *Tithi* on May 24th. But Ma had the *kheyala* to visit three other places as well during that period, namely Bhopal, Delhi and Bombay. In the early morning of May 8th, the opening ceremony of the constructed kitchen and dining hall was performed in Ma's presence. Immediately after, the foundation stone was laid for a cottage for Mataji's use to be built in the recently acquired extension of the Ashram grounds. This was followed by *Akshaya Tritiya* puja performed by several devotees, led by Dr. Gourinath Shastri, Vice-Chancellor of the Varanasi Sanskrit University. At midday sumptuous feast was given to all present. During Her short stay for only two nights there, the Prime Minister Srimati Indira Gandhi, the Vice President Sri G. S. Pathak, Sri G. L. Nanda, Union Railway Minister and many others availed themselves of this opportunity to have even private interviews with Mataji. *Nama Yajna* of the *Mahamantra* was celebrated, continuing until early morning on the 9th. During the night, Mataji's birthday puja was performed in grand style at the *Panchavati*. Mataji's forty-eight hours in Delhi were an uninterrupted festival. A throng of four to five hundred people were present in the Ashram day and night, enjoying Mataji's darshan to their heart's content.

On May 9th morning, Mataji boarded the train to Bombay reaching there the next morning. She stayed for three nights in

Her special cottage at Vile Parle within the compound of the house of Sri B. K. Shah. This was a comparatively quiet period after the two hectic days in Delhi.

Mataji motored to Poona on the 13th morning. Mataji's birthday celebrations had been carried out at Poona with full vigour since May 3rd. Swami Paramananda, Brahmachari Nirmalananda and a few others were already there in the Ashram to assist the local devotees. Swami Krishnanand Avadhutji had also arrived with a *Rama Lila* party who performed for 2½ hours daily from May 4th to 24th. Besides the *Rama Lila*, there was kirtan, chanting of the Ramayana and the daily recitations from the *Gita*, *Chandi*, *Upanishads* and *Bhagavata* that form part of the Ashram routine. A spacious pandal had been provided for the satsang. Another small structure, next to the pandal, served for the recitation of one hundred *Durga Sapta Satis* performed by several pandits. In a tiny little hut made of bamboo matting, *akhanda japa* was sustained day and night. A spacious new dining hall, kitchen and store rooms were also ready for use.

As soon as Mataji arrived, she and Didima occupied the new cottage, which had been recently built for Mataji's use by Sri and Srimati Bhagwandas P. Nangpal. It is worth mentioning here that it was the Nangpals who very kindly donated the existing Ashram building to the Sangha for the purpose of starting an Ashram in Poona.

During the last and main week of the celebrations, namely from May 18th to 24th, the Swamis Sri Akhandanandaji, Sri Vishnu Ashramji, Sri Sarananandaji, Sri Avadhutji and Sri Jogesh Brahmachariji daily delivered talks from 7-30 a.m. and again in the evening. At 9-30 a.m. Sri Hara Govinda's party enacted the *Rasa Lila* and in the afternoon there was *Rama Lila*. The climax of every day was, as usual, Matri Satsang at 9-30 or 10 p.m. when Mataji replied to questions or sang. Every morning punctually at 7-30 Mataji appeared in the pandal and attended the satsang for long hours. A decorated chair with Sri Haribabaji's photo had also been placed on the stage of the *Lila*.

On the *Buddha Purnima*, May 21st, the ladies performed an all night kirtan of *Ma Nama*. Mataji came in the early morning before the completion and distributed *prasada* with full hands to all who had participated throughout.

A delightful function is always *Kumari Puja* and a feast given to

108 *Kumaris*, including a few little boys. Mataji was playing and eating with the children as one of them, while the Brahmacharinis of our Ashram walked along the lines of the *Kumaris* performing *arati* to them.

For the *Tithi puja* on the 24th night, the *Durga Sapta Sati* hut was joined to the main pandal and Mataji's decorated couch placed there, with elevated seats for the *Mahatmas* by Her side. There was pin-drop silence in the entire pandal as about 550 people observed the puja going on and Mataji lay completely still from 3 a.m. to 10 a.m. when She slowly rose and was taken to Her room.

On the 25th evening there was *adhivasa* of *akhanda* kirtan of *Mahamantra*. Mataji was present throughout and then started the women's kirtan that continued all night, the men taking over at sunrise on the 26th and continuing until sunset, when Ma Herself led the kirtan. During the night Mataji came three times and also joined into the singing. Some of our Delhi kirtan party had come and their kirtan is always inspiring and unforgettable.

The devotees of Poona had taken great trouble to make the necessary arrangements and everything proceeded in great joy and harmony. The attendance was large, as every year for Mataji's birthday. Devotees had flocked from all over the country, including the South.

From May 26th they began to disperse. Now a somewhat quieter period followed, although visitors from Bombay and other neighbouring places kept on pouring in and Mataji had to grant numberless "privates". One day H.H. the Gaekwar of Baroda came to see Mataji. Another day Dr. Vikram Sarabhai, the Chairman of the Atomic Energy Commission also had a private interview. On a number of occasions Sri Dillip Kumar Roy and Sm. Indira Devi paid visits to our Ashram. They very kindly accommodated for about ten days in their beautiful Ashram Mahamahopadhyaya Dr. Gopinath Kaviraj, who also arrived on May 28th for a change. We are happy to say that his health has very much improved.

Mataji was also having a more or less quiet period those days. Almost every evening She used to go out for long drives, giving darshan in the morning at 11-30 and 6-30 in the afternoon. At 9 p.m. Brahmachari Virajananda would read out from the "Amar Vani" and according to Her *Kheyala* Mataji would respond

to questions with longer or shorter comments.

Mataji was expected to remain in Poona till about the end of June, after which She was likely to visit 2/3 places in Maharashtra and return to Poona again in time for the *Guru Purnima*, which is going to be celebrated on July 18th. Further programme after that is not yet definitely known.

We are however happy to note that the Durga Puja is scheduled to be performed in our Ashram at Kalkaji, New Delhi in Mataji's presence from October 6th to 10th. Our readers will be interested to learn that both the Lakshmi Puja and the Kali Puja (*Dewali*) are also expected to be held in the New Delhi Ashram on October 14th and 29th respectively. The next *Samyam Saptah Mahavrata* is proposed to be held at Shuktal (Muzaffarnagar) this year from November 6th to 12th at the cordial invitation of Sri 108 Swami Vishnu Ashramji Maharaj.

Mataji was in Poona since May 13th. We have already reported in detail about the celebrations of Her birthday and after. In the middle of June Mataji was to visit some places in Maharashtra, when Didima developed breathing difficulty. The doctor prescribed a few week's complete rest for her. Mataji therefore postponed Her trip. Didima rested for about a fortnight, after which her health seemed normal.

In the later part of June Mataji followed invitations to the houses of several devotees, among them the Rajmata of Baroda who had met Mataji for the first time this summer only. Satsang had to be held in sheds, since Mataji did not enter the dwelling of a householder. On one occasion it started raining heavily and the wind blew the rain into the shed from the sides. Our hosts felt quite desperate, being unable to protect the gathering from the inclemency of the elements. Mataji said laughingly: "What is the use of worrying? Just sing kirtan!" She Herself began to sing, "Radhe Govinda" and the whole congregation joined in enthusiastically not heeding the pouring rain. In a few minutes the sky had cleared up and the gathering proceeded undisturbed.

Mataji used to go for a drive on Kharakvasla Road almost every evening and then walked for a mile or more accompanied by a number of Brahmacharis and Brahmacharinis. Dr. Gopinath Kaviraj also often walked with Her.

On June 28th, Mataji paid a visit to the Ashram of Sri Dilip Kumar Roy. The great poet and singer sang beautifully before

Mataji.

On July 2nd, Mataji together with Didima, Didi and a large party of ashramites and devotees motored to Miraj, 140 miles from Poona, at the invitation of Sri Thakorebhai Patel, a devotee from Bombay, who owns some mills at Miraj. It is a health-resort, renowned for its bracing air and wholesome water. There is a T.B. Sanatorium also at Miraj. Mataji and Her entire party were put up at the "Tilak Vidya Mandir" school. One day the students of the school gave a demonstration of *asanas* in which they are experts. Their performance was much appreciated.

On July 3rd, Mataji and Didima motored to Nipani in Belgaum at the pressing invitation of Sri Chandrasekhar Swami, Head of the Department of Comparative Philosophy in Varanasi Sanskrit University, who happens to be the head and Guru of the famous Shivacharya Swami Hiremath at Nipani. Dr. Gopinath Kaviraj was already there. Dr. Gouri Nath Shastri, Vice-Chancellor of the Sanskrit University and a few others accompanied Mataji from Miraj. Mataji was taken in a two-mile long procession in an open car followed by hundreds of citizens who all walked on foot. The entire population of the town numbering several thousands seemed to have come out to welcome Mataji and to pay homage to Her. Eleven arches had been erected along the road. Women carrying copper vessels went on sprinkling water in front of the car. As Mataji passed, people came out of every house waving lights and incense in worship. It was indeed a moving and unique sight.

Sri Dattabal had requested Mataji to visit the meditation hall of his "Divine Mission" if ever She came to Kolhapur. On Her way back from Nipani, Mataji had to pass through Kolhapur but She did not know Dattabal's address. Mataji went to the famous Mahalakshmi Temple at Kolhapur. In the very crowded bazar She by chance met a devotee who knew the address and who had been praying fervently for Ma's darshan. At night Mataji was again back at Miraj where She remained until July 9th. Satsang was held twice daily. One day the renowned singer, Sri Vinaya Pattavardhan sang to Mataji. Another day She went to see the famous Ganesh temple which is made of black stone.

On the 9th, Mataji proceeded to Barsi where She had been for the first time last summer.¹ Twenty-two persons accompanied

¹Ananda Varta, October 1969, pp. 190-91.

Her, while the rest of the party, including Didima, returned to Poona. At Barsi Mataji was in a very animated mood. She sang and talked as during Her previous visit. Like last year She also visited the mandir of Lord Vishnu and King Ambarish where special puja was celebrated.

On July 12th, Mataji returned to Poona. On the 13th the opening ceremony of a new guest-house in the Ashram grounds was performed in Mataji's presence.

Mataji had wanted to go to Kankhal (Hardwar) for *Guru purnima*. But the devotees of Poona and Bombay just would not let Her go. Some of them pleaded that they had never before been with Mataji on that auspicious day and they took great trouble to persuade Her to remain in their midst. Mataji finally responded to their entreaties, leaving for Bombay on July 19th, the day after *Guru purnima*. The festival was observed in great style on July 18th. Excellent arrangements had been made. The attendance was enormous. Mataji felt inspired to sing for quite a long while. She sang "Krishna Kanhaiya," "Krishna Gopal" and "Pran-gopal re". It was as it were, an invitation to Gopal to take his abode in the temple for Him which is under construction in the Ashram grounds with an adjoining hall for satsang.

During Her short stay in Bombay for two nights, a number of dignitaries came to see Mataji, such as Swami Akhandanandaji, Swami Chinmayanandaji, the Secretary of Sri Vinoba Bhave, the Rajmata of Gwallor and the head of the R.S.S. (Rashtriya Swayam Sewak Sangh), who was still in hospital after a cancer operation.

On July 21st, Mataji left for Varanasi with Didima and Didi to see the ailing Dr. Gopinath Kaviraj and Sri Mukti Maharaj, who is one of the last surviving disciples of Holy Mother Sharada Devi. Both of them have been staying in our Ashram at Varanasi.

On July 29th, Mataji and Didima travelled to Kankhal, reaching there the next morning. Mataji remained in the Kankhal Ashram until August 1st and then moved with Her entire entourage to Jaipuria Bhavan at Ramghat, Hardwar, where a *Bhagavata Saptah* was held from August 3rd to 10th, with Sri Srinath Shastri of Vrindaban officiating. Sri Sitaram Jaipuria of Kanpur who unfortunately was very ill and therefore unable to come himself had put the greater part of the newly built Jaipuria Bhavan at the disposal of Mataji and Her party for the entire period of Her stay

which extended over *Jhulan* and *Janmastami*. This *dharmasala* is a beautiful four-storeyed structure consisting of forty rooms, spacious courtyards, kitchens, bathrooms etc., situated directly on the Ganges. An ideal place for large gatherings. From August 4th, Mataji motored to Kankhal almost every evening, spending the night there in quiet and solitude.

The Ashram at Kankhal had so far been known by its old name "Shantiniketan." The owner of the property Sri Nital Basu Mallik, who happens to be a devotee of Mataji, recently made a gift of the same to Sri Sri Anandamayee Sangha in the memory of his parents. The Gift Deed was registered only on July 31st and in the morning of August 7th it was formally inaugurated in Mataji's and Didima's presence as a regular Ashram. Brahmachari Jogeshda who is in charge of the Kishenpur Ashram and a few others were called for the occasion and special *bhoga* was offered in the Shiva Mandir at midday. Mataji returned to Ramghat as usual by 11 a.m. to be present during the last half hour of the Sanskrit reading of the *Bhagavata* followed by arati.

On August 8th, Sri Krishna's birth was described in the course of the reading of the *Bhagavata*. This is always a special occasion. Didima was present in her seat and Mataji noticed her extraordinary radiance that day. Late in the evening the car that almost daily used to take Mataji to Kankhal was sent back. Mataji said She had no *kheyala* to spend the night at Kankhal. At about 1 a.m. Didima got up and went to the bathroom. On returning to her room she felt uneasy. Her attendant wanted to call Mataji, but Ma had already left Her room and came of Her own accord. Didima could not breathe normally. Mataji sat down by her side and gently massaged her chest, yet there was no improvement. At nearly 1-30 a.m. Didima suddenly opened her eyes, looked at Mataji, tried to raise her hands by way of *pranama* and breathed her last. Her room was directly on the bank of the Ganges, the music of its streaming filled the atmosphere. In this simple and beautiful manner, in the most blessed surroundings, under the most auspicious circumstances, ended the life of the holy woman who had been chosen by Providence to give birth to Sri Anandamayi Ma and to bring Her up. Not only that : to be later Her closest companion for 32 years as a *sannyasini*.

Trunk calls were put through first to Varanasi and then to all our other Ashrams. From early morning disciples and devotees be-

gan to arrive from Dehradun and Delhi. Later in the morning Didima's body was lifted into a car and taken to Kankhal Ashram in sitting posture. It remained all day long in the lotus pose on an elevated seat on the veranda of the Ashram, dressed in silken garments, the forehead adorned with ashes. The face looked entirely beautiful, serene and fresh until the late evening when the body was given *samadhi* in the garden of the Ashram.

Mataji went to Kankhal after the Sanskrit reading of the *Bhagavata* at about 11 a.m. More and more devotees collected from many places. Excellent singers arrived from Delhi and the kirtan could be kept up with vigour until 10 p.m. Someone came from Jullundur where no information had been sent. He had been prompted by a dream to hurry to Ma without delay. A few others in different places had also dreamt. By 2 p.m. devotees arrived (partly by plane) even from Bombay. At 6-45 p.m. Didima's only son, Sri Makhan Bhattacharya came from Varanasi with the General Secretary of the Sangha and Brahmachari Nirmalananda. Then only the final rites were performed. The Mahant of "Nirvani Akhara," the Ashram of Didima's Sannyasa Guru, had come earlier in the day and his advice was sought as regards the procedure and he himself provided some of the necessary paraphernalia. Hundreds and hundreds of people had darshan of Didima in *Mahasamadhi* in the course of the whole day. A solid *samadhi* had been built of bricks, the inner walls made of marble slabs. By about 9-30 p.m. the body was placed into it in sitting posture. The whole function was extremely inspiring and serene.

The next day, August 10th was the last day of the *Bhagavata Saptah*. On the 11th morning there was *havan* (fire sacrifice) and the recitation of the whole of the *Bhagavad Gita*. Immediately after its completion, *Akhanda Ramayana* was started in Didima's room at Ramghat in Mataji's presence. It was followed by the reading in Hindi of the *Devi Bhagavata*, the *Bhagavata* twice and again *Ramayana*, ending with *Yoga Vasistha*. In this manner the uninterrupted reading of Sacred Scriptures was sustained day and night until August 25th by all present taking turns. At Kankhal the *Shiva Purana* and the *Ramayana* were read in the day only.

On several days Brahmins in small numbers and beggars were fed and given presents at Kankhal. On August 20th, Mataji went to Rishikesh to grace with Her presence feasts that were given to *sannyasis* on behalf of Didima's *Mahasamadhi* in Sri

Sivananda Ashram and Kailash Ashram. On this occasion, Swami Sri Vishnudevananda, the aged Sannyasa guru of Sri Swami Sivananda Saraswati and also the Guru of Sri Swami Chetan Giri, met Mataji for the first time. He is the head of the Kailash Ashram. On August 23rd, which was the 16th day of Didima's passing, a special celebration was held at the Kankhal Ashram. Uninterrupted *japa* was kept up all day in Didima's room upstairs and uninterrupted kirtan downstairs, Mataji herself singing several times and starting new tunes. Four pujas were performed that day, namely of Narayana, Shiva, Durga and Giriji (Didima). Another puja of Giriji was performed at 1-30 a.m. (the time of Didima's passing) in Giriji's room at Kankhal by a Brahmacharini who had come from Varanasi. Mataji and those who spent the night at Kankhal were present. In spite of acute scarcity of space and rain at intervals, food was served in leaf bowls at midday to all present and also distributed at Daksheshwar Temple.

On other days *Daridra Narayana Bhojan* (feeding of the poor) was arranged at Har-ki-powri on a large scale. About one thousand poor were fed. The final and biggest *bhandara* was held on August 25th at the "Nirvani Akhara", at Kankhal, which has been amalgamated with the Ashram of Sri Mangal Giri, Didima's Sannyasa Guru. Five hundred *sannyasis* were given food and clothes and also sixteen special presents. Mataji attended, accompanied by a very large number of devotees who had arrived for the occasion from all over North India. At our Varanasi Ashram also two hundred *sannyasis* were entertained to a feast on behalf of Giriji and about three hundred poor were fed. There was sadhu feeding, on a smaller scale, kirtan and talks about Didima in most of our Ashrams. Giriji's disciples and devotees of their own wishes contributed generously to all these functions.

In between, *Jhulan* was celebrated at Ramghat every evening from 13th to 16th August in the customary manner. *Vigrahas* of Sri Krishna and Sri Radha were placed on a profusely decorated swing and Brahmachari Nirmalananda performed puja to the accompaniment of beautiful songs. Next to Mataji's seat there was a seat for Giriji with her garlanded picture. A large swing had also been prepared for Mataji's use, but She did not sit on it the first day. Afterwards Ma placed Didima's picture on it at the end of the function and then sat on the swing just for a second, so as to

satisfy those who had taken much trouble over its decoration and were anxious to see it used by Mataji.

On *Jhulan Purnima* there was midnight meditation in the open courtyard. At 1 a.m. Mataji drove to Kankhal, as a function was held there the next early morning with puja and *havan*. It was August 17th, the day of the *Raksha bandhan* festival. Already from the evening before, people had started tying bracelets (*rakhis*) round Mataji's wrist, receiving *rakhis* from Her in return. This continued almost all day long.

On August 24th, *Janmastami* (Sri Krishna's birthday) was celebrated by a solemn midnight puja which started at 11-30 p.m. and continued for nearly two hours. At 1-30 a.m. another puja was performed in Giriji's room. The attendance was extremely large as people had arrived from everywhere for the *Purnahuti* of the function held in honour of Dildima, which was to be the next day.

On the 25th morning *Nandotsava* (frolics of the *gopas* and *gopis* after Sri Krishna's birth) was observed. Although Mataji was in a hurry to go to Nirvani Akhara for the *sannyasi* feeding, She gave Her full attention to this joyous festival. The men were singing kirtan, dancing round *vigrahas* of Sri Krishna. Mataji joined in the singing and danced a few steps with the woman who was dressed up as a *gopi*. After a small vessel containing curds fell down and broke into pieces, as tradition demands, Mataji went out into the open courtyard in the pouring rain, surrounded by the whole crowd of devotees. Someone held a large bowl full of curds in front of Her. With such swift and skilful movements Mataji threw curds into every one's open mouths and all over them that in a few minutes every single person had received his or her share. Mataji was in a great mood, full of joy and *bhava*. She then entered Giriji's room, where the reading of scriptures (that had gone on for full 15 days without a break) was now brought to an end and *arati* performed. When Mataji came out of the room, She moved like lightning among the throng of men and women, touching the head of every single person in blessing.

Mataji was to motor to Dehradun in the early afternoon after returning from "Nirvani Akhara", but it became late in the evening. On Her way Mataji first went to Baghat House, Kharkhari, where the stepmother of the Raja of Solan was

given *Atur Sannyasa*¹ by Swami Hridayananda of Sivananda Ashram. Then Mataji went once more to Kankhal, reaching Kish-enpur only at 10-30 p.m. Mataji was to board the train to Delhi from Dehradun on the 26th evening, but She had the *kheyala* to return to Kankhal for some work that had been left undone. She therefore drove to Hardwar already at 2 p.m. and got into the train from there. During the few hours spent at Dehradun a packed full hall of people had darshan in the morning. Mataji also visited Kalyanvan and then a devotee at Rajpur who, aged 95 and confined to bed, was pining to see Mataji once more in this life.

On August 27th, Mataji reached Delhi, leaving for Vrindaban on the 28th. A *Bhagavata Saptah* was held there from September 1st to 8th. Mataji was expected to be in Gwalior for five or six days from the 9th. Swami Akhandanandaji is expounding the *Bhagavata* there for a whole month. After Gwalior Mataji might spend a few quiet days at Solan and before the end of September would go to Delhi in time for the Navaratri and Durga Puja. It has already been reported that the Luxmi Puja as well as the *Divali* and *Annakut* festivals also are scheduled to be held in our Delhi Ashram in Mataji's presence. Soon after that She was likely to leave for Shuktal where the *Samyam Saptah* will now commence from November 4th, and not from 6th as already announced.

Mataji stayed in Vrindaban from August 28th to September 9th. A *Bhagavata Saptah* was held there from September 1st to 8th. Apart from this function, *akhandajapa* was kept up day and night, although there were hardly enough people to take part. The girls of our Ashram were asked to choose one hour each during the night which should be reserved for *japa* also in future as a regular practice. Visitors kept on arriving from Delhi almost daily for Mataji's darshan. One day Mataji went to see the *Rasalila* at the Uriababa Ashram.

Following an invitation of H. H. Rajmata Vijaya Raje Scindia, Mataji motored to Gwalior on September 9th. There She attended for a few days *Bhagavata Parayana* by Sri Swami Akhandananda Saraswati, which took place in the hall of Sri Satyanarayana Mandir. Mataji was present daily for three hours in the morning and three hours in the afternoon. One day a public reception was given to Mataji and to Swami Akhandanandaji at the Chamber of Commerce

¹*Atur Sannyasa* is given to people who are likely to pass away soon.

Building. The hall was packed to overflowing. Swami Akhandanandaji and a judge gave discourses, while Mataji said two or three sentences only. She, however, sang kirtan for over half an hour. The *Bhagavata Paksha* having been completed on the 14th, Mataji left for Solan the next day via Delhi where She halted at the railway station for two hours, reaching Her destination on the 16th morning.

At Solan She had a really restful time, such as She had not known for years. She had brought only a very few companions with Her. The people of Solan were asked to come for Mataji's darshan in the evenings only, when satsang was held for about one and a half hours. Local devotees recited from the Ramayana and performed kirtan. Many came from considerable distances, since Mataji had not been to Solan for several years. Most of the day Mataji spent quietly, except for dictating a few letters and attending to special visitors off and on.

This short and sweet interlude changed abruptly into intense and concentrated activity as soon as Mataji reached Delhi on September 24th morning.

NINETEEN

(October 1970 – October 1971)

Preparations for the forthcoming Durga Puja were in full swing. The celebrations of Durga Puja (7th to 10th of October), Lakshmi Puja (14th of October) and Kali Puja (29th of October) were of a rare and overwhelming magnitude and solemnity. The divine presence was overwhelming. Everything connected with those festivals was carried out well nigh to perfection. Mataji remarked: "Such a puja we have never had before and are not likely to experience ever again." There is a Committee in Delhi that distributes prizes for the best Durga Puja every year. Our Ashram was awarded the first prize for the beauty of the image as well as for the quality of the worship. The prize consisted of a fine bronze statue of Nataraja, the dancing Shiva. Someone exclaimed: "Lord Shiva was so pleased with the intensity of the worship of his consort and His whole family that He came in person to take His permanent abode in our Ashram." Everything was done on a large scale. On Ashtami, Navami and Dasami, every single person who came for darshan was asked to sit down and partake of the *bhoga prasada*. In this manner, about five hundred people were entertained to a meal on each of the three days. An enormous pandal had been erected for the congregation in front of the *Panchavati* which served as the sanctuary. There was extremely lovely music throughout, performed mostly by Kumaris Chhabi Bannerji and Puspa and Brahmachari Brahmananda. Moreover, concert was given by Radio artists, both vocal and instrumental, and a Bengali party sang 'Kali Kirtan'. The climax was, as usual, provided by Mataji herself who sang with great *bhava* on Navami day after the *bhoga arati* and even more so on Vijaya Dasami day after the symbolic immersion.

Every day before the puja began, satsang was held. It was our good fortune that we had inspiring speakers: Sri Chaitanya Giri Maharaj, Sri Swami Vishnu Ashramji, Sri Avadhutaji and others. One afternoon *Rama Lila* was performed by Sri Avadhutaji's party. Every evening Professor Tripurari Chakravarti talked about the Valmiki Ramayan in his unique way, speaking Bengali, Hindi, Sanskrit and English alternately.

The number of guests from all over India was very large. They

were accommodated in a school of the neighbourhood and in tents in the Ashram compound. The attendance of the citizens of Delhi and New Delhi was greater than ever.

It goes without saying that many Government officials took this opportunity of meeting Mataji. The Prime Minister, Sm. Indira Gandhi came twice, once in the beginning of Mataji's sojourn and then on Ashtami day during the puja. Mataji was in the Puja Mandap and the door was closed. As soon as it opened, Mataji with a sweeping gesture presented a profusion of flowers and a special garland to Sm. Indira, who was sitting right in front. The Vice-President of India, Sri G.S. Pathak and his family were regular visitors all along. Among other dignitaries who came for Mataji's darshan were the Congress(O) President Sri Nijalingappa, Acharya Kripalini and Sm. Sucheta Kripalini, Sri Gulzar Lal Nanda, Dr. Triguna Sen, Sri K. K. Shah. Also the Rajmata of Gwalior, the Rajmata and Maharaja of Baroda, Maharaja Karan Singh of Kashmir, the Maharaja of Bhavnagar, the Rani of Mandi, the Maharaj Kumar of Karauli. On October 3rd six judges of the High Court and their wives had an interview with Mataji, asking philosophical questions. They were meeting Mataji for the first time and were deeply impressed by Her terse, pithy and witty replies.

On October 4th, Mataji and her whole party followed an invitation to Dalmia House where satsang was held in the morning. On October 11th a feast was given to sweepers and poor people and clothes were distributed to them. The entire police force present was also entertained to a sumptuous meal and Mataji herself distributed fruits to them. On the last day of Mataji's stay, October 15th, She called the children of the neighbouring Chandralok colony and taught them to sing "Sri Ram, jai Ram, jai, jai Ram" and then presented a length of cloth to each child.

That night Mataji left for Hoshiarpur, where She alighted on October 16th morning and remained for three days at the Satchidananda Ashram. The devotees of Sri Haribabaji Maharaj had clamoured for Mataji's presence at Hoshiarpur ever since Sri Haribabaji left his body and Mataji had agreed to spend a few days in their midst as soon as Her crowded programme would permit. Sri Haribabaji's disciples were overjoyed to welcome Mataji in their town. For the first time since their Guru had left this world they felt really happy and at ease. It was as if he had returned to them in Mataji. They were greatly comforted and prayed to

Mataji to receive them in Her fold and to grace Hoshiarpur with Her presence at least once every year. On October 19th Mataji motored to Jullundur and spent the day at the Savitri Devi Ashram, which for many years has been and is running a Girls' School in Mataji's name. At night She left for Delhi, where She paid a visit to our Ashram on October 20th early morning for one hour only, mainly because Gurupriya Devi was ill and confined to bed. During that short hour the famous singer Sm. M.S. Subbalakshmi had a private talk with Mataji and also sang to Her. Mataji then motored to Vrindaban. Some devotees had arranged for the recitation of hundred *Durga Sapta Satis* there.

On October 26th Mataji returned to New Delhi where Kali Puja was celebrated during Diwali night, October 29th. Kali Kirtana was sung all night by a special Bengali Kirtana party and the puja was extremely solemn and awe-inspiring. On the 31st Annakuta, the festival of the Goddess of Plenty Annapurna, was performed in the usual style. Mataji also presented sweaters to a number of poor children.

On November 1st evening, Mataji motored to Suktal to be present at the 21st *Samyam Mahavrata*, which was observed from November 4th to 10th. Suktal is a village with not more than 500 or 600 inhabitants, situated near the Ganges, about 18 miles from Muzaffarnagar, the nearest railway station and market. It is said to be the spot where Sri Sukdev related the whole of the *Srimad Bhagavata* to King Parikshit in ancient times and is therefore a specially hallowed place and a place of pilgrimage with a beautiful Sukdeva Mandir on the top of a hillock. Every *Kartik* full moon a huge mela is held on the banks of the Ganges and villagers flock in their thousands in bullock carts and buses. Since it was *Kartik Purnima* two days after the completion of our gathering, pilgrims started arriving during the last three or four days of our *Saptah* and satsang with loudspeakers was held all over Suktal. In 1961, our twelfth *Samyam Mahavrata* had also taken place at Suktal, but on a different site.

The general programme of the *Samyam Vrata* is always more or less similar; yet every one of these yearly functions has had its special distinctive features. This was the first time that a *Mahatma* had invited us to hold our gathering in his Ashram and had himself seen to all arrangements. Sri Dandi Swami Vishnu Ashram Maharaj is well known to all Vratīs by his wonderful, inspiring

talks, and is greatly revered and loved for his serene and benevolent presence. He made elaborate preparations for the occasion. Arrangements were excellent in all respects. He gave his own rooms to Mataji, himself occupying a thatched hut prepared for the purpose. A beautiful spacious hall had been newly built, almost adjoining Mataji's rooms. It was opened in Mataji's presence on November 3rd morning and satsang held immediately after, while the customary preliminary meeting on the eve of the *Samyam Vrata* took place there in the evening. Several Ashram buildings, guest houses and *dharmaśalas* were put at our disposal, besides a considerable number of tents, all in the close vicinity, so that every vrati could be comfortable and near enough to attend even the *Usha Kirtana* at 5-30 a.m.

The year 1970 has deprived us of the physical presence of Sri Haribabaji, Sri Maheshwaranandaji and Sri Didiima, an irreparable and grave loss to all of us. Yet, the number of *Mahatmas* that graced our gathering with their presence was larger than ever before. Almost every one of the *Mahatmas* who every year delight us by their inspiring talks had come. Every morning we sat glued to the spot, listening spell-bound to the lectures on Upanishads delivered by Sri Swami Akhandananda Saraswati the first few days and by Mahamandaleshwara Sri Chaitanya Giri the following three days. Not only Sri Swami Vishnu Ashram, Sri Sharananandaji, Sri Govinda Prakashji of the Ramatirth ashram, Sri Chakrapaniji and others held our undivided attention by their talks, we were also fortunate to listen to three excellent new speakers, namely Swami Brahmananda, the successor of Sri Maheshwarananda, Swami Bhumananda of Hardwar and Swami Dharmananda of Paramartha Niketan, Rishikesh. All of them were praising the quality of our concentrated week of *sadhana* and we hope to listen to them again on future occasions. Swami Chinmoyananda of Bombay came for one day only and gave a very short talk in English. There was beautiful music every day and Mataji herself led the Kirtan two or three times.

On November 11th everybody dispersed. Mataji left for Delhi from where she proceeded to Kanpur the next night, arriving there on the 13th morning. A *Bhagavata Parayana* by Swami Akhandananda Saraswati, such as we had witnessed at Naimisharanya in December 1968 and at Varanasi in February-March 1970, was held in Kanpur from November 15th to 29th, at the invitation

of Sri Padmapat Singhanla in a pandal of impressive size erected on an extensive lawn near the exquisitely beautiful Radha Krishna Temple. We have on former occasions reported about the fine Ashram that had been built in the close vicinity for the use of Mataji and Her party. At the special request of Sir and Lady Singhanla and their sons, Mataji had consented to be present for the entire function. Day after day, She sat on the dais on Her elevated seat from 8-30 to 11 a.m. and from 3-30 to 6 p.m. surrounded by *Mahatmas*, with our hosts sitting at Her feet, while Swami Akhandanandaji, occupying a decorated couch in the centre of the platform, expounded the *Bhagavata* to the vast congregation which not only filled the pandal but often spread out on the lawn. The loudspeakers were excellent and everyone listened in pindrop silence to the Swami's brilliant and enlightening discourses to the soul-stirring *bhajans* before and after each session. Many guests had flocked from all over India and with a rare spirit of selfless service the whole of the Singhanla family assisted by their efficient staff, were busy taking care of everyone's well-being and comforts. The function had been advertised by large posters all over the city and the people of Kanpur availed themselves in gigantic numbers of this rare opportunity of the choicest satsang. After every meeting Mataji would sit in a small pandal in the Ashram grounds and everyone could approach Her individually and receive Her personal attention, blessing and advice. At night there was kirtan in the beautiful Ashram hall and Mataji was usually present for the silence from 8-45 to 9 p.m. On two evenings the Kirtan was performed in a newly built hall in the residence of the Jaipuria family in the presence of Mataji and Her party.

Immediately after the completion of the *Bhagavata Parayana* on November 29th, *Nama yajna* of the *Mahamantra* was started in the hall by our Delhi Kirtan singers. It continued until sunset of November 30th, Mataji was present for the "*Adhivasa*" until the women took over for the night. She came again at about 2 a.m. and once more to distribute *prasada* before sunrise when the men's kirtan started. A German and a Swiss devotee joined the ladies' kirtana with great enthusiasm, playing on cymbals and drums indefatigably all night. The next midday Mataji joined the men's circumambulations for a while, singing and almost dancing in great *bhava*. At the end of the function, Mataji sang "*Dharo lao*" as She

usually does on those occasions. Many of the citizens of Kanpur feasted their eyes and ears on this rare and wonderful spectacle.

On December 1st Mataji left for Varanasi, arriving the same night. She remained there until the 8th. On the 3rd the newly acquired house of a devotee next to the hospital was opened and Mataji stayed there for 24 hours.

On December 9th, Mataji alighted at Hardwar, to be present on the 12th morning at the foundation stone laying of the temple to be built over Didima's *samadhi* at the Kankhal Ashram. Sri Girdhar Narayan Puri, the Mahant of the Nirvani Akhara (which is amalgamated with the Ashram of Sri Mangal Giri, Didima's *Sannyasa Guru*) was the special guest of the function. He was profoundly impressed and full of praise of the rites and ceremonies performed.

Immediately after the midday meal, Mataji motored to the Kishenpur Ashram at Dehradun. An upper storey which has been added to the girls' department was opened in Her presence at about 7 p.m. The next morning food was prepared in the new kitchen upstairs and Mataji Herself distributed rice *prasada* to all present. After the meal She proceeded to the Raipur Ashram where She remained for two nights. The women of Raipur recited the Ramayan and sang beautiful kirtan for hours. Mataji was in a great mood and animatedly talked to them of Her own kheyala, asking them to hold satsang regularly in the Ashram hall, to read the whole of the Ramayan, Srimad Bhagavata, Devi Bhagavata and the Shiva Purana one after another and to call Her again soon. Mataji spend another night and day at the Kishenpur Ashram, visiting Kalyanvan and the residence of Mr. & Mrs. Khaitan where *Havan* and *Kumari Puja* were performed on the 16th morning. The same evening She boarded the night train to Varanasi. On December 26th She was expected to leave for Ranchi and stay there for a few days. Mataji would have a camp at the *Ardha Kumbh Mela* at the Triveni and might stay there for part of January.

On December 17th, Mataji reached Varanasi from Dehradun. A few comparatively quiet days followed. Several devotees arrived from Bombay, taking this opportunity to have private talks with Mataji at leisure. On December 21st, the well-known saint, Sri Sitaram Das Omkarnath came to meet Mataji. He always makes it a point to see Her whenever he happens to be in the same town. On December 24th, Sri Gulzari Lal Nanda, Union Railway Minister,

visited our hospital and was much impressed by the arrangements. He then had Mataji's darshan, spending over half an hour with Her.

On December 26th, Mataji left for Ranchi. For a long time the devotees and ashramites had been clamouring for Her presence there. Mataji remained until January 3rd. Many devotees arrived from Calcutta to spend a few days with Mataji and the citizens of Ranchi came in large numbers for Mataji's darshan and satsang which was held three times daily in Mataji's presence.

On January 4th, Mataji returned to Varanasi. The next day Mrs. Mallefant, a member of the Unesco delegation came to meet Mataji "on her way" to Malaya, although Varanasi was actually a good distance out of her way. She had had Mataji's darshan in Delhi three years ago.

On January 11th, the Canadian Prime Minister, Mr. Pierre Elliot Trudeau, accompanied by the High Commissioner of Canada in India, Mr. James George, and the Indian High Commissioner in Canada came for Mataji's darshan. It rarely happens than an official guest of the Government visits a person. Mr. Trudeau, who had studied at Benares Hindu University years ago, had expressed the wish to see Mataji on the occasion of his visit to Varanasi. The Prime Minister's party comprised a number of high officials of the Central and State Governments of India, several foreigners, journalists, photographers, television men, etc., in all about eighty persons. The reception took place in the hall adjoining Gopal Mandir. The General Secretary of the Sangha offered to provide chairs for the main guests but Mr. Trudeau preferred to sit on the floor like everyone else. The girls of the Kanyapith, stationed on the gallery, regaled our honoured guests with beautiful religious songs. Garlands, sweets and souvenirs (booklets) were presented to each one of the party. After about ten minutes, the Prime Minister together with Mr. James George, the General Secretary of the Sangha and Dr. Bithika Mukherji as translator were taken upstairs to have a private interview with Mataji which lasted for about twenty minutes. Mr. Trudeau asked mostly philosophical questions and seemed highly pleased with Mataji's replies. His people, in glowing terms, expressed their appreciation of the reception given to them. While our own Prime Minister and many other topmost officials are regular visitors wherever Mataji was within their reach, Mr. Trudeau was the first Prime Minister of a foreign country to pay his respects to Mataji.

On January 16th, a group of about 25 Brazilians of French origin, disciples of the late Swami Sivananda Saraswati of Rishikesh, came for Mataji darshan. They were obviously very sincere seekers of Truth, judging from the response they were to evoke from Mataji. She was in a wonderful mood throughout their visit and even after. The atmosphere was intense and inspiring. Mataji for about half an hour replied to their questions, then distributed *prasada* and blessed every one of them by touching their heads. They requested for the privilege to have silent meditation in Mataji's presence, which was granted for 15 minutes. Finally they sang to Mataji. They all seemed deeply moved, many cried at the parting. One woman completely overcome, broke out into sobs. Mataji took a wrapper from Her own shoulders and presented it to the woman.

The next day the Vice-Chancellor of the Benares Hindu University, Dr. Srimali came to see Mataji and was with Her for over an hour.

On January 19th, Mataji motored to Allahabad, going straight to Satya Gopal Ashram at Allengunj where She regularly, once every year, spent two or three days with the family and the disciples of the late Sri Gopal Thakur. At about 5.30 p.m. She came to the Ardh-Kumbh Mela at the Triveni, where a camp had been arranged for our Ashram. Mataji remained until about 9 p.m. and then returned to Allengunj. She seemed to enjoy the atmosphere of the Kumbh where so many *mahatmas* and sadhus and such masses of lay people had gathered for the sake of satsang. Recitation of the Ramayan, Kirtan, *Rasalila* and religious discourses could be heard over the loudspeakers. Mataji remarked: "Even if one does nothing at all, one is bound to hear God's name at least!"

The whole of the next day, Mataji remained in Satyagopal Ashram. Kalyani, Sri Gopal Thakur's daughter, performed Her usual very impressive puja. Mrs. Rajen Nehru came for Mataji's darshan. On the 21st morning, Mataji shifted to 31, George Town, where She had a small cottage at the residence of the family of late N. N. Mukherji. The Vice-President of India, Sri G. S. Pathak with some members of his family paid her a visit there and again the next day in the Mela grounds. In the afternoon Mataji drove to the Kumbh. It was cold and raining. Mataji walked about in the rain. The next day the sun shone brightly.

Our camp had been started before January 10th, as a number of the grown-up girls of our Ashram did "*Kalpavasa*" for one whole month, beginning from January 10th. Swami Paramananda was himself in charge of the camp. The girls stayed in straw huts, preparing their own meals in a tin-shed, bathing daily in the Ganges and spending the whole day in spiritual practices and satsang, listening to discourses of various *mahatmas*, to kirtans etc. On February 22nd, Mataji came and occupied Her pretty hut at the camp also during the night. A fairly large pandal had been provided for satsang. Mataji gave darshan very frequently, answering questions for long hours. Many sadhus came to discuss their problems with Mataji. People of all classes and walks of life crowded into our camp, eagerly waiting for Mataji's darshan: officers, police staff, rich people clad in silks and jewels, poor people in rags, and so forth. A number of well known *Mahatmas*, whose camps were not far off, came to see Mataji at various times: Sri Prabhudatt Brahmachari, Sri Swami Vishnu Ashram, Sri Swami Sadananda of Paramartha Niketan, Rishikesh, Sri Chakrapaniji of Vrindaban, Sri Swami Govind Prakash of Ramatirtha Ashram, Sri Jogesh Brahmachari of Calcutta and others. Late one night a group of sadhus and lay-members of the Vijai Krishna Math, Calcutta had a long talk with Mataji. Members of the "Krishna Consciousness Society," a Vaisnava organisation that has opened branches all over Europe and America, came several times; among them Americans dressed as Vaisnavas, carrying rosaries in little bags and with sandalwood marks on their foreheads and down their noses. They presented some of their publications to Mataji. An old Sikh sadhu, called Vahiguru Maharaj talked to Mataji very enthusiastically about Sri Haribabaji. The *Rasalila* was performed in several places at the Kumbh. Sri Haribabaji had been so keen on it. Now that he has left his body, others have taken it up, the fruit of his endeavours.

The Commissioner of Allahabad, Sri R. K. Trivedi, the son of an old devotee, came right in the beginning of Mataji's stays, offering his services.

From January 26th to February 3rd a *Bhagavata Saptah* was held in the pandal of our camp which had been specially decorated for the occasion. Sri Nityananda Bhatt of Vrindaban officiated as the reader and expounder.

On January 28th and 29th Mataji spent the nights at 31,

George Town, but returned to the Mela every morning. On January, 29th, Kumari Puja was performed to three Kumaris, representing Ganga, Jamuna and Saraswati. Just as all preparations had been completed, Sri Prabhudatt Brahmachari happened to come along and at Ma's request performed the Puja very beautifully. That evening Sri Swami Ananda arrived and gave a talk.

On January 30th evening, Sri G. S. Pathak and his youngest daughter-in-law came to take Mataji to his residence where Saraswati Puja was performed the next morning (Vasant Panchami day) in Mataji's presence. Like last year on the same occasion, a lovely hut had been erected for the puja and a pandal for the audience. The daughters of the house had taken immense trouble over the preparations. The puja was grand and inspiring. In spite of traffic restrictions, over a hundred people attended and stayed to partake of the Devi's *prasada* at midday. The same day Mataji returned to the camp.

On the February 1st, Sri Krishna's birth was narrated in the course of the *Bhagavata Saptah*. To celebrate it there was special *bhoga* and distribution of sweets. In the evening a *Rasalila* party from Vrindaban gave a performance in our pandal in Mataji's presence.

On February 2nd, Mataji accepted an invitation to Sri Jogesh Brahmachari's camp and had Her midday meal there. On February 3rd She went by car to the Triveni. But She did not bathe there as She had done on former occasions, She just put Her feet into the water.

On the 4th morning Kumari Puja and Gopal Puja were performed to a small girl and a small boy. The same day Mataji left Allahabad by car for Varanasi. On Her way She stopped for a while at Sri Prabhudatt Brahmachari's Ashram at Jhusi.

The Ashramites who has to complete their *Kalpavasa* remained at the camp until February 10th with Swamis Paramananda and Satchidananda in charge.

At Varanasi Mataji stayed for one week in Her tiny room on top of the Kanyapith, where She enjoyed a certain amount of privacy. She hardly descended. On the 11th She boarded the train to Hardwar, reaching Kankhal on the 12th. On February 15th Her sojourn there was interrupted by a short visit to Dehradun, where She remained for four days, spending the first and last day at Kishenpur and the two days in between at Rajpur. One of the

newly built rooms on the uppermost storey of the girls' department at Kishenpur was designated as "Silence Room". The girls are taking turns, staying in it one at a time, for a few days each, in seclusion, keeping silence without signs, gestures or writing—except in cases of extreme emergency—cooking their own meals in the adjoining kitchen and spending all their time in *japa*, meditation, contemplation, silent reading of scriptures. The practice was begun in Mataji's presence and is to be continued without a break henceforth.

On February 19th, Mataji and a fairly large party returned to Kankhal, where Shivaratri was celebrated in the night of February 23rd. In the evening of the same day the Shiva temple of the Ashram was reconsecrated by a short ceremony, since its walls, inside as well as outside, had been covered with marble. The *vigrahas* that for a few months had been worshipped in one of the rooms in the Ashram, were re-installed in the temple, which now is extremely beautiful. The Maha shivaratri night puja had to be held under a canvas roof in the open space in front of the temple. Fortunately only fifty to sixty people participated in the puja, so that it was just possible to arrange in spite of extreme shortage of space. Last year at Varanasi, where there is ample space, 215 vratis had taken part in the puja. As always in Mataji's presence, circumstances adjust themselves spontaneously according to necessity. This year, the winter being late, there was an icy wind blowing from the snow-clad mountain peaks, and to the *tapasya* of 36 hours of fast without water and the vigil was added the *tapasya* of sitting up all night in the cold under a thin canvas. However, by Mataji's grace everything proceeded without a hitch and even a few guests, among them two American devotees, sat up all night watching the puja with great interest and devotion.

The next day most people dispersed, while Mataji Herself with a few companions remained at Kankhal until March 7th. Some devotees arrived from distant places and had quiet days with Mataji. *Sannyasis* and other inmates of Sivanañda Ashram, Rishikesh and people from Dehradun and Delhi came for short visits whenever possible.

Sri Haribabaji's disciples had urgently requested Mataji to spend Holi at Bundh, where the *Samadhi Mandir* of the great saint was to be inaugurated on his birthday. Thus, Mataji boarded the train to Delhi on the 7th night and from there proceeded by car

to Anupshahr and the last few miles by jeep to Bundh. Jagadguru Sri Shantananda of the Shankaracharya Math, Sri Krishnananda Avadhutaji, Sri Chakrapaniji, Sri Krishnanandaji from Bombay, Sri Nirmalananda from Karnavas and other *Mahatmas* had assembled for the occasion. Satsang was held three times daily in a pandal, Mataji's usually attending in the mornings and afternoons, but resting in the evenings as Her health was not too good. On March 10th at about 6 p.m. the mandir was solemnly opened in Mataji's presence and puja performed. It contains a beautiful, like-life statue in sitting posture of Sri Haribabaji Maharaj. The celebrations continued for several days. *Mahatmas* delivered talks about Sri Haribabaji's life and character. One evening a film depicting various phases from the saint's life was shown for about two hours in Mataji's presence. Kirtan of *Mahamantras* is performed daily throughout the year by the villagers in Bundh at all times.

Mataji left on March 12th, travelling straight to Kanpur at the request of the Jalpuria family. She remained there for three days, leaving for Varanasi on the 16th. Mataji remained in Varanasi over Vasanti Puja, till 6th April and left for Kishenpur the next morning.

Mataji's 75th birth anniversary celebrations are going to be celebrated in Varanasi from May 7th to 13th.

Mataji remained in Varanasi over Vasanti Puja, which was celebrated from April 2nd to 5th. Simultaneously *Devi Bhagavata Parayana* was held, starting on March 27th and ending on April 4th with *homa* (fire sacrifice). Mataji's health had not been quite satisfactory but during Vasanti Puja she was, as usual on festive occasions, very active and saw to every detail in person. A number of foreign visitors kept on coming. One of them wrote some poems inspired by the puja. On Mahastami day (April 3rd) Sri 108 Dhananjay Das Babaji Maharaj visited our Ashram with a party of disciples and was with Mataji for about half an hour. On April 5th, after *Darpana Visarjana* Mataji blessed the audience by touching each and everyone's head. After the immersion ceremony She distributed sweets to all present.

On April 7th Mataji boarded the train to Dehradun, alighting at the Kishenpur Ashram on the 8th morning. Mataji was badly in need of rest. She gave darshan every evening. Private talks were of course going on at other times of the day. On April 10th Mataji

left for Kankhal where preparations had to be made of the function on April 14th to commemorate Didima's *Sannyasa utsava*. At Kankhal Mataji was Her lively self again supervising arrangements with great interest. In the morning of the 14th a solemn puja was performed at Didima's *samadhi*. At midday a large number of sadhus were entertained on Didima's behalf both at the Nirvani Akhara at Kankhal and at the Kailash Ashram at Rishikesh. On that auspicious day Brahmachari Mahananda and Didima's attendant, Srimati Vimala were initiated into *Sannyasa* by the Mahant of Mangala Giri Ashram. Vimala had dreamt that Didima had given her *sannyasa mantra*. Her name is now Swami Dayananda. She lives at the Kankhal Ashram ever since Didima left her body and daily offers *bhoga* to Didima.

On April 16th Sri G.S. Pathak, Vice-President of India, paid a visit to Ma with his family and stayed for the day. In the evening Mataji went to Paramartha Niketan at Rishikesh to grace with Her presence the *Srimad Bhagavata Parayana* which Sri Swami Akhandananda was holding for three weeks. The next morning Mataji came there again for a short while on Her way to Raipur, Dehradun. She also halted at the Government Anti-biotic Medicine Factory near Rishikesh where a devotee had built a cottage for Mataji who took Her midday meal there, arriving at Raipur between 3 and 4 p.m. On April 20th Mataji shifted to Kishenpur. On Her way She followed an invitation to the residence of the District Magistrate where kirtan and *bhajans* were sung by the girls of our Ashram under a pandal on the lawn. Before proceeding to the Ashram Mataji stopped for a few minutes in the garden of another devotee. The next day, Mr. James George, Canadian High Commissioner in India, came to see Mataji accompanied by three Canadian seekers after Truth. They had come specially from Delhi to have an interview with Mataji and returned to Delhi straight from our Ashram. Mr. George had met Mataji for the first time about ten years ago. This time he had come mainly to clarify some points that had been discussed when he and Mr. Trudeau, the Canadian Prime Minister had a talk with Mataji last January at Varanasi. He and the other Canadian guests asked very interesting questions and Mataji responded most generously. She was in a wonderful, communicative mood, looking young and radiant. Our guests were deeply impressed and full of gratitude.

On April 23rd Mataji and a large party of Ashramites and others

boarded the train to Varanasi, where preparations for the forthcoming 75th birthday jubilee of Mataji were in full swing. When the train arrived at Lucknow on the 24th morning, Mataji quite unexpectedly got down with only two companions, while the rest of the party was obliged to proceed to Varanasi without Mataji. Nobody knew where Mataji was going and when She would arrive at Varanasi. She first went by taxi to the residence of Sri Rameshwar Sahai, where a room is permanently reserved for Her use. To the joyous surprise of the family, Mataji had Her midday meal there and after a few hours of rest left at about 3 p.m. for Kanpur, going straight to the beautiful Radha Krishna temple, in the vicinity of which Sri Akhandananda Swamiji's *Bhagavata Parayana* had taken place last November. Sir Singhanian and his family were informed of Mataji's arrival by members of their staff. From there She also paid a short visit to Jaipuria House and thereafter left for the Railway Station. There She took the train to Allahabad, reaching there at about 1 a.m. Mataji spent the rest of the night and the next morning in Her cottage at 31, George Town. One can easily imagine the delight of the family at Mataji's surprise visit. From there Mataji motored to Varanasi, reaching the Ashram quite unexpectedly at about 3.30 p.m. on the 25th, only to leave within a few minutes for Sankat Mochana (about a mile from the Ashram) where the Sangha owns some land and a cottage in which She spent the following two days. On April 27th Sri Krishnandaji Avadhuta arrived in Varanasi with a *Ramallila* party. He went to see Mataji and with the greatest difficulty persuaded for to come to the Ashram and take up Her residence there. Mataji was most reluctant to have any birthday celebrations this year because of the sad plight of East Bengal and to the last moment tried to prevent them. However, since it was Her Platinum jubilee nobody was willing to listen to Her objections.

In actual fact, the religious functions which were to start on May 3rd in honour of Mataji, began already on April 28th, which was *Akshay Tithiya*, the anniversary of the consecration of Gopal Mandir. There was special puja in the morning while Mataji was walking up and down, giving instructions. Beautiful kirtan was kept up all day and in fact never interrupted until May 14th. With great enthusiasm small and at times large groups of devotees took turns in singing every day and every night. A European devotee joined every night throughout the celebrations, singing with real delight

and playing the cymbals. Mataji would appear at the kirtan sometimes all of a sudden at 2 or 3 a.m. and brace the singers. Even the fishermen of the locality took a turn for two hours late every evening. An abundance of religious functions had been arranged. There was something for every temperament and every taste. The Ashram is fortunately spacious and comprises several buildings, so that it was possible to provide for so many ceremonies and functions simultaneously without disturbing one another.

For the first time in our Ashram *Shiva-Sakti Yajna* was performed by twenty pandits in the Yajna sala in the courtyard for eleven days, starting on April 29th. Every morning there was *Rudra Yajna* and every afternoon *Durga Sapta Sati Yajna*. Puja was offered daily to a *Shiva Parvati murti*. In the cave hall below Gopal Mandir the whole of the four Vedas were chanted one after another by renowned pandits for four hours every morning. In another room all the eighteen *Puranas* were recited one by one. *Sat Chandī Patha* was performed daily in the room of Sri Narayan Swami. Uninterrupted *japa* was sustained in the *Chandi Mandap* throughout the period of the celebrations day and night, and puja done daily there itself before Mataji's and Didima's photos. In the night of May 3rd, all the pupils of the Kanyapith (about 30 girls) actively joined in Ma's birthday puja on the roof of Gopal Mandir, while Brahmachari Nirvanananda acted as the main priest.

A large very beautifully decorated pandal had been erected in the hospital grounds for the satsang week from May 7th to 13th. On the 7th evening the function was solemnly and in hushed silence inaugurated by the Chief Minister of the U.P., Sri Kamalapati Tripathi in the presence of an enormous audience. The Chief Minister had come from New Delhi specially for the occasion and read out a letter from Srimati Indira Gandhi, the Prime Minister, who conveyed her *pranamas* and best wishes to Mataji, regretting not to be able to be present in person due to pressure of work. The Maharaja of Benares, the Vice-Chancellor of the B.H.U., Dr. K. Shrimali, Sri Rajaram Shastri, Vice-Chancellor of the Kashi Vidyapith, several *Mahatmas* and Prof. Tripurari Chakravarti of Calcutta sat in a semicircle on the dais, Mataji occupying a seat on the extreme right, next to the Chief Minister. The meeting began with chanting from the Vedas, followed by 'Vandana' by the girls of the Kanyapith. Then every one of the dignitaries and *Mahatmas* sitting on the raised platform delivered

short but very spirited and original talks. The Maharaja of Benares for instance said: "Mataji is our mother, we Her children are playing on Her lap. May this continue for thousands of years." All the *Mahatmas* who usually grace our functions with their presence had come and the large audience was kept spellbound by their brilliant and enlightening discourses every morning and evening. One of the *Mahatmas* made a striking remark. He said: "We all have assembled here to celebrate the birthday of one who was never born, so that we also may be liberated from the wheel of birth and rebirth." It is impossible to even hint at all that we were fortunate enough to listen to during that week, but all talks have been tape recorded and we hope will gradually be published.

Ramalila was performed every afternoon from April 28th to May 13th and *Rasalila* every morning from May 8th. Special puja was offered on behalf of Mataji's birthday to the main deities of Varanasi. A reception was also given to 51 pandits who presented with flowers, fruits, sweets, clothes, brass vessels etc. Another day there was Kumari Puja and a feast and presents given to 108 Kumaris. *Puris*, sweets and handkerchiefs were distributed to all the children of the fishermen of the locality. There was poor feeding on a large scale. One day special food was sent to the patients of the leper hospital and fruits distributed in several hospitals of Varanasi.

The climax of the celebrations was the *Tithi Puja* in the small hours of May 14th. Satsang went on in the pandal until midnight. Then the pandal and the whole Ashram lane were specially decorated with garlands and rings of fresh flowers and the dais on which Mataji was to lie converted into a bower of sweet scented jasmins. At 2 a.m. the pandal was opened again and in a few minutes occupied to capacity by devotees and visitors. Kirtan and bhajan started immediately. At about 3 a.m. Mataji was carried from the Ashram to the pandal on a silver palanquin to the accompaniment of music. As soon as She reached Her couch She lay down, covering Herself completely. Before starting the *Tithi Puja*, Brahmachari Nirvanananda performed a short puja before a large picture of Didima that had been placed near Mataji. The beautiful music was interrupted for half an hour by silent meditation. It was really amazing that pindrop silence was possible in the packed pandal. At the end of the function, at dawn,

long queues were formed and everyone was given the chance to ascend the dais and offer *pranamas* and flowers to Mataji who lay completely motionless in deep *samadhi*. There seemed no end to the people lining up patiently to approach Mataji. At about midday Mataji was roused with difficulty and helped to stand up and get into the palanquin to be carried to Her room. People stood on both sides all along the lane and others were looking down from the windows and roofs of every house to catch a glimpse of Mataji who was still under the impact of *samadhi*, Her eyes shut and Her limbs hanging down loosely. By the evening Mataji was again Her usual self and people who were leaving could go to Her room to say good-bye. At about 10 p.m. She came down to the hall of Gopal Mandir for the beginning of the *Nama Yajna* that continued until the evening of May 15th. Mataji remained for part of the night and for a while joined the women who circumambulated singing and dancing round a circular altar until sunrise. After the birthday night Mataji was in a rare *bhava*: Her whole countenance of heavenly beauty and sweetness and the aroma of another world visibly moving about Her. It seemed as if Mataji had been rejuvenated and Her health obviously improved.

It may well be imagined that devotees had flocked from every corner of India to be with Mataji on this joyous occasion and pay homage to Her—not only from India—ten devotees had come specially from America and Europe. The writer of *Matri Lila* is painfully aware of his incapacity to adequately describe this unique festival and to give even a faint idea of the atmosphere that pervaded the whole locality. People who arrived during the last few days felt as if transported to a kingdom of joy, peace and universal love. All worries, troubles, quarrels and difficulties seemed far removed and unreal. Mataji, although most of the time surrounded by a surging throng, found a way of giving individual attention to every single person who had come. Nobody left without a present given by Mataji Herself and without being blessed by Her loving words, Her smile, Her touch. The limitations of time and space seemed transcended. Many had travelled from great distances and were able to stay only for two or three days. Yet the trouble they had taken was insignificant compared with what they gained by this unique and unforgettable experience. Mataji was master of the art of bestowing in the twinkling of an eye what cannot be achieved by years of personal effort.

Even the elements co-operated. Within living memory Varanasi had not known such cool and pleasant weather in the month of May, which is greatly dreaded for its scorching heat and its violent dust storms.

Mataji stayed on in Varanasi for another week and the few who could remain with Her enjoyed Her darshan and Her words freely. On May 22nd She left for Vrindaban and on the 25th proceeded to New Delhi where the foundation stone for a Shiva temple near the *Panchavati* in the Ashram grounds was laid on the 26th. The Prime Minister availed herself of this opportunity to have a private talk with Mataji. On May 27th Mataji returned to Varanasi reaching there on the 28th. On June 3rd two Brahmacharinis of our Ashram were given sacred threads.

On June 9th Mataji left for Hardwar, reaching the Kankhal Ashram on the 10th morning. On the 14th She proceeded to Dehradun. This time Mataji put up in Her house in the compound belonging to Mr. and Mrs. Khaitan, adjoining Kalyanvan. There She enjoyed a certain amount of privacy in extremely quiet and beautiful surroundings. Every evening She would give darshan in the Kishenpur Ashram for an hour or two. The students of the Kanyapith who were spending their summer vacation at Kishenpur, used to recite Sanskrit hymns and portions from the Ramayan. Then Brahmachari Nirmalananda would very lucidly expound the Narad Bhakti Sutras before the large congregation that daily came for Mataji's darshan, followed by kirtan for one hour, sung again by the girls of our Varanasi school. On two or three occasions Sri Swami Govinda Prakashji of the Ramatirtha Ashram delivered interesting talks and once Sri Swami Krishnananda of Bhagavad Dham, Hardwar spoke. One evening the whole programme was performed at the Ramatirtha Ashram (4 miles further up) at the kind invitation of Sri Swami Govinda Prakash. There Mataji sang Herself for a short time at his request.

On July 5th early morning Mataji left for Kankhal where *Guru Purnima* was celebrated on the 8th. Mataji came downstairs early morning and gave darshan until about two in the afternoon sitting alternately on the veranda of Shiva Mandir and on the veranda of Didima's Samadhi Mandir where Guru puja was performed on Didima's *samadhi*, accompanied by interrupted kirtan which continued until evening and *arati* at night. Devotees arrived from Dehradun, Delhi, Varanasi, even from Bombay and Calcutta to pay

homage to Mataji on this auspicious day and brought gifts of various kinds. It was amazing how everything proceeded without a hitch in spite of the very limited space. Again the elements co-operated : it did not rain that day except for a short shower after everybody had partaken of *prasada* in the small open space in front of Shiva Mandir.

On July 12th Mataji returned to Kishenpur with a number of devotees from Bombay and with the Maharaja of Travancore and his family who came for the first time to spend a few days with Mataji. On this occasion Mataji was staying at the Kishenpur Ashram.

On July 15th the Indoor Section of our Varanasi Hospital was opened. A devotee from Varanasi urgently wired to Mataji requesting Her presence. She wired in reply : " Mataji is with you and will ever be with you." Swami Nirgunananda, known as "Mukhibaba", one of the last disciples of Holy Mother Sarada Devi of Sri Ramakrishna Math and who lived in our Ashram for about 32 years, was admitted as the first patient. The next afternoon at about 4 he passed away peacefully at the age of nearly 90. Since our Hospital is situated within the "*Mukti Kshetra*" (area of liberation at Varanasi), where everyone who leaves his body is supposed to attain release from the wheel of birth and death, there can be no room for regret. When Mataji left Varanasi last month, he fervently begged Her to free him from his ailing body. As soon as the message of his passing was received by phone, *akhanda* kirtan for 24 hours of " Satyam Jnanam Anantam Brahma," was started at the Kishenpur Ashram and also uninterrupted *japa*.

The anniversary of Didima's *mahasamadhi* will be celebrated at Kankhal on July 29th. Since it has not been possible to complete the *Samadhi Mandir*, its consecration has been postponed until next April. Jhulan and Janmastami are also likely to be celebrated in Mataji's presence in Kishenpur or Raipur. Durga Puja, Lakshmi Puja and *Diwali* are to be observed in Dehradun this year. The *Samyam Mahavrata* is proposed to be held at Vrindaban from October 27 to November 2.

Mataji left Dehradun for Kankhal on July 24th. On July 29th (*Jhulan Panchami*) the first anniversary of Didima's *Mahasamadhi* was commemorated at our Kankhal Ashram by *akhanda* (uninterrupted) kirtan, *akhanda* puja and *akhanda mouna* (silence) for 24

hours, devotees taking terms of one or two hours each. At midday *sannyasis* and *sadhus* were given feasts in our own ashram as well as in Nirvani Akhara and at Kailash Ashram, Rishikesh. In the night puja was performed at Didima's *samadhi* and there was silent meditation in Mataji's presence during the hour of Didima's passing, namely from 1.15 - 1.45 a.m. All sat on the veranda of the *samadhi* mandir and in the courtyard in solemn silence. Didima's presence was felt tangibly by one and all. It was as if she had merged with Mataji. After the meditation, Ma got up and placed a large garland on the *samadhi*. Didima seemed to receive it in person.

On July 31st Mataji returned to Kishenpur, visiting on Her way Nirvani Akhara, Maheshwarananda Ashram and Baghat House.

From August 2nd to 6th, *Jhulan* was celebrated every evening in the Kishenpur Ashram in the usual manner. A number of *vigrahas* of Krishna and Radha were placed on a large swing on the east veranda. The decorations with silk hangings and a profusions of flowers and leaves became more gorgeous every night. Puja was performed to the accompaniment of sweet songs. On August 6th, the festival of Raksha Bandhan, *rakhis* (bracelets) were presented to Mataji and in turn tied by Her to the wrist of every person who approached Her. There was midnight meditation in remembrance of Mataji's self-initiation in the *Jhulan* full moon night in 1922. Since there happened to be a lunar eclipse, kirtan was performed until 3 a.m. Mataji Herself led the kirtan for about 15 minutes at 2-15 a.m. when some of the congregation were in danger of dozing off. Several American devotees took part in the celebrations with great interest and devotion.

On August 7th, Mataji motored to Raipur, where She remained for three days' rest. Due to heavy rains the road was in a precarious condition and Raipur difficult to approach. All the same, many went to see Mataji there, enjoying Mataji's darshan in that beautiful, secluded spot.

On August 13th, *Janmastami* (Sri Krishna's birthday) was celebrated by solemn midnight Puja. In spite of running a temperature, Mataji remained downstairs until 2 a.m., actively supervising everything as She always did. There was a wild storm with torrential rain and the electric lights went out already in the evening and had to be replaced first by candles and finally by gas lights. The next morning, Nandotsava (the joy of the cowherds over Sri

Krishna's birth) was observed in the open space in front of the Ashram temples. A few devotees who usually dress-up as *gopas* (cowherds) had come from Delhi and were singing and dancing round a circular altar, one of them carrying on his shoulders a yoke with earthen pots filled with curds one of which was knocked down and smashed in course of the dance, as tradition demands. Mataji was in a great mood. She sang: 'Brahmagopal, Pranagopal.' Suddenly She caught hold of the most bulky old lady and danced round with her. Then She moved all over the place, joining hands, one by one, with every single woman present, swinging them round once each. Mataji throwing curds into the mouth of every one and splashing it all over them marked the climax of the function. Fortunately it was only drizzling at the time, so everything proceeded without disturbance and to the maximum enjoyment of all present.

Every evening during Mataji's sojourn at Kishenpur, there was satsang in the packed hall with kirtan and a brilliant talk by Brahmachari Nirmalananda, until he left for Varanasi just before Janmastami. On August 19th he returned, bringing some of the sacred fire that has been kept burning ever since 1926. In that year at *Divali*, *havan* (fire sacrifice) was performed in Dacca after a very extraordinary Kali Puja. At Mataji's suggestion, the fire was not allowed to go out after the *Purnahuti* (final oblation) as is usually done, but preserved. After the partition, the fire was transferred from Dacca to Vindhyachal and Varanasi and later also to Calcutta. Now it has come to Dehradun as well. Already about two years ago a structure to house the sacred fire had been erected in Kalyanvan on the platform near Rama Mandir where Sri Haribabaji used to hold satsang formerly.

From August 18th Mataji stopped talking. Some of us guessed that Her keeping silence might be connected with the installation of the sacred fire at Dehradun, since the Brahmachari started with the fire from Varanasi on the 18th morning. However, our guess was obviously wrong because, although Mataji uttered one sentence of instruction after the installation of the fire on August 24th, Her silence continued. Nobody knows why and for how much longer. However, Mataji was by no means in retirement, on the contrary She was extremely active and interested in everyone and everything and expressed Herself by signs and gestures and, whenever necessary, by drawing Bengali letters with Her finger on someone's

hand. Mataji even held private interviews and conveyed replies by letters in this manner. Now and again, on special occasions, She sang kirtan. When during the recent Durga Puja many old devotees who had come from distant places begged Her to talk to them, She responded by saying: "Narayan, Narayan" or "Baba Tripurari" or "Ma Durga", "Sri Krishna," and the like. During Durga Puja Ma uttered a word occasionally when absolutely necessary, but then She again reverted to complete silence.

Brahmachari Kamalakanta who had been with Mataji already in the days of Dacca, has been in Dehradun for some time now. Having studied astrology, he had figured out that his life in his present body was to end on August 20th of this year at the age of 65. A few days before Mataji stopped speaking, She explained that while the ordinary person's life is completely controlled by destiny, the sadhaka can rise about it. On August 20th *akhanda* Ramayan (the uninterrupted recitation of the whole of the epic) was performed in the Ashram hall and Kamalakanta was asked to spend most of the day in Mataji's immediate presence. He did not die and is in fact quite hale and hearty. He feels that by God's grace he has been given a new birth in his old body. Mataji had assigned to him the task of tending the sacred fire and offering daily oblations into it. He had for some time done this already in Dacca long, long ago. In the early morning of August 24th the fire was ceremonially installed in the *kunda* (fire pit) of the new building in Kalyanvan and an elaborate function held in Mataji's presence. By irony of fate it was pouring with rain and everyone was thoroughly drenched. A *yajna* of 100,000 oblations with *Gayatri mantra* was started on that day, performed daily for 2 hours by three pandits, ending on September 27th, Mahastami day.

On August 25th early morning, Mataji was to motor to Hardwar. However, She went first to Kalyanvan and spent nearly two hours making arrangements for the fire since the wood was all wet due to continuous rain and the fire was not burning as brightly as it should have.

From August 28th to September 5th a Bhagavata Saptah was held in Hardwar. On August 28th, when the sad news of the passing of Yogacharya Sri Swami Shyamananda, head of the Yogada Satsang at Ranchi, was received, Mataji interrupted Her silence by saying: "*Shreya grahan*" ('Embrace the highest'). Mataji sang for a short while on the first and last days of the *Saptah*. She

visited our Kankhal Ashram in the beginning and at the end of Her sojourn at Hardwar.

On September 5th evening Mataji again alighted at Kishenpur. Satsang was held twice daily. One day someone related that some devotees at Poona had recently had a car accident. The car was badly damaged and the window pane crashed into small pieces that fell on the inmates, but nobody at all was hurt. The devotees ascribed their miraculous escape to the fact that Mataji's photo was with them, since they were taking it to a shop for framing.

On September 10th Mataji proceeded to Raipur. The next day happened to be the anniversary of the *Mahasamadhi* of Swami Akhandananda Giri, Gurupriya Devi's father. A feast was given in his honour to a few sadhus and to all present. On September 13th Mataji returned to Kishenpur. On the 15th and 16th there was another recitation of the entire Ramayana. Guests now began to gather for Durga Puja. On the 18th Professor Tripurari Chakravarti arrived from Calcutta and from that very evening gave a daily lecture for an hour, mostly in English, interspersed with a few Bengali sentences during the evening satsang in the over-crowded hall. On the 19th evening Mataji shifted to Her beautiful cottage near Panchavati, in the compound of Mr. and Mrs. Khaitan next to Kalyanvan, but came twice daily to the Ashram for satsang until the pandal was opened on September 25th morning. On the 24th and 25th the whole of the Ramayana was chanted in Rama Mandir, Kalyanvan.

On the 25th evening Durga Puja started with "*bodhan*" (awakening) and "*amantran*" (invitation) followed by *arati*. The traditional clay images of Durga, Lakshmi, Saraswati etc. had been sculptured by a Bengali artist in life size and were extremely beautiful and lively. The walls and the ceiling of the shrine were completely covered with gorgeous red velvet, and a huge velvet curtain shut off the shrine from the pandal whenever necessary. The pandal itself was a real piece of art, in fact it looked like a beautiful temple with its painted pillars, freezes, lamps and paintings from Hindu mythology. Mataji's throne-like chair was placed on the extreme right of the dais on which the puja was performed and a chair with Didima's garlanded photo on the extreme left. Mataji was present every morning during the puja and in the evening during *arati*, as well as an hour before when Prof.

Tripurari Chakravarti delivered his interesting daily lecture on the Valmiki Ramayana. After *arati* the famous Baul singers Sri Prahlaad Brahmachari with his party and the renowned Dhananjay Bhat-tacharya regaled the audience with the best type of Bengali songs till late at night. On Dasami day slides of Ma and Didima were shown after the music. On Sasti and Vijaya Dasami the great saint Sri Sitaram Das Omkarnath came with a party from his ashram at Rishikesh and again one day after Lakshmi Puja, when he spent three hours with Mataji in Her cottage, notwithstanding Her *mouna*. On Mahastami day, besides Durga Puja and the *Purnahuti* of the yajna, the consecration took place of a lovely little sculpture in silver of Padmanabham (Visnu lying on His bed of snakes), a replica of the deity that is worshipped in Padmanabham Temple at Trivandrum.

When last July, the brother of the Maharaja of Travancore came for Mataji's darshan, he was put up at Kalyanvan, in the cottage which is nearest to the Panchavati. Padmanabham is the presiding deity of Travancore and the Maharaja regarded as His representative on earth. As such, the Maharaja's brother carries with him an image of the deity wherever he goes and performs daily worship. On taking leave from Mataji in July, he took his *vigraha* to the Ashram to show to Mataji. Mataji was highly pleased and said, when Padmanabham had chosen to come all the way to Kalyanvan from South India, he should not be allowed to depart anymore. A devotee from Bombay therefore had a silver model of Padmanabham made in Travancore and on Mahastami day brought it to Dehradun together with the Maharaja's brother and two South Indian priests who gave instructions about the proper worship. Padmanabham was first placed near the deities of Durga Puja for consecration and then carried by the Maharaja's brother in procession to the *Panchavati* where another ceremony was performed in Mataji's presence, and then to the cottage at Kalyanvan. Nobody had been permitted to stay in the cottage after Padmanabham had graced it with His presence last July. Mataji took great interest in this new shrine and almost daily walked down the steep hill and up again, arranging for an altar there and certain alterations in the building. Three Brahma-charis and a Dandi Swami have been deputed to take care of Padmanabham.

On Navami day, after the Puja, Mataji blessed every single

person present by putting sandal paste on their foreheads. On Vijaya Dasami day, after *Darpan Visarjana*, Mataji sang: "Ma Durga, Ma Uma." Later She distributed flowers, fruits, and cloth to everyone who came to do pranam. In the evening everyone queued up, to receive laddus from Her hand. In spite of Mataji's mouna everyone felt amply blessed during those festive days. Mataji conveyed everything by smiles and gracious looks and sometimes by touch.

On September 30th morning Mataji motored to Suktal at the urgent invitation of Sri Swami Vishnuashramji, who had specially sent a Brahmachari to Dehradun to persuade Mataji to grace with Her presence a *Srimad Bhagavata Parayana* which Swami Akhandananda Saraswati was holding in Suktal. On Her arrival Mataji was given a tremendous ovation by a huge gathering of sadhus, mahatmas and others. Besides attending the satsang Mataji wandered all over the spacious Ashram. Before leaving at about 3 p.m. on October 1st, she visited Sukhadeva Temple, then motored to the bank of the Ganges and stopped at two other places, alighting in Kishenpur at about 5-30 p.m. Mataji went first of all to Kalyanvan to see Padmanabham and Rama Mandir and then gave darshan at the Ashram before proceeding to Her cottage.

On October 3rd evening, Lakshmi Puja was performed in the pandal and Satya Narayan Puja at the Ashram until late at night. Mataji was just indefatigable. Nobody is able to keep pace with Her countless activities. The satsang continued every morning in the Ashram and every evening in the pandal, where Professor Tripurari delivered very brilliantly expounded lectures on the Valmiki's Ramayana in English. On October 8th night, Mataji boarded the train to Varanasi, accompanied by over twenty people. She was expected to return to Kishenpur on the 14th morning. Kali Puja will be celebrated in the same pandal on the 18th night, *Divali*. Mataji was expected to leave on the 21st for Vrindaban where the twenty-second *Samyam Mahavrata* is to be held from October 26th to November 1st.

TWENTY

(October 1971 — October 1972)

Kali Puja was celebrated on October 18th, late at night (*Divali*) in the same beautiful pandal in which Durga Puja and Lakshmi Puja had been performed, in the compound of Mr. and Mrs. M. L. Khaitan, adjoining Kalyanvan at Rajpur, Dehradun. After the puja, there was *havan* (fire sacrifice) at about 3 a.m. Mataji remained present throughout the puja and then descended from the dais and sat near the fire with a small group of devotees since most people had left as soon as the puja was over. This was the most intimate part of the function and greatly relished by the few who had remained. Early morning *prasada* was distributed.

On the 20th *Annakut* was observed. This is the festival of Annapurna, the goddess of physical and spiritual plenty. On that occasion 108 different items of food have to be offered and thus, although the cooking began before dawn, the *bhoga* was quite late. *Kirtan* and *bhajan* was kept up until after 4 p.m. when the function was completed. Within a few minutes the pandal was converted into an enormous dining-hall and people sitting in long rows were served a sumptuous meal on leaf plates and in earthen cups. Mataji at first watched from the dais and then came down, and walking along the rows of dining devotees, served with Her own hand a large spoonful to every single person.

The next evening Mataji, accompanied by a large party, boarded the train to Delhi en route to Vrindaban, reaching Delhi early morning on October 22nd. Mataji spent only a few hours there, but by no means quietly. She visited a patient in the Nursing Home, then the residence of Rajmata Sukhet's daughter, where a *Bhagavata Saptah* was inaugurated in Mataji's presence in a school building. Even there several Americans came for Mataji's darshan. After halting in our Ashram at Chandralok for less than an hour, Mataji and a small party drove to Vrindaban by car and jeep. After several miles something went wrong with the jeep. The car also stopped as Mataji wanted both vehicles to remain together. There was no workshop anywhere near. Someone, going in search of a telephone, entered a newly built factory. He found no phone, but the owner, a Sikh gentleman, was greatly delighted when he heard that Sri Anandamayi Ma was waiting on the road nearby. He

had read about Her a year ago and ever since was most eager to have Her darshan. He at once came outside and after this unexpected fulfilment of his cherished desire, repaired the jeep and then begged of Mataji to bless his factory by setting Her foot on the premises. Mataji agreed and inspected the whole place. However, after several miles the jeep again failed near village Hodal. A message was sent to Vrindaban to bring a car from there and rescue the stranded party. Mataji strolled up and down the road. There were only a few small houses nearby. Some women of the village called Mataji and made Her sit down on a cot. Mataji began to sing "Sri Ram, Jai Ram" and then "Narayan" etc. and everyone joined in. After some time Mataji expressed by signs that it was getting late and everyone was feeling hungry. She asked the villagers to bring out their provisions, a cooking stove, coal, vessels. Some were obviously very poor. In one house there was only atta (wheat flour), others provided potatoes, ghl, spices. Mataji's companions started preparing food in the open air and Mataji also lent a hand. A delightful picnic was improvised. Mataji had whatever fruit, etc. was in the jeep, taken out and She Herself distributed food on leaves to everyone of Her party and a smaller quantity to each and every villager, who had gradually all appeared on the scene, men, women and children. By that time the car from Vrindaban arrived and its inmates were also given *prasada*. Mataji sang again and the entire village repeated in chorus. Needless to say that the generosity of the poor people who had gladly supplied their scanty stock of provisions, was amply rewarded not only by this intimate darshan of Mataji but also in hard cash, which they were reluctant to accept. In this manner, what ordinarily would have been a serious predicament was converted by Mataji into a most charming interlude, quite unforgettable for all who had the good fortune to be present. The lucky villagers were all given Rama Nama by Mataji. Mataji had no fixed plans. Whatever happened was equally welcome to Her and regarded as an opportunity to pour out Her blessings and bring happiness to all within reach—for all are Her very own; men, animals, plant, stones and invisible beings.

From October 26th to November 2nd, our 22nd *Samyam Mahavarata* was held at Vrindaban. As on similar occasions, Mataji was present almost throughout the long hours of satsang and in between found time to attend to visitors and to supervise all

arrangements. She sang at least once every day, sometimes twice. A special feature were the foreigners who, although not actual vratis, attended the collective meditation regularly in large numbers, in spite of having to sit outside the roped off space. Among them were disciples of Sri Neem Karauli Baba, the Self-Realization Fellowship, Sri Goenka and other gurus. During the few days after the *Samyam Vrata*—that, Mataji remained in Vrindaban, 30-40 foreigners used to come daily for Mataji's darshan, often waiting patiently for hours, since timings were not definite. Although Mataji had never been out of India and did not speak any European language, She had obviously by now made a profound impression on seekers in the West. While Mataji was in Dehradun for three days in November, for example, a 78 years old lady, disciple of Paramahansa Yogananda, came all the way from Paris for Mataji's darshan. When actually face to face with Mataji, she said: "All my life I have dreamt of this blessed moment. Now my dream has come true."

On November 6th evening Mataji motored from Vrindaban to Agra where She remained for a few hours at the residence of some devotees. The first feeding of solid food (*annaprasana* ceremony) of a child was performed in Mataji's presence. Late at night She took the train to Jaipur, arriving early morning on November 7th. Dr. Jivanlal Purohit and his family had arranged for Mataji to stay in a devotee's newly built house. Mataji visited Jaipur mainly to give instructions to the artists who are sculpturing Didima's statue for her *Samadhi mandir* at Kankhal. Six sculptors had been commissioned to model a statue each. Mataji selected two out of the six and the better one of the two would be installed in the temple. Mataji was very particular that it should be life-like. A number of Rajas and Ranis of Rajasthan had come to Jaipur to meet Mataji and some devotees who cannot easily move out of Jaipur were eagerly waiting for Mataji's visit. Mataji went to the famous temple of Govindji one day.

She left on the 8th night, reaching Kishenpur on the 9th evening. She came straight to the Ashram hall and indicated by gestures that She was very tired and not feeling well and wanted to rest. After a little while Mataji proceeded to Her cottage near *Panchavati*, where She was expected to remain until November 17th. No times were fixed for darshan and She did rest all by Herself for one day. The next evening She came to the Ashram.

On the 12th morning She suddenly declared that She would leave for Varanasi that very night.

Mataji reached Varanasi on the 13th evening. There also She did not rest much as She found many needs that had to be attended to. Mataji had been running a temperature off and on for some time and was not looking robust at all. Nevertheless Mataji travelled about and sew to thousands of things like a young person of radiant health.

On November 17th morning Mataji boarded the train for Itarsi. From there Sir Datar Singh himself took Mataji and the whole party to Bairagarh near Bhopal by road.

In picturesque surroundings in the vicinity of the vast lake of Bhopal with Shamla Hill in the background, Sir and Lady Datar Singh had several years ago built a small Ashram for Mataji on their estate. This time a *Bhagavata Saptah* was held there in a pandal from 23rd to 30th November. Sri Vishnuashramji of Suktal had very kindly agreed to expound the *Bhagavata* in Hindi although he is a Dandi swami of a very strict order and neither travels by train nor by bus. Brahmachari Bhaskarananda brought him and his small entourage after a journey of four days. A separate cottage, tastefully decorated with orange and silver buntings had been reserved for his use. When he expounded the intricacies of the *Bhagavata* with his gentle, melodious voice, it all appeared so simple and easy to grasp. Mataji was present twice daily for the whole period of the meetings. No wonder the audience felt altogether transported into another world. The Sanskrit recitation was performed by a pandit in a specially built, dainty little hut. The '*sankaipo*' and the initial was prompted By Br. Nirvanananda but performed very solemnly and beautifully by our host's eldest grand-daughter, a senior student of the Ma Anandamayi Kanyapith, who has from her early childhood been brought up under Mataji's loving care.

In spite of running a temperature most of the time, Mataji would almost every morning go for a walk in the wide open country full of green fields, interspersed with a profusion of bright yellow and orange marigolds, that had been specially cultivated for the daily decoration during the *Saptah*. Sir and Lady Datar Singh and their family took great trouble to see to the comforts of Mataji and of all guests. Several Rajas and Ranis of neighbouring states with their families attended the function and a number of the elite of

Bhopal came regularly. The Chief Minister of Madhya Pradesh and his wife also came once. Mrs. Aga, the wife of the S. P. of Bhopal stayed in a tent in the compound for the whole week and was very helpful. Some high military officers were also present several times.

On December 2nd afternoon, Mataji left by car for Itarsi after a brief halt at the residence of Mr. and Mrs. N.N. Shah, and took the train for Varanasi. Devotees were waiting at the station to receive Mataji on December 3rd. But Mataji suddenly chose to get down at Allahabad from where She motored straight to Vindhyachal for a few days' rest, alighting at Varanasi on the 6th.

On December 10th Mataji travelled by train to Kanpur reaching there the same night. *Bhagavata Parayana* (recitation in Sanskrit and explanation in Hindi of the whole of the *Srimad Bhagavata* in fifteen days) was held by Sri Swami Akhandananda Saraswati in Mataji's presence at the invitation of Sir and Lady Singhania in the vicinity of the beautiful Radha Krishna Mandir in the outskirts of Kanpur in November 1970. A similar religious festival took place from December 13th to 28th, 1971 in the same place with similar excellent and most elaborate arrangements carried out by the Singhania family and their staff. This time also Mataji was present in the pandal for full five hours daily. Sri Vishnuashramji had also been persuaded to come and daily sat by the side of Swami Akhandanandaji on the dais. The function begun under the gloom of war and blackout and the attendance in the huge pandal was comparatively poor during the first few days. Fortunately the war and with it the general anxiety and nervousness came to a favourable end within four or five days and immediately the people of Kanpur flocked in large numbers. The whole function turned out extraordinarily successful, the climax being December 21st, when Sri Krishna's birth was narrated and specially celebrated. A beautifully decorated *vighraha* of Sri Krishna was placed on the dais. Mataji was in a rare *bhava* (for the second time during this function) and, regardless of the enormous congregation, prostrated full length (*sastanga pranama*) before Krishna and rolled over. Nothing similar had happened for many years, and never before in front of thousands of people Mataji put wreaths of flowers and tulsi leaves on the heads of Swamis Akhandananda and Vishnuashram. She also sang with great inspiration. On the 18th already Mataji had been in some kind of *bhava* while in the pandal. She lay back with closed eyes for

about an hour and a half. Her breathing had become very slight and the whole body cold. All the same Mataji was listening to the exposition of the *Bhagavata* and also seeing the speaker. Afterwards Mataji distributed *prasada* saying; "Gopal, Gopal" to each person who approached Her. Mataji was still observing silence.

At Kanpur a number of very distinguished guests, high Government Officials as well as many industrialists of the city came for Mataji's darshan. Sri G.S. Pathak, the Vice President of India and his family, Dr. Gopal Reddy, Governor of U.P., Ex-ministers G.L.Nanda, Dr. Triguna Sen and others, Srimati Madalbensa a daughter of Sri Jamnalal Bajaj and wife of Sriman Narayan, the Governor of Gujarat, stayed throughout the fortnight and was greatly impressed.

As soon as the *Bhagavata* had been completed on December 28th, *Akhanda Namayajna* (uninterrupted *kirtan* with circumambulation round a circular altar) began and continued until sunset on December 29th. Our Delhi Kirtan party came specially for the occasion like last year. But this time it was performed in the pandal as the hall had proved far too small on the previous occasion. At the end of the fortnight, Sir Padampat Singhania gave a short address, thanking Mataji and Sri Akhandanandaji and requesting them to make it possible for him to arrange for a similar Satsang once every year, by gracing it with their presence. He said that during the gathering he had been inspired so much that he actually came to look at the men and women in the pandal as 'janjanardan' (God in the guise of men).

On December 30th, Mataji left Kanpur for Varanasi. On January 4th She was again in the train to Delhi and from there she travelled with a party of 46 to Madras, reaching there on the 7th. On the 9th, She and all Her companions proceeded to Trivandrum where they remained till the 15th. On the 17th Mataji reached Poona, where on January 21st Saraswati Puja was celebrated and a new temple of Gopalji was consecrated. In South India Mataji was consecrated. In South India Mataji was in an excellent mood throughout and also kept better health than She had done for a long time. We hope to report in detail about Her trip to the South and to Poona, where a *Bhagavata Saptah* was held from January 22nd to 29th. Mataji left for Bombay on the 31st. She was expected to go to Jaipur for a short visit on February 5th and then to New Delhi where Shivaratri is to be celebrated on the 13th. Immediately

after Mataji was due at Kishenpur, Dehradun where another *Bhagavata Saptah* is to be held.

Mataji reached Poona on January 17th from Trivandrum via Madras. In Poona as in South India Mataji was in excellent form. Many devotees from Bombay and other places came and some also from South India. The Elaya Raja and Rani of Travancore were present for a day or two.

On January 18th the newly built Ashram Hall, a spacious rectangular structure, was inaugurated with due ceremony. On the 21st a beautiful *vigraha* of Gopal, which had been kept in the Kishenpur Ashram for some time, was installed in a new temple adjoining the hall. It was the day of *Vasant Panchami* and Saraswati Puja was therefore celebrated the same morning with kirtan, discourses and *prasada*, followed by a *yajna* (fire sacrifice). In Gopal's new temple there are also image of Ganesh and a small Radha-Krishna. Thus for three consecutive days *abhisheka* (ceremonial bathing and anointing) was performed on the three *vigrahas*, one-by-one. From January 22nd to 29th a *Bhagavata Saptah* was held in memory of Srimati Amrita Vasudevaya, a devotee of many years standing, who passed away a couple of years ago with the sacred *mantra* on her lips. The renowned Vaisnava teacher of Vrindaban Sri Atul Krishna Goswami, very lucidly expounded the *Bhagavata* in Hindi every morning and afternoon. His rendering of the *Lila* of Sri Krishna was specially inspiring. The Sanskrit recitation was performed every morning in one of the guest-house by Sri Bhola Pandit of Kashi. It was Mataji's *kheyala* that the worship of a different deity, such as Lakshmi, Narayana, Satyanarayan, Guru etc., should be performed every morning in the new temple while the *Bhagavata* was being recited in the hall. On January 29th, a tiny Shiva shrine, adjoining Gopal Mandir was consecrated and *linga* named "Anandeshwara." The same day *havan* (fire sacrifice) and *Purnahuti* of the *Bhagavata Saptah* took place.

Kirtan parties of Maharashtra and South India came to sing for Mataji at Poona and She Herself sang several times very beautifully adopting the style of those musicians. Almost every morning Mataji would go for a drive along the calm and picturesque hilly roads on the outskirts of Poona. Sometimes she took an early morning walk round the Ashram. One day Mataji followed an invitation to the residence of some Parsi devotees.

There She sang for quite a while. On the last day of Her sojourn She visited a hospital of wounded soldiers and distributed oranges, saying "Narayana" to each patient.

On January 31st Mataji left for Bombay, where She spent three days in Her pagoda at Sri B.K.Shah's place, Vile Parle. A large number of devotees from all parts of the city came every morning and evening to pay their respects to Mataji.

On February 3rd night Mataji entrained for Jaipur halting at Sawai Madhopur M.P., for several hours. She had been there once before many years ago and a devotee had requested Her repeatedly to come again. This time Mataji went there without any previous notice. On the 5th early morning Mataji reached Jaipur. Dr. S. L. Purohit, who last November had arranged for Mataji's accommodation in a devotee's newly built house, had in the meantime constructed a lovely thatched cottage for Mataji in his own compound. As on Her last visit, Mataji went to Jaipur this time also mainly to see that Didima's statue would be executed to perfection. She spent daily two or three hours in the studio of the artist handling Herself the clay, in spite of the icy cold weather. It was a great joy for the few present to see Ma in the role of a sculptor trying to give the final touches to Didima's image. On February 8th, the clay model at last seemed a perfect likeness and Mataji left the same night for New Delhi reaching there the next morning.

On the 11th started the consecration ceremonies of two new temples in the Ashram grounds : one Panchayatan Mandir with three *Shiva linga* in the centre and images of Ganesh, Narayana, Surya and Parvati in two corners; the other one a very small shrine for Hanuman. The installations were completed on the 13th with elaborate rites, pandits having arrived from Hardwar for the occasion. During the whole night *Shivaratri* was observed in the customary manner. It goes without saying that the attendance was enormous. The very spacious hall, the *Panchavati*, the new temple, in fact every available space was occupied by devotees who took part in the all-night puja; Mataji being here, there and everywhere and taking note of the minutest details. Srimati S. M. Subbulakshmi who had also come and joined the festival, delighted everyone by her songs during the intervals between the *pujas*.

On the 14th *Nama yaina* (uninterrupted *kirtan* of *Mahamantra*) started and was kept up for 24 hours.

On the 15th night Mataji travelled to Dehradun where She alighted on the 16th morning. On the 17th, thirteen students of our Vidyapith and two other young men received their sacred threads in Mataji's presence in Amar Kutir, Kalyanvan. The new brahmacharis have to remain closetted for three days after the ceremony and are kept busy learning to perform *sandhya* (morning and evening prayer) and their other duties. They keep a fast on rice boiled in milk without sugar at midday and milk and bananas in the morning and evening. Mataji went to see the boys every day and supervised all arrangements.

From February 18th to 26th a *Bhagavata Saptah* was held in the Ashram hall with Sri Srinath Shastri of Vrindaban reciting the Sanskrit text in the morning and expounding in Hindi very brilliantly every afternoon. The hall and the verandas were packed to capacity with men and women listening in pindrop silence. On two days Mataji did not come downstairs as Her health was indifferent. But She was present on the first and last days as well as for the narration of Sri Krishna's birth which was, as usual, specially celebrated. After the *havan* on the 26th, so many people had come unexpectedly to partake of the feast, that more food had to be cooked at the last moment. Mataji sat in the courtyard with the waiting crowd and started to sing 'Sri Ram, jai Ram, jai jai Ram'. While everyone was kept busy repeating in chorus, Mataji had fruit collected from every nook and corner of the Ashram which was cut into pieces and placed on everyone's empty leaf plates. In this way we could enjoy a most charming improvised darshan of Mataji for an extra hour and a half.

That very afternoon Mataji motored to Raipur where Akhanda Ramayana started the next morning. Soon after its completion on the 28th, Mataji returned to Kishenpur. On the 29th the *Holi* festival was celebrated by a grand fire sacrifice at Kalyanvan and uninterrupted kirtan in the Ashram. Mataji came to Kalyanvan four times that morning and blessed everyone by throwing coloured powder all over them, while the kirtan was shifted to Kalyanvan for a couple of hours. This was the first time that Holi was observed in Ma's presence in Dehradun. The bus services being suspended on *Holi* day, not too many people could come, which made the celebration all the more intimate and enjoyable. A few foreigners from various countries also participated and filmed the proceedings.

On March 2nd, Mataji took the train to Varanasi. On March 7th, She suddenly left for Vindhyachal for three days' rest, taking only two or three companions with Her. The following day some devotees from Germany arrived at Varanasi and seized the rare opportunity of having Mataji's darshan in the delightful solitude of Vindhyachal on two successive days. Mataji returned to Varanasi on the 10th, looking rested and refreshed.

Now a tremendously busy fortnight followed. Everyone was kept breathless by a regular avalanche of functions, ceremonies, feasts, visits of V.I.Ps and foreigners in large numbers. About 150 devotees arrived from Calcutta, Bombay, Ahmedabad and other places to be present at Vasanti Durga Puja that was celebrated in the Chandi Mandap from March 21st to 24th. On March 12th a religious group of 55 French men and women came for Mataji's darshan. They specially asked for 15 minutes silent meditation with Mataji which was granted in the Gopal Mandir hall. After the meditation Mataji distributed *prasada* to all of them. The French doctor who permanently lives in our Ashram happened to be present and told them about Mataji and Her teaching in their own language. They left greatly impressed and satisfied by their visit.

On March 15th the recitation of *Sahasra Chandi patha* (1000 *Durga Saptasati*) by 50 pandits for ten days started in the cave hall below Gopal Mandir and was completed on the 25th by an elaborate fire sacrifice performed by over 20 pandits. This was followed by *kumari* and *batuk puja* in Ma's presence.

On March 17th a new Shiva temple with five *lingas*, three white and two black, was consecrated with due ceremony. The *linga* had been entrusted to our Ashram by someone who had to shift to Calcutta and dreamt that the *linga* did not want to leave Varanasi. On the 19th, Sri Narendra Brahmachari of Deogarh came to see Mataji. She invited him and his party of fifty for *Saptami Puja* and *prasada* on the 21st. The next day, after attending *Ashtami Puja* in our Ashram very early in the morning, Mataji followed Sri Narendra Brahmachari's invitation to Motijhil where he was celebrating *Annapurna Puja*. In our own *Annapurna* temple also special *puja* and *bhoga* was performed that day and Mataji went straight there on returning to the Ashram about midday. On the 23rd, *Ram Navami* was observed in the beautiful traditional way. A *Saligram* was placed into an orange which was opened at midday to symbolize the birth of Sri Ramachandra. That day, Sri Swami

Chidananda, the head of Sivananda Ashram, Rishikesh came to see Mataji and spent about half an hour with Her. The next day, Dusehra, marked the completion of Durga Puja. Ma sang with great inspiration before the image was taken to the Ganga for Immersion.

On the 26th Sri G.S. Pathak, Vice-President of India, accompanied by Sri B. Gopala Reddy, the Governor of U.P. and a number of high officials came to meet Mataji and had lunch at the Ashram. Late at night Mataji quite unexpectedly left for Calcutta, mainly to see a teacher of the Kanyapith who was lying seriously ill in a hospital of the Ramakrishna Mission. She had to have an operation a few days later. Mataji stayed in the hospital for over an hour, comforting the patient. She went to the homes of two other sick devotees and gave darshan to the widow of Sri G.C. Das Gupta who is about 95 years old. Mataji spent only some 15 minutes in our Ashram at Agarpara and then motored to Burdwan, but just missed the train and had to return to Varanasi by another train without reservations. In the morning of the 28th, the Ashram car that had been sent to receive Mataji at Varanasi Station, returned empty, while Mataji came later by taxi. After a few hours of private interviews and settling various matters, Mataji returned to the Railway Station and left for Delhi, accompanied by Sri Gourinath Shastri and others. Mataji thus spent three successive nights in the train. On arrival at Delhi, Mataji first of all went to the new Shiva Mandir and then saw to arrangements for Her guest before going to Her own room. Very soon Ex-minister G. L. Nanda came to finalize Mataji's trip to Kurukshetra. Large posters with Mataji's picture had been placed at various places in Delhi, Chandigarh and Kurukshetra.

Kurukshetra, the famous ancient battle-field of the Mahabharata, where Sri Krishna taught Arjuna what is known as "*Bhagavad Gita*", while the Kurus and Pandavas were facing each other arrayed for battle, is even now a place of pilgrimage where lakhs of people come to bathe in a large old pond, whenever there is a solar eclipse. This place is now being developed into a centre of Sanskrit learning and Hindu culture. Sri G. L. Nanda had requested Mataji some time ago to grace Kurukshetra on March 31st for two days and bless the place by Her presence.

On the 30th evening a large number of foreigners, most of them disciples of Master Subramuniya and some also of Sri Satya

Sai Baba and Sri Neem Karauli Baba came for Mataji's darshan and sang to Her on the terrace facing the Shiva temple. Sandalpaste and garlands were distributed to them and sweets from the temple. On the 31st at about 5-30 a.m. Mataji and Her party left for Kurukshetra in a fleet of cars. Even at that early hour number of westerners were waiting to have Mataji's darshan. During the drive Mataji for a long time sang "*Sri Krishna saranam mama*" ("*Sri Krishna is my refuge*") while everyone repeated in chorus. At the entrance to Kurukshetra, Mataji was received by Sri G.L. Nanda and a vast crowd with a shower of flower petals and taken to Birla Dharmasala where She and Her party were put up. After a while the Mahant of Nirvani Akhara of Kankhal and the Vice-Chancellor of the newly opened Kurukshetra University came to welcome Her.

Satsang, with various well-known *Mahatmas* giving discourses, was held in a pandal near the lake amidst ancient mango trees with tender leaves and fragrant blossoms. A new, much larger lake is under construction. Mataji was then taken to Sthaneshwar, the Shiva temple where Sri Krishna is said to have celebrated puja before the battle started. A low wooden seat and various items for the worship had been kept ready for Mataji who sat on the stool and motioned to Br. Bhaskarananda to perform the puja, but then Herself sprinkled water, offered sandalpaste and bilva leaves and finally placed Her head very gently and lovingly on the ancient *linga*. Mataji was in a very special *bhava*. None of us have ever before seen Ma perform puja. Everyone present felt deeply moved. After visiting the Durga and Bhadrakali temples, Mataji was taken to *Jyotiswar* which is supposed to be the actual spot where Sri Krishna taught Arjuna. It is said that the great Sankaracharya corroborated this fact. Every day the whole *Bhagavad Gita* is being recited there. The next day Mataji was shown round the lake. A large hall for lectures is planned there and an ashram "*Sadhana farm*." Mataji again sang : "*Sri Krishna Saranam mama*." Many were speechless with emotion. The foundation stone of the Centre for Cow Protection was then laid in Ma's presence with a vast concourse of people attending. The bricks were handed to Mataji and She touched them before G.L. Nanda placed them into the ground. Mataji was also driven through the very large campus of the University. Before leaving in the late afternoon, Mataji visited the Gita Mandir where the whole of the Gita is inscribed on the walls.

Mataji proceeded by car to Ghaziabad at the earnest request of the Jaipuria family. Mataji was accommodated in a new house and received with Sanskrit chanting and *arati*. At 10 p.m. Nama Yajna, performed by our Delhi Kirtan party round a beautifully decorated circular altar, started in Mataji's presence in a huge new factory building. Before retiring to Her room at about midnight, Mataji went round with the kirtan singers for a little while and the next evening sang very beautifully the charming "*dharo lao*" at the end of the function and then gracefully and swiftly distributed *prasada* to all present.

Mataji was to go to Vrindaban, but instead, at very short notice, motored to the Raipur Ashram at Dehradun on April 4th, alighting there in the afternoon. The next day She spent several hours in the Kishenpur Ashram and in Kalyanvan and then returned to Raipur for a few days of much needed rest. She however gave darshan every evening on the terrace overlooking the valley with its watercourse and the surrounding mountains. On the 8th Akhanda Ramayana was started in the Raipur Ashram hall and after its completion on the 9th, Mataji visited the residence of a devotee at the Raipur factory, reaching Kishenpur at 6 p.m., from where She left for Kankhal on the 10th afternoon. Late at night on the 9th, the Prime Minister and her Italian daughter-in-law spent nearly an hour with Mataji in Her room upstairs.

At Kankhal, Didima's Sannyas *Utsav* was commemorated on April 13th by solemn puja performed on her *samadhi* in the beautiful new mandir and by a feast given to 100 *sadhus* at the Nirvani Akhara. There newly built rooms were opened that morning in Ma's presence with Narayana and Padmanabham puja. Many devotees from various places gathered for the occasion. Satsang was held in front of Didima's Mandir. A number of well-known *Mahatmas* who are excellent speakers graced the occasion with their talks on Didima and on the significance of *Sannyasa*. Among them were Sri Swami Govind Prakash, head of Ramatirtha Ashram and Sri Swami Brahmananda, head of Sri Maheshwarananda Ashram.

On the 15th night Mataji took the train to Varanasi where She might remain until April 27th.

Mataji's birthday celebrations will be held in our Ashram at Chandralok, Kalkaji, New Delhi from 23rd to 31st May.

Mataji stayed at Varanasi from April 16th to 27th. On the 28th early morning She left for Allahabad where She visited the Ashram of late Sri Gopal Thakur at Allenganj. At night She boarded the train to Delhi. From April 29th until June 3rd She remained in our Ashram at Kalkaji, New Delhi. A charming new house had been built for Mataji in the Ashram grounds with Mataji's room in the centre surrounded by verandas on all sides, a porch on top and another set of rooms in the basement which is naturally airconditioned in the hot season. This new structure was ceremonially opened on May 2nd morning. The silver image of Sri Padmanabham, which had been presented to Mataji by the Elaya Raja of Travancore and which nowadays mostly travels with Mataji, was carried in procession from the *Panchavati* all round the Ashram and then worshipped in Mataji's room together with a Narayan Shila. Mataji and all the *sadhus* present joined the procession. That night Mataji's first birthday puja was celebrated. Mataji remained in Her new room, while the puja was done outside. The daily recitation of the *Durga Sapta sati* by pandits and *akhanda japa* (the uninterrupted repetition of God's Name) which continued until the *tithi* puja on May 31st, were also started that day. Mataji stayed in Her new house for three nights and was then expected to go to Kankhal and Dehradun for several days and return to Delhi shortly before the birthday celebrations started on May 23rd.

However, Mataji's health was not good and at the last moment She changed Her programme and remained in New Delhi in spite of the heat wave. We are happy to report that Mataji's health improved gradually and She was extremely active and in a very good and expansive mood during the birthday celebrations, seeing to everything Herself and being present in the pandal for several hours daily. Mataji returned to Her old room in the main Ashram building on May 5th, but occupied Her new cottage again on May 15th, when Akshaya Tritiya was observed by the customary puja performed by a number of people in the Ashram hall. That day a grand *Maharudra Yajna* commenced in a special structure (*yajnasala*) erected according to the rules prescribed in the Sastras for such functions. For the next fifteen days, sixteen Brahmins performed this fire sacrifice daily for several hours. Some of them had been summoned from Hardwar. A *Ramallie* party had arrived and started their daily performances. Unfortu-

nately the father of one of the main actors died a few days later and so the party had to leave but was replaced by the *Rasalila* party from Vrindaban.

Professor Tripurari Chakravarti had arrived from Calcutta and delivered his daily lecture in Mataji's presence. Sri Kapindraji, the famous expounder of the Ramayana also talked every night and to everyone's delight succeeded without fail in persuading Mataji to sing Rama Nama as the climax of his talk and as the climax of every single day. Mataji did not speak these days and so the 'questions and answers' meetings, called 'Matri Satsang' could not be held, but Mataji's singing beggars all description. Every evening She improvised new words and new tunes. Everything has been preserved by tape recordings.

On May 23rd started the official birthday celebrations with a full programme of lectures, music and dramatic performances from early morning until late at night. An exquisitely beautiful pandal had been designed and put up by an expert from Calcutta. It was a real piece of art, fitted in so naturally between the various Ashram buildings and trees that it looked an integral part of the landscape. It had a lofty blue domelike ceiling and was tastefully decorated with pictures and lamps and equipped with many fans and five coolers, which effectively counteracted the gruelling heat of May. The large, raised platform in front of the temples served as a dais for Mataji and the *Mahatmas*, and as a stage for the dramatic performance. All arrangements were excellent in spite of the enormous attendance and the inclemency of the season.

A good number of *Mahatmas* and Mahamandaleswaras arrived and graced the occasion with their brilliant and enlightening talks. Among them were Sri Brahmanand, head of Maheshwarananda Ashram, Sri Vidyanda, head of Kailash Ashram of Rishikesh, Sri Chidananda, head of Sivanandashram, Sri Govinda Prakash, head of Ramatirtha Ashram, Sri Sharanananda, head of Manav Seva Sangh. Every morning, punctually at 7-30 a.m., Mataji would attend the talk of Sri Vishnuashram, who preferred to stay in the solitude of Modinagar and to drive to Kalkaji at dawn and to return to his residence before the heat of the day. The next item was usually 'Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu Lila' performed by the party from Vrindaban, who would also enact *Rasalila* every evening in the spacious hall of Pant College in the immediate neighbourhood. Pant College also gave shelter to most of our

guests who had flocked from all over India. Mataji was present for some time every day during the *Mahaprabhu Lila* and for most lectures in the afternoon and evening.

The Prime Minister was unable to attend the inauguration of the function but she did come the next day and taking her place on the dais among the *Mahatmas*, gave a short but beautiful and pithy address, soliciting Mataji's blessing for our country in the difficult situation of the present.

The famous singer from Calcutta Sri Dhananjay Bhattacharya and other musicians regaled us with their songs. A special feature was the dramatic representation of the life of Lord Gouranga in Bengal by the renowned "Nader Nimai" party of Howrah Samaj on two successive nights until 2 or 3 a.m. Mataji did not budge from Her seat and at the end did *sastanga pranama* on the stage. She was in a special *bhava*. On some other nights films of Mataji and Didima were shown as the last item.

It goes without saying that there was Kumari Puja and a feast given to 108 little girls in the Ashram. Mataji herself putting flowers on their heads and asking one of the kumaris to feed Her.

The *Tithi Puja* in the night of May 31st proceeded with the utmost solemnity and in great harmony, although, not only was the pandal packed to capacity but rows of people stood all round it for hours in awe and silence. The atmosphere was of an extraordinary sweetness. We were lifted into a stillness and radiance in which fatigue of the all-night vigil was simply non-existent. During the puja there was beautiful music sung by our best Ashram singers with half an hour's meditation in pindrop silence in between. The Puja was performed at a distance from Mataji, as She had been allergic to flowers, scents etc. for sometime. Beautiful fresh flowers in perfect condition had arrived from Madras sent by the night plane by Sri T. Sadasivam and Sm. M.S. Subbhlakshmi.

Many high Government officials, headed by the Vice-President Shri G. S. Pathak and his family, were present, besides a good number of other V.I.Ps, Rajas and Ranis.

Mataji this time rose already before 11 a.m. from Her *samadhi* and was able to walk up the steps to her house.

The Pandal was converted into a huge dining-hall for the feast given to all who cared to partake in honour of Mataji's birthday and was then dismantled.

On June 2nd *Nama yajna* was performed all day and on the 3rd

night Mataji entrained for Kankhal, alighting there in the early morning of the 4th. On the 5th evening Mataji arrived at Kishenpur by car, leaving Dehradun for Delhi on the 8th by the night and from there proceeded on the 9th evening to Bombay. In Dehradun also Mataji was very active and gave darshan twice daily and more. On the last day Sri Sitaram Omkarnath paid Her a visit. Mataji came downstairs into the hall. It was a very charming meeting, although Mataji would say nothing more than "Baba, Baba," but She expressed everything by gestures. Sri Sitaram Omkarnath never misses an opportunity of seeing Mataji.

After a few days in Bombay, Mataji proceeded to Poona for a long stay. In the beginning, Mataji's health was indifferent and She gave darshan only in the evening for about an hour, after going for a drive almost daily. On June 24th, She called Didi and indicated to her that her illness had left Her and that She was now quite well.

On July 12th there was a big function. A new image of Radha Krishna was installed in the temple and the other images that had been temporarily removed while alterations were carried out in the Mandir, were reinstalled. A *Bhagavata Saptah* was held from 10th to 16th with Srinath Shastri officiating and Swami Akhandanan-daji giving an hour's talk every evening. The *Rasaila* party arrived from Vrindaban and performed daily. On July 20th our Delhi Kirtan party celebrated *Nama yajna*.

Mataji was expected to stay in Poona for Guru Purnima on July 26th and thereafter She was expected to proceed to Calcutta for a short visit.

Mataji was expected to be in Kankhal for the 2nd anniversary of Didima's *mahasamadhi* which is to be celebrated on August 15th.

Durga Puja is to be held in Naimisharanya from 14th to 17th October and Kali Puja in the same place in *Divali* night, 5th November.

The Twenty-second *Samyam Mahavrata* will be observed at Hardwar from 13th to 20th November.

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It is perhaps well to remember that what we saw Mataji do is only a small fragment of Her *Lila*. She literally is wherever and

whenever She is thought of by anyone, anywhere. The number of Mataji's devotees of India is increasing by leaps and bounds. Many come to India to have Her darshan and others were praying that She might grace their countries with Her presence. When someone asked Mataji to visit his or her country, Mataji usually replied: "I am there just as you see me here so I am there." She said says again and again: "This little child is always with you." Many letters arrive in which people claim to feel Mataji's presence and Her influence tangible. Some who have never even met Mataji physically have dreams and visions of Mataji which leave a lasting impression.

The following is a letter from a devotee who lives thousands of miles away.

April 14, 1972

My Beloved my very own Mother,

I know as I write these words that You are here with me, that you are indeed the writer, the words and thoughts themselves, and She who is beyond all form of expression. Yet the awareness of Your presence is not always with me for I am poor in wisdom and realization. And so it is I yearn and long for you to come. So it is that I roam through the forests and meadows of this beautiful ashram and cry for You to come. And so it is that I write to my dear Mother about a dream I experienced many, many months ago.

Dear Mother, your little girl dreamed of herself in a large room with many people. As these people were not engaged in talk about God, your little girl was very lonely and went away from the people. To console her she thought: "I will just think about Ma. That will make me happy." No sooner had I thought this, than You appeared before me very real, full of light, with your arms stretched out to me. You walked to me and I to you, but just as we were about to embrace, You walked into this body and disappeared. How I cried! So much I wanted to embrace you, but you had disappeared at my very touch.

Well, I thought, perhaps I can recall the experience. I will just think of Ma again. And again You appeared, just as the first time. You looked at me as though I was your very own child, walked to me and then walked again into this body.

I had, then, the understanding that You are here within me, and very often I live in this realization. At times I perceive you just behind my eyes, looking through them. Or I hear you singing in my

own voice. But then I forget Mother, and think at times that you are far away in India and that I shall never see you.

Oh, Mother, dear Mother, please let me come to you in Mother India. The longing is great now—the yearning for God and for my Mother. Please, Mother, let me come to you—let me receive *sannyas* initiation and stay with you for some time.

Dear friends are returning this week to our ashram. I prayed, Mother, that you would send them back here to us some day. Yet, I am certain that their arrival will only increase my longing for you. They will bring pictures and stories and songs that they sang for you, and I shall cry and cry. If I am to cry so, please let me come and cry at your feet.

Bless us, Mother, that we may know God.

Your child."

Mataji had gone to Poona for a long stay about the 15th of June. When, after visiting South India, Mataji went to Poona in the middle of January, a beautiful new hall was inaugurated in our Ashram. It was built exactly where Sri Haribabji had held his last satsang in a pandal in summer 1969. Mataji had the *Kheyala* that the hall should be built on that very spot. This summer elaborate satsang took place there just as Sri Haribabaji would have arranged, were he still in the body. His garlanded photo was placed on a decorated armchair while *Rasalila* and *Mahaprabhu lila* were performed daily and a *Bhagavata Saptah* was held as well. Mataji sat through it all as if Haribabaji were present in person.

A new extraordinarily beautiful *singhasana* with a swing, made entirely of sandalwood, had been ordered in the meanwhile and on July 12th, Sri Gopalji who had been installed in the new *mandir* in January was now placed on it and a grand *puja* performed. A new *vigraha* of Radha-Krishna was also consecrated the same day.

During the *Nama Yajna*, celebrated on July 20th by our Delhi Kirtan party, Mataji sang for a long time and went into a *bhava* such as had not been observed for many years. On July 24th Mataji and the whole party visited the farm of Sri S. Mahindra where the evening satsang was held. The entire staff and all labourers, over 120 men, queued up to do obeisance and Mataji with Her own hands distributed fruits and nuts to all of them.

On July 26th, *Guru purnima* was celebrated, preceded by *Satyanaryana Puja* on the 25th night. An enormous throng of

devotees had collected from all over Maharashtra and Gujarat to pay homage to Mataji on that auspicious day. Mataji was available practically the whole day from 6 a.m. onwards. As She usually does on this occasion, She blessed all who approached Her by touching their heads and distributed fruit and sweets with full hands. Several hundred of people partook of the feast at midday. There was kirtan all day and a special puja of Padamanabh with *abhisheka*. Mataji herself decorated the image.

Mataji was expected to leave for Varanasi immediately after *Guru purnima* and to proceed from there to Calcutta in the beginning of August. She was further expected to be present at Kankhal on August 16th for the second anniversary of Didima's *Mahasamadhi*. However, Mataji did not go to any of these places. Didima's festival was observed at Kankhal with quite a large attendance of Ashramites and devotees from Dehradun, Delhi and Varanasi, but without Mataji's physical presence. The exquisitely beautiful, very dignified *Samadhi* mandir is now complete, except for the statue. Instead a very large photo of Didima was placed on the *samadhi* and profusely adorned with flowers and garlands. As Didima passed away between 1 and 2 a.m. there was soft music and half an hour's meditation at that time not only at Kankhal but also at Poona where Mataji was physically present. On the 16th morning puja was performed in the *Samadhi* mandir as well as in Jaipuria House at Ramghat, Hardwar, where Didima had left her body. Hundred *sannyasis* were entertained to a feast at Nirvani Akhara and all devotees in our ashram.

In the meanwhile Mataji quietly remained in Poona, after almost everyone had dispersed. None knew where Mataji would go next and when. On August 5th, She suddenly left for an unknown destination with a few companions by two cars. She did not disclose to anyone where She was going. First the driver was asked to proceed towards Miraj, a place She had visited many years ago. Some devotees were following in their own cars several miles, when all the cars had been left behind or had come back, Mataji changed the direction and went to Bombay. She got down at Shiva Mandir, Sion that has a hall in which She used to put up in former years whenever She visited Poona situated next to a house of an old devotee, Sri Mullaji, and his wife were in Poona. Only their daughter was there to the delightful surprise of Mataji's sudden arrival. Mataji

Shiva Mandir hall for two and a half days in complete seclusion with all the curtains drawn. Even Swami Paramananda was asked not to go out into the street, so as not to give a clue to Mataji's whereabouts. In the meanwhile Sri Gurupriya Didi, who had left for Varanasi soon after *Gurupurnima*, was frantically phoning to various places to find out where Mataji was. On August 8th Mataji left Her retreat and moved to Her pagoda at Sri B. K. Shah's place at Vile Parle and from there returned to Poona on August 12th. Only then it was decided to celebrate *Jhulan* (20th to 24th August) and *Janmastami* (Sri Krishna's birthday) on August 31st in Poona. Mataji had never before been in Poona during those festivals.

On August 14th a new room in the guest-house built by a devotee of Bombay was opened in Mataji's presence. At Ranabaw near Porbander some devotees had constructed a small cottage for Mataji. They were very keen that Mataji should grace the opening ceremony before the *Jhulan* festival started. But Mataji sent Brahmachari Virajananda to represent Her. They arranged for a procession through the town in which a very large photo of Mataji was carried on a palanquin that was shaped like a boat. When Mataji got up from Her rest that afternoon at Poona, She said She had seen Her body being carried on a ship on land. She described in detail the landscape of Ranabaw though She had never been there physically. Later a film of the proceedings in Ranabaw was shown in our Ashram.

The *Jhulan* and *Janmastami* celebrations proved an unequalled success. Some old devotees declared that they had never before experienced such wonderful Krishna festivals. Mataji was in an excellent mood and kept excellent health, better than She had for a long time. The people of Poona were extremely enthusiastic and generous, giving their full unstinted co-operation in labour, cash and kind. Moreover they kept exemplary discipline, obeying without questioning Mataji's injunctions. When asked not to come, they stayed away. Thus Mataji did not have to remain behind closed doors but could move about freely all day with only half a dozen people about. Mataji always gave to the limit of the capacity of the receiver—physically, emotionally, mentally and spiritually. The devotees of Poona as well as all guests from Bombay and other places were literally flooded with Mataji's grace.

One can well imagine that the attendance during the functions

was very large. There were two tastefully decorated swings; the permanent one of sandalwood on Sri Krishna's altar and another one just outside of the temple. Mataji sang on two or three occasions : once for a whole hour : "*Premamoyi Radha, Pranamoyi Radha.*" On *Raksha Bandhan* day, which is *Jhulan Purnima* day. Mataji indefatigably, with endless patience, accepted and distributed rakhis the whole day. There was special puja both in the morning and evening. All decorations were made with fruits instead of flowers that day and the lights in the hall covered with blue paper to give the effect of soft moonlight. The Rani of Mandi had arranged a large swing for Mataji's own use on the veranda of the guest-house, but Mataji would not sit on it. However at about 10 p.m. when the *Jhulan* celebrations had been completed, she lay down on it, closed Her eyes and covered Herself from head to foot. She remained there for about an hour, then rose abruptly and went to Her room. The midnight meditation, in commemoration of Mataji's self initiation in 1922 very solemnly took place in the hall in Mataji's presence.

Between *Jhulan* and *Janmastami* Mataji one day went to the Ashram of the blind Swami Sri Gangeshwarananda to be present at the installation of the Vedas.

On August 31st, Sri Krishna's birthday was celebrated as customary by elaborate midnight puja in the temple. Many had fasted all day without water and could offer *Pushpanjali* at 2 a.m. Mataji Herself distributed *prasada* to hundreds of people at about 3 a.m. The next morning the traditional *Nandotsava* was observed on the platform in front of the old Ashram building. A couple of devotees who every year play the roles of the main actors on that occasions, had come from Delhi, and dressed up as cowherds (*gopas*). Mataji was in great *bhava* and putting Her arms round the necks of two portly elderly ladies who were dressed up in elaborate Marwari costume with their faces heavily veiled, sang and moved round with them. She then joined hands with each woman, one after another, swinging them round once. Afterwards Mataji fed literally hundreds of people with curds under great merriment. Curds had been provided in abundance, even late comers got their share.

During Her stay of about two and a half months in Poona, Mataji followed several invitations to the homes of devotees where satsang and kirtan took place in Her presence. Sri Dillip

Kumar Roy and Srimati Indira came to see Mataji off and on and regaled us with their beautiful songs. On September 2nd, Mataji again visited Sri Mahindra's farm.

On September 4th Mataji finally left Poona for Bombay and from there on the 5th took the night train to Ahmedabad. Sriman Narayan, the Governor of Gujarat, had earnestly requested Mataji to go there and she accepted although she had very little time at her disposal. We have on former occasions reported about Sriman Narayan meeting Mataji and even more often about the visits of his wife Smt. Madalasabehn, the daughter of Seth Jamnalal Bajaj, a great follower and co-worker of Mahatma Gandhi. The Sethji had met Mataji towards the end of his life, in 1941 and had been tremendously impressed by Her. He and his whole family became deeply devoted to Mataji. It was Sriman Narayan's great desire to bring the whole population of Gujarat in touch with Mataji. Already during Her visit to Ahmedabad in July 1969, he had invited Mataji to Government House to give darshan to the "Gujarati Congressmen and women born in free India." The entire elite of the city had been present on that occasion.

But never before had Mataji actually put up in any Government House. A green-house in the garden had been converted into a cottage for Mataji and Her small party was accommodated in Government House itself, a palatial building on the bank of the holy river Sabarmati, with extensive grounds, commanding a charming view. Mataji's sojourn was planned like that of an official guest. Every minute detail had been carefully thought out and arranged beforehand. The Governor himself, his wife and their daughter-in-law, assisted by the Governor's highly efficient staff, took immense trouble over the preparations for Mataji's visit. No wonder it turned out a huge success and the maximum number of people could derive the maximum benefit from Mataji's short stay of not quite two days.

On September 6th at 6 a.m. Mataji was received at the station by Sriman Narayan and Srimati Madalasabehn and taken straight away to the Durbar Hall where She was given a reception for about an hour and a half with *bhajans*, kirtan and *arati*. About five hundred persons had assembled. The high officials of the province and the V.I.Ps of Ahmedabad belonging to all religious communities, as well as Mataji's devotees had been invited. Sri Chavan, the Finance Minister of the Central Government was

also present and later had a private interview with Mataji.

At 4.30 p.m. about a hundred social workers met Mataji. During Her stay in Poona recently, Srimati Madalasabehn had in Mataji's presence felt the inspiration to found a Child Welfare Organisation. On returning to Ahmedabad, She had called all the social workers and it had been decided to start a "Shishu Mangal Kalyan". The inaugural meeting of it took place in Mataji's presence. About twenty social workers spoke in Gujarati, only the Governor and Srimati Madalasabehn talked in Hindi. Mataji alone sat on the dais. The Governor pointed out that Mataji had been requested to bless the gathering rather than to preside over it. In this as in every other meeting he stressed that Mataji's teaching was completely universal and applied to all men and women, irrespective of religion, sect, caste, class or nationality. He had made it a point to invite Hindus, Buddhists, Jains, Mohammedans, Christians, Parsis to every single gathering. Mataji was asked to give a message to the new Child Welfare Centre. She said : "*Bhagavan-srishti-sthiti-laya—Yatra jiva tatra Siva, Yatra nari tatra Gouri. Balgopal, Kumari seva*". "God emanates, preserves, and again absorbs into himself (the universe). Wherever a man is, there is Shiva and wherever a woman there is Gouri (Shiva's consort). Serve children looking upon them as Balgopal and Kumari".

At about 6 p.m. Srimati Sarala Devi Sarabhai and her daughter Srimati Bharati took Mataji for a drive. From 7 to 9 p.m. a public meeting was held on the enormous lawn. The Governor had given orders to announce in all papers that Mataji would give darshan at that time in the premises of Government House and that everyone without distinction was welcome. This was perhaps the first public religious meeting ever held in the grounds of any Raj Bhavan. According to newspaper reports about twelve thousand people assembled. Again Mataji alone was asked to sit on the dais. The Governor, all ministers and other V.I.Ps had their seats on the cushioned lawn in front. Exemplary order was maintained by civil clothes men. One can well imagine how impressive it was to watch that vast congregation in complete discipline and pindrop silence. None made an attempt to approach Mataji. It was an unforgettable experience. The programme consisted for the most part of religious music sung by well known Gujarati artists. In the second hour the Ashram girls

sang and at the end Mataji led the kirtan Herself for nearly half an hour. She spontaneously composed new words on this occasion. *Jagat guru sharnam mama, namo, namo, Vishva guru sharanam mama, namo, namo*. ("The Guru of the whole world is my refuge, I bow to him again and again; the Guru of the Universe is my refuge, I bow to him....") It seemed obvious that Mataji chose these words so that people of all religions could participate. After the meeting there was private darshan in Mataji's room. The Governor and his family left at 10 p.m. to give Mataji time to rest, but other devotees remained until late.

On the 7th from 8.30 to 9.30 a.m. professors and students of all colleges and of the university had been invited to meet Mataji. Srimati Madalasabehn delivered the inaugural speech, then the Governor spoke, again emphasising Mataji's universality. The talks were succeeded by songs by our Ashram girls. Mataji was asked to give a message. She Herself said: "*Bhagavan-Parabrahma-Rupa-Arupa*." ("There is only ONE, call Him God, *Parabrahma* or *Paramatma*. He is With Form and Formless"). The following had been dictated by Mataji and was read out by one of Her people: "*Ma to sarbada hi kahati hai, Ma, baba, dost log ek bhagaban hi sab sampraday ka, jyase pita, putra, pati ek. Manusya jiban durlav. Manusya jivan main hi bhagaban lav. Safal jiban ke liya koshis hona. Jati dharma nirbishesse mein satya bakya apna-apna japa dhyana swaran puja. Nija nija sampradaya mein jo jo hai wahi sthiti mein se prarambh kare. Sadgrantha path, satsang, kirtan. Bhagavat bhudhi mein sarba seba*."

"Mataji always says 'mother, father, friends,' There is only one God worshipped by all religions and sects, just as the same man is father, son and husband. Human birth is a rare boon. Among all creatures the human being alone has been endowed with the potentiality to realize God. One must endeavour to fulfil this purpose of human life. No matter to what caste, class or religion anyone may belong, he should be truthful in speech and engage in his particular *japa*, meditation, worship and the remembrance of God. Each one should start along the lines taught by his own religion. Study scriptures, seek satsang, sing the names and praises of God. All service has to be done as a service to God."

After this meeting Mataji paid a visit to the Munshaw family where She had stayed on Her previous visits to Ahmedabad. A pandal had been erected for this occasion. Almost a thousand

people tried to approach Mataji and do *pranama*. The Governor was also present. Mataji remained for about an hour. There was *kirtan*, *bhajan*, *arati* and Mataji sang Herself. On Her way back She halted at the houses of three other families but did not leave the car. At midday a last gathering at Government House, Mataji led the kirtan for a long time and the whole assembly repeated after Her. From the Governor to the A.D.C. and the constables everyone sang with enthusiasm. It was a rare spectacle, moving and inspiring. Mataji started with "*He Bhagavan Priya Bhagavan, Jyoti Bhagavan*" and at the request of the Governor's daughter-in-law sang also "*Krishna Kanheya*", "*Sitaram*", "*Krishna Keshava*", "*Sri Krishna sharanam mama*."

At 4 p.m. before leaving for the station, Mataji was shown an exhibition of photos and writings of Sri Kamalanayana, the late brother of Srimati Madalasabehn, a famous social worker, who had been personally known to Mataji. The Governor and his wife themselves and the whole Government of Gujarat went to see off Mataji. She sat on a chair on the railway platform for half an hour before the train left. One should have imagined that once the train started Mataji would be able to lie down quietly and rest. Far from it a great rush of people was found thronging outside of Mataji's compartment for Her darshan at every single station up to Abu Road. The Governor had it announced in the papers by which train Mataji was travelling. He wanted everyone in the whole province to receive Mataji's blessing. Even at small way-side stations people were waiting eagerly to catch a glimpse of Mataji. At Palampur Junction the crowd amounted to 600 or 700 and the police had to make order. People were stationed also on the roofs of the station buildings, while Mataji was standing in front of the open door of the bogie.

On September 8th at about 10 a.m. Mataji reached Jaipur, putting up in the cottage built for Her by Dr. Purohit. She had come mainly to inspect Didima's statue, but also visited Govindaji's Mandir. Late that night She boarded the train to Delhi from where She motored to Vrindaban on the 9th morning. Sri Avadhutaji is ailing and Mataji wanted to pay him a visit. On the 10th afternoon she returned to Delhi, spending four hours in our Ashram at Kalkaji before boarding the train to Hardwar where She alighted on the 11th early morning. A few hours later She drove to Dehradun and went first of all to Kalyanvan where the anniver-

sary of the installation of the sacred fire¹ was commemorated. Mataji reached there at about 12 p.m. and drove back to Kankhal at 4 p.m. The whole time She was busy at both Ashrams. When She was about to leave, Sri Swami Govind Prakash of Ramathirta Ashram came to see Her. Mataji sat down in the Ashram hall for half an hour. Pushpa sang Mataji's new kirtan "*Jagatguru sharanam mama*" and the Swamiji delivered a short address.

At Kankhal Mataji remained for a week of comparative rest. Many devotees from Dehradun and a few from Delhi went there for Her darshan. On September 18th night She left for Varanasi where the yearly *Bhagavata Jayanti* had already begun. On September 22nd Mataji suddenly left with only three companions for Rajgir. But She said She would return soon.

Mataji was expected to go to Naimisharanya early in October. Durga Puja will be celebrated there from 13th to 17th October, Lakshmi Puja on the 22nd and Kali Puja on November 5th.

¹ This fire had been lit for *havan* after a Kali Puja in Dacca in 1927 and been preserved even since. After the partition it was transferred from Dacca to Vindhyachal and later to Varanasi and Calcutta. Last year it was also brought to Dehradun.