

DIARY LEAVES

Part I : 1947-1954



*In Mataji's Presence even
the trivial becomes sublime,
the pettiest incident acquires
significance. This fact itself is
an important part of Her
teaching.*

A young girl approached Mataji with the request to write in her autograph book. I felt sure Mataji would decline with a gracious smile, explaining: "I do not write." Nothing of the sort. Mataji nodded, "Alright, on which page would you like it?" Delighted the girl opened the book and handed it to Mataji.

With the utmost concentration and a childlike seriousness, Mataji drew a tiny dot in the middle of the page. Then, raising Her head, She looked straight into the girl's eyes, and pointing to the dot, said, "*In this everything is contained!*" and handed the book back to the owner.

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Satsang in the hall of the Varanasi Ashram

Not many people were present. Scripture was being read. Suddenly a fairly large dog came racing into the hall. Two or three men got up and tried their best to drive it away. But the dog defeated all their attempts, running round and round the hall, causing much distraction. Mataji made signs to them to sit down quietly and take no notice of the animal, but they were not looking at Her. Swiftly Mataji beckoned to a young man sitting near Her. She took the garland of fresh flowers from Her neck and handed it to him, "For the dog !," Mataji said. The boy at once succeeded in throwing the garland over the dog's head. The animal tugged at it happily and hastened straight out of the hall. A smile of relief showed on everyone's face.

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At another time, Mataji was sitting surrounded by a group of devotees. An ant was busily crawling up Her garment. Someone tried

to brush it off. With an expression of infinite tenderness Mataji looked at the tiny creature and said, "Why chase it away ? It has come out of love."

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In May 1948 Mataji's birthday was being celebrated in the garden of Dr. J. K. Sen's house, at New Delhi. A large crowd attended the Satsang three times daily. Sri Haribabaji Maharaj and other well known Mahatmas graced the function with their presence.

One morning in the middle of the meeting, a weird looking man entered the garden. He was dressed in a queer fashion and his face bore a look of insanity. He was obviously disturbed. He walked straight over to the women's side and spoke to each woman whose head was uncovered, "Cover your head, be a Devi !" No one heeded him. This seemed to annoy him intensely. He was obviously getting more and more desperate. Finally, he approached Mataji and repeated his request to Her as well. She at once complied with his wish and motioned to the girls sitting near Her to do likewise. Every woman in the assembly followed suit. The stranger was visibly pleased at his sudden success, and with a triumphant smile walked across to the men's side and sat down quietly. After some time however he got up, announcing in a loud voice that he wanted to leave. Mataji handed an orange to someone to give to him. This for some reason infuriated the stranger and he threw the fruit at Mataji with violence. He aimed well, it hit Her. A wave of indignation surged through the crowd. Two of Mataji's bhaktas caught hold of the intruder and tried to lead him out of the garden. At the gate he freed himself from their grip and attempted to return to the Satsang. One of the devotees hit him, and with difficulty he was finally turned out into the street.

After the meeting Mataji called the two young men who had dealt with the stranger. She wanted to know all the details. On hearing them,

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She said, "You are not to prevent anyone from coming to this body<sup>1</sup>, moreover you must not beat anybody. To atone for what you have done keep a fast tomorrow, and you who have hit the stranger may not even drink water." "But how could we allow him to throw the orange at you?" protested the young men. "There was no knowing what he might have done next." "Never mind," said Mataji, "he wanted to return to me, you should have let him do so."

The next morning the stranger came again. This time he was decently dressed like everyone else. The insane look had vanished from his face. He did not concern himself with the women's bare heads, but straight away sat down quietly with the men and remained throughout the Satsang. When it was over he went up to Mataji and talked to Her. She invited him for lunch and he stayed with us until after the meal. We found him an educated, cultured and amiable person.

Afterwards, we learnt that throwing the orange at Mataji had caused him such deep remorse that he was healed of his mental disturbance. He had been unbalanced and was restored to normality by Mataji's Grace.

This surely is an incident to be pondered over. Mataji sometimes says, *"If you must be angry, be angry with me, for you will not be able to keep it up for long. If you focus your anger on me, it will soon evaporate."*

This reminds me of a conversation with Sri Ramana Maharshi at Arunachala which left a deep impression. Someone asked, "How was it that St. Paul who hated Jesus Christ so violently that he wanted to kill him, later became his most ardent disciple?" Sri Ramana replied, "Whether it be love or hate, it is the thought of Him that takes you there."

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1. Mataji spoke of Her own person as "this body."

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## Satsang at the Kishenpur Ashram

22nd September, 1949

A small party had arrived from Rishikesh at the Kishenpur Ashram. Among them was a lady from South India. Probably in her late thirties, beautiful and cultured, yet she appeared absent-minded. Showing no interest in her surroundings, she hardly spoke to anyone. Some deep grief was obviously gnawing at her heart. She asked for an interview with Mataji. She knew very little Hindi and so a few of us were allowed to be present to translate when she told her sad tale. "First my husband died. I was upset, but I could bear it, because I had my only daughter, a lovely, talented child. When she was 12 she became ill and died. Since then I cannot find peace of mind. She was all I had, so beautiful and promising. When she had hardly begun her life, she was torn away from me. Why did she have to leave me ? Why ? I cannot understand.

"For some time I worked in an orphanage. I thought, if I have no child, let me at least serve motherless children. I got attached to those orphans and they to me, but my heart is still broken.

"My Guru says, 'Go on with your *sadhana* and gradually you will find consolation.' But I cannot concentrate. All the time I am pining for my darling. Nothing appeals to me. I want my child back. What am I to do ?"

Mataji said, "First of all, sorrow comes from the sense of 'I' and 'mine.' You say, 'My daughter died' and so you grieve. But who are you ? Find out who you are ! She was the fruit of your body. As long as you are identified with the body, there must be pain, it is inevitable. So many boys and girls die, young and beautiful, yet it does not affect you much. You only *think* that this one child was your own and you have lost her."

"Then, there is another thing to be learnt. All sorrow is due to the fact that one keeps apart from God. When you are with Him, all pain disappears; let your thoughts dwell on Him. Remember that your

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daughter is now with Him. The more you think of God, the nearer you will be to her. If you cry and shed tears, cry for Him.

"Just as some blossoms fall off without bearing fruit, so some human beings die young. For a while God had entrusted the child to your care and then he took her back unto Himself. Now He Himself is looking after her. One day you will go there too. Until then keep your mind on God and you will also be with your child."

"How do you know that your daughter is not much better off where she is now ? How much trouble and distress life has brought you ! Would you have desired a similar fate for her ?

"Then again, on the level where there is only One Self, there is no question of birth and death. Who is born ? Who dies ? All is One Self.

"The mind that identifies itself with the body can be turned towards the Eternal and then the pain the body experiences will be a matter of indifference. Since the body is bound to get hurt at times, there must be suffering as long as one is identified with it. This world oscillates endlessly between happiness and sorrow, there can be no security, no stability here. These are to be found in God alone. How can there be both, the world and the ONE ? On the way there, seem to be two : God and the world ; but when one has arrived there is only ONE. What worldly life is, you have seen. Who is yours ? Only your Guru, your *Iṣṭa*, in Him you will find everything and everyone. *I am your child.*"

Several months later the same lady came to Varanasi for Mataji's darshan. She looked younger and happier. "I have got over my grief," she told us. "I am now reconciled to my fate. When Mataji said, 'I am your child,' Her voice was my daughter's voice. My hair stood on end and I had an extra ordinary feeling, which I cannot put into words. From that moment the wound in my heart began to heal. I have gained an inner conviction that my child is happy where she is. I am finding ever greater peace and am able to attend to my meditation. Now I am

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planning to go on a pilgrimage to Badri and Kedamath. I only wish all bereaved mothers would have the chance to be comforted by Mataji as I have been."

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It was a rainy day, in July 1949. At that time I was staying at Rajghat School at a distance of nearly 5 miles from the Ashram. Nevertheless, whenever Mataji was at Varanasi I used to go to the Ashram every evening almost without exception. But on that muddy day I had given up all hope of getting to Mataji. It had poured with rain for many hours and the sky was still overcast with heavy black clouds. To venture out would have meant wading through mud and rain-puddles for half a mile before I could get a conveyance, if at all a rickshawman could be persuaded to take me such a distance; and even then there was every probability of arriving at the Ashram drenched to the skin and splashed with mud. But lo and behold – a visitor who lived in the Ashram lane turned up in her car. "Mataji is very gracious", I thought, "when I have no other chance to get to Her a car comes along". Without difficulty I got a lift. When we passed through the chowk the owner of the car stopped to make purchases. I availed myself of this opportunity to buy a garland. There was only one flower-seller to be seen and what he had was not at all to my taste, but in spite of this something made me buy a garland.

At the Ashram I found Mataji seated in Her usual place in the hall with only a few ashramites sitting on either side of Her. No one had ventured out into the pouring rain. As a rule, Mataji receives lots of garlands but on this occasion no one had brought even a single flower. I felt very apologetic because of my shabby garland. However I offered it and was going to sit down in my usual place when Mataji made signs to me to get out of the way. Surprised I turned round; exactly opposite to Mataji at the west end of the hall I saw an emaciated old lady lying

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on her bedding that had been spread on the floor. She was very ill and had shifted to the Ashram a few weeks ago, as she wished to die in Mataji's presence and in sight of the Ganges. It was obvious that her last hour had come. Her son was sitting close by her chanting holy texts while her daughter was attending to her. The dying woman had her rosary in her hand. She was hardly breathing but evidently fully conscious. Her blouse had been loosened and one could see every one of her protruding ribs, in fact she already looked more like a skeleton than a living person. Mataji was watching her intently. Off and on She would say with a loud voice : "Mother, are you doing *japa* ?" The old lady could respond only by almost imperceptible gestures. Her daughter confirmed : Yes, she was doing *japa* and listening to her son's chanting. Mataji suggested sprinkling some Ganges water on her chest and a few drops of the sacred liquid were instilled into her mouth with the help of a piece of cottonwool, since she was too weak to drink. Not for a moment did Mataji let Her eyes off her. I was reminded of the sight of an eagle watching its pray from the air, ready to swoop down on it at the right moment. Suddenly, Mataji left Her seat and walked straight to the dying woman. With great motherly affection She gazed at her, placed the garland on her chest and then with a swift and determined gesture passed both Her hands over the shrivelled body from head to foot. The end had come. It was unforgettable – a most impressive moment. I thought to myself, "Surely this is not death, this is liberation."

"Call the girls to sing kirtan !" said Mataji. The brahmacharinis of the Kanyapeeth came and sang. Some of them children of nine or ten. What a beautiful idea it is to make children face death in this atmosphere of peace and serenity ! Everyone felt moved, but there was no weeping, no lamenting, no regret. On the contrary, there was a hush, a sense of quiet, pervading joy, of fulfilment. "Death means changing one's apparel", one can often hear Mataji say.

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The kirtan continued for a little while, then the body was taken down to the *ghāt*. Some Ganges water was poured over the spot where the old lady had breathed her last and an oil lamp placed there. Everyone left the hall. Fortunate is he who ends his days in this manner.

Some time ago I read that when Sri Ramana Maharshi's mother was about to die, He placed his hands on her head and heart. When afterwards someone referred to her passing away, He corrected : "Not passed away, absorbed".

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In summer 1947 Mataji was spending several weeks in Her Ashram at Kishenpur near Dehradun. Sri Haribabaji Maharaj with his party and many of Mataji's devotees had gathered. In June a young couple arrived with their son Ramlal, aged about three. They had been to Hardwar and the child had caught fever there. It looked like a slight indisposition at first, but the fever kept on rising and after a few days typhoid was diagnosed. It was a serious case. Complications soon caused great anxiety to his parents. The patient developed double pneumonia and perforation of the intestines and lay unconscious for days. The doctors had given-up all hope of his recovery and the child's mother grew frantic. Very nearly out of her senses she fell at Mataji's feet, sobbing loudly and beseeching Her to save the life of her only son. Mataji used to go to the sickroom several times daily and give minute instructions as to the nursing of the child. His chest had to be padded with cottonwool and She Herself supervised the making of the padding. It was arranged that small groups of us should take turns in singing kirtan at regular intervals just outside the sick-room. Special *japa* and puja was also performed.

On the 14th day Ramlal's condition seemed extremely critical. Late at night Mataji called Sri Gurupriya Devi ( Didi ) and asked her to sit by Ramlal's bed from 1.45 a.m. till 2.15 a.m. and do *japa* while catching

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hold of his body. "Mind you, do not fall asleep", She said, "keep up your concentration without a break. Don't forget to put plenty of cold water on your eyes". Didi did as she was told. When she left the patient's room, Ramlal's temperature had come down to 101 degrees for the first time after several days of unabated high fever. Mataji asked Didi whether she had felt anything special while sitting near Ramlal. "There was a sense of great fear", Didi replied. "If you had not touched Ramlal's body during that time, he would have felt the fear", Mataji said. Then she related the following : "This night was the most crucial one of the illness. I saw the apparitions of two men. One was sitting just outside the garden gate. He seemed to wait for someone whom he was to take with him. The other figure was standing in the Ashram compound near the window of the sickroom. He was looking at Ramlal and making a gesture as if to say : 'At 2 a.m. everything will be over'. I then had the *kheyāla* to ask Didi to perform *japa* while holding Ramlal's body. To the old man at the gate, I said, 'go somewhere else', and he went." Thereafter Ramlal gradually recovered.<sup>1</sup>

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At Vasant Panchami<sup>2</sup> (spring festival) in February 1947, Mataji was at Vrindaban. A few days earlier Manohar<sup>3</sup> felt a keen desire to earn some money by manual labour. He thus worked as a coolie for a day or two and earned Rs. 3/-. He wished to spend the money on food for Mataji on that festive occasion. Some eatables were purchased and a dish consisting of rice, ghi and vegetables was prepared. Manohar suggested that Mataji Herself should distribute the *prasāda*.

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1. Ramlal is now an engineer and lives in California with his wife and two children.

2. Saraswati, the goddess of learning and music, is worshipped on that day.

3. Manohar is a disciple of Sri Haribaba who used to travel with him.

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But Sri Uriababaji said : "This is *Jagannath prasāda*<sup>1</sup>, anyone can distribute it." Much later, namely at Kishenpur in May of the same year, Mataji related : "The mere hearing of what Uriababaji had said, sent a thrill like an electric current through my whole body. I put the *prasāda* into the hands of Jaganath and then requested Uriababaji to distribute it. But both Haribabaji and Manohar begged me to give it with my own hands. So, after all, to please everyone present, I agreed. Haribabaji did not accept the *prasāda* with his hands, but instead opened his mouth wide and I put the *prasāda* straight into it. At that moment, Haribabaji was eager to feed me also, but as his hands were not quite clean, he refrained from doing so. The thought that Haribaba could not fulfil his desire to give me *prasāda* would not leave me.

"After a little while everyone went away; Didi asked me to sit down for my meal and started feeding me. Even then Haribabaji's wish was alive in me and vibrated like electricity. I could not remain seated. Getting up suddenly, I went to where the vessel with the *prasāda* was kept. I found it empty, except for one grain of its contents which had been left over. I took that grain and hurried to Haribabaji, who had just had his meal and was washing his hands and mouth. I caught hold of his hand and putting the grain into it, said : 'feed me !' Usually Haribabaji is a shy and hesitating person, but at that moment I was so definite when seizing his hand that he could not possibly have felt the slightest doubt or hesitation. However that may be, he put the tiny bit of *prasāda* into my mouth and I saw it had been transformed into pure light and the light entered into me – Oh yes, it must be mentioned here, that when the *prasāda* was being distributed to everyone, Haribabaji had said : 'Not a single grain of this must be wasted, for it is *chinmaya prasāda*'<sup>2</sup>

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1. The *prasāda* from the Jagannath temple at Puri is supposed to be unpolutable. Even untouchables may touch it.

2. Chinmayi *prasāda* means that the *prasāda* is completely divine and luminous and has lost its material character.

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In the course of a discussion about yoga in Kishenpur, in June 1947, Mataji related the following incident :

"Once Bhaji and this body were walking from Barlowganj to Mussoorie. In the heat of the early afternoon my mouth and throat became parched, but I did not feel like saying that I was thirsty. Just at that time a certain devotee's wife at Rajshahi in Bengal prepared some melon sherbet and offered it to me. I found that my thirst was perfectly appeased, the feeling of dryness had left me and my mouth seemed full of juice.

"Later when Bhaji travelled to Rajshahi he confirmed by letter that the said lady had actually prepared some melon sherbet and offered it to me at that very time. The surprising thing was that she did not as a rule offer me any sherbet. Only on that day, at that particular time it occurred to her to prepare a refreshing drink and offer it to me. This is an example for yoga."

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One day Mataji said : "Under God's dispensation now and again man has to suffer violent blows. Do you know that these blows are God's Grace ? Without them it would be impossible for the person concerned to experience a change of heart at this particular stage.

"At Dacca, a young girl of good family once related the following to this body : 'A man, of whom people said he was just like Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu,<sup>1</sup> visited our house. He said to me : 'When I came to earth last time, I left my home forsaking Vishnupriya. Now I have returned to fulfil her ardent desire for me. You are Vishnupriya reborn.' When people came to know of this they beat him up mercilessly. But this was very wholesome for him. Indeed it was the Supreme Mother who caused the beating to happen.

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1. Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, also called Lord Gauranga lived in Bengal in the 16th century and is regarded as an *Avatāra*. Vishnupriya was the name of his wife.

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One night at Vrindaban in 1948, a most animated discussion was in full swing when one of Mataji's bhaktas, a learned old *sannyā sī*, who as a rule takes a very active part in all arguments, fell fast asleep and was snoring peacefully, quite oblivious of what was going on around him. Mataji called out to him once or twice without any response. Everyone was highly amused. At last someone by way of a joke dropped a *rasagula*, (the famous juicy Bengali sweet) into the half-open mouth of the sleeping man. Even this did not have the desired effect, nor the hilarious laughter that followed. But when the sweet syrup began to trickle down his throat, he could not help waking up.

As so often happens, Mataji made this playful episode an occasion for utterances of profound wisdom. She spoke about *rasa*. However, there is a difficulty in translating what She said, for the Sanskrit word '*rasa*' means any juice from water to nectar, essence, pith, as well as delight of every kind, gross and subtle, also Supreme Delight. There is no equivalent in English.

This is what Mataji said : "Unless *Bhagavad Rasa* is instilled into man, unless the nectar of the Divine penetrates deep into him, his slumbering soul does not awaken. *Vedānta* is also *rasa*, just as *bhakti* is *rasa*; why should *Vedānta* be described as dry ? It is a well-known fact that poison neutralizes poison. Similarly, when transcending nature's delights, which are fleeting, man tastes of the delicious flavour of his true Being (*Svabhāver rasa*), of Supreme Delight (*Param rasa*), then the excruciating anguish of the poison of mere worldly enjoyment is destroyed.

Beyond bodily pleasures, such as eating, sleeping, moving, about and so on, lies Joy Supreme. Don't you recite; '*Brahmānandam Paramasukhadam*,' 'Absolute Bliss, Supreme Happiness.' HE is Happiness Itself, Happiness is His very essence. Earthly happiness has its opposite—sorrow. But where happiness is in its essential form

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(*Ananda Swarūpa*), unconditioned, there the opposites – joy and misery – find no place ; where solely *Sva Rasa* is, there can be no question of a-*rasa*, (of the sense of dryness, of emptiness, of the anguish of God's absence). He is the Fountain of Joy – Joy and Joy alone is His being. A state exists in which there is only Bliss, Beatitude, Supreme Felicity. At your level, joy has its opposite ; you speak of the joys of heaven and of the torments of hell. But where Eternal Bliss is, bliss in its own right cannot be expressed, it is entirely beyond words. THERE – what is ? What is not ? To speak means to float on the surface; what language can express that which is neither floating nor diving deep ?"

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A gentleman who lives in a far off hill station in the Himalayas had come for Mataji's darshan and stayed for some days. During his journey back home he wrote the following letter to which Mataji replied in detail, paragraph by paragraph, as follows :

*The letter* : At the time of parting, when with a broken heart I did *pranama* to you, I knew that I had found something, but I also felt as if I were losing something. In this mood I went my way.

*Mataji's reply* : Where nothing is, there is everything. All efforts are for the sake of this realization only. To do *pranama* means to pour oneself out at His feet, to become closely bound to them and thereby united to Him, to become His, who alone IS. When doing *pranama* in a temple or anywhere else, you should not hold back anything, but give yourself without reserve.

*The letter* : To know you are always near, although physically you may be far away, this experience can only come by your Grace. It seems impossible for me to attain it through my own efforts.

*Mataji's reply* : You must know Him in such a way that no place remains where He is not. According to Vaishnavite terminology there is

*viraha* and *milana* (separation and union). But this *viraha rasa*, this experience of profound yearning for God after having known union, is not like the worldly sense of separateness, which means not knowing the other, being unfulfilled.

Everything comes by His Grace alone – this of course is a fact. You experience as your own the power He has vested in you. Apply it in His service to the utmost of your capability, whatever be the nature of your approach, whatever your line.

*The letter* : While I was near you, I forgot all about my home. I did not give a single thought to my family affairs and cares. But the nearer the train carries me to my home, the more my domestic hopes and worries crowd into my mind.

*Mataji's reply* : Just as thoughts about your home crowd into your mind as you draw nearer to your dwelling–place, so also the closer you get to God, the greater grows the joy derived from the ever–increasing variety of experiences of the Divine. Indeed as you advance toward your real home, you realize more and more of this Joy. You are on the way to finding yourself, be it as the servant of the Lord, or as a part of Him, or as the ONE SELF. You must seek what will take you to EKA RASA, the state of undifferentiated Being, of Oneness, where nothing remains to be known, to be attained.

*The letter* : Grant me the strength, the power to become firmly established in pure devotion, in truthfulness and sincerity. I desire no other wealth except the abandonment of myself at the Feet of the Lord.

*Mataji's reply* : All desire must be for God only. Whatever you do whether with your hands or with your brain, do it as His service. Whatever you accept, physically or mentally, accept it as God coming to you in this shape. If anything is to be given, it is a surrender of yourself at His feet.

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Some time ago, a lady from Switzerland wrote a letter to Mataji. Here are her questions and Mataji's replies.

*Question* : Since the religious conception is the highest, the only goal in life, what becomes of those who do not attain to it in their lifetime?

*Mataji* : Those who do not attain to the Goal of human existence, have to continue in the realm of death, which is the ceaseless round of birth and rebirth.

*Question* : Since our only reason for living is to return to that from which we came, why is there this life, why were we separated from this Being ?

*Mataji* : Everything is His Will, He is absolutely free, He is His own law. This coming and going is His very nature, His dispensation. He Himself plays with Himself, everything is He and He alone.

*Question* : Will man ever destroy this world and himself ?

*Mataji* : Man has certainly not got the power to create, preserve or destroy. In Him, whose play all this is, all possibilities are contained.

The destruction of one's ego virtually amounts to the destruction of the universe. Where the ego is, there the world exists. Destruction is the very nature of that which is the world and therefore perishable ; it is ever destroyed, it is being destroyed now and it will be destroyed. But where He is and He alone, who is to destroy whom ? There, the question of destruction cannot arise. Where is He who is that Self? Find out ! The Self is not subject to destruction. The ceaseless endeavour to know that Self is man's bounden duty.

*Question* : Is there no love between mortals or must all love be first for God and then love for another being ?

*Mataji* : Between individuals, true unadulterated love or fondness is impossible. Where love or affection has grown perfect this question cannot arise, for in such a case, who is the beloved ? God and God alone.

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Varanasi, Aug. 27th, 1948.

This morning a young girl student asked : "How can I find peace ?"  
*Mataji* : "Do you really want peace ? Then make a firm resolve : 'I am going to find peace !' Just as when you want to study, you first make up your mind, then you proceed with the necessary arrangements. So also here : First you must make up your mind to it, then the road will open out. If you want to find peace, turn to Him who is the source of peace. In the world there are the twin brothers : happiness and pain. They are inseparable. As long as you are after worldly happiness there must be sorrow as well, since there is constant change. Happiness can only be temporary, never permanent. If you want lasting peace you must turn to Him. Just as a child who is hurt cries for its mother, so you must cry for Him who is your own."

*Questioner* : I want peace but I don't get it.

*Mataji* : If you sit at home and say : "I want to pass an exam", nothing will happen. You have to undertake the necessary steps. Similarly you have to take the road that leads to peace.

*The girl* : Then what to do ?

*Mataji* : Seek satsang and if you have a Guru obey his instructions.

*Question* : How to find a Guru ?

*Mataji* : If you are keen to study you find a teacher. So here also, if there is eagerness in your heart you will find a Guru. When you call God, do so only for His sake, for nothing else. Why ? When you have found Him you have found everything and then you want nothing else at all.

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Varanasi Ashram, December 16, 1948.

The chanting of the Holy Scriptures had just ended. A Kashmiri lady brought a basket full of fruit and offered it to Mataji. A little later Mataji called two bhaktas and asked them to distribute the contents of the basket to all present. "Give a whole fruit to each person," She said. Someone, who felt afraid that there might not be enough to go round, objected : "Why a whole fruit? Would it not be safer to cut them into pieces?"

*Mataji* : "No, when there is one for each person, why divide them?"

After everyone had received his or her share, only one fruit was left over for the two distributors. Mataji said to them : "The task of dealing out is only one. There might have been even three of you to accomplish it. Now you two will have to divide the fruit between you." Someone remarked : "In a similar way the action of reciting the Scriptures is one although many join in it ; it would therefore have been appropriate for all those who took part to share one single fruit between them." Someone else added : "But then to listen to the chanting is equally only one task."

*Mataji* : Exactly, there is only ONE ; all this is meant to make you grasp this fact. Whatever you do at any time, no matter for what purpose, must aim at the ONE in order to be brought to completion. Indeed, this holds good in every case – one must aim at THAT.

"To Ma everything is complete," put in a devotee.

*Mataji* : Whether you say 'to Ma' or 'to me' (meaning yourself) – everything is in reality complete. What does 'here' and 'there' mean ? That which is whole comprises everything – not even death can be excluded. Any particular angle of vision is like a fissure or gap in the whole. Even all the varying points of view, in fact anything you please, is contained in that –which is complete ; indeed in the guise of incompleteness also manifests the Perfect ONE – in every aspect is He alone.

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A *bhakta* : From completeness arises the incomplete and the incomplete develops into the complete ; movement evolves into stability, for the mouth has to be shut sooner or later when the manifestation of the next sound 'M' must follow as a matter of course. (Laughter)

*Question* : But do you not say : '*Hari Katha hi katha aur sab vritha vyatha* (Of Him alone must be the spoken word, all else is but futility and pain) ? If there is only the One—without—a—second how can there be words and speech ?

*Mataji* : Dwell only in Him, abide only in Him ! He cannot be left aside; although you may exclude Him He is still there and if you acknowledge Him He is also there – on the plane where talk and discussion still exist.

At this point the lady who had brought the fruit, suddenly got up and said : "When the *prasād* was distributed two shares were given to me." Now at last, we knew why there had been a shortage of one fruit! Then the lady added : "When I was walking in the street carrying the basket, a cow followed me and tried to snatch some fruit. In spite of all my efforts to move the basket out of her way the cow was so insistent that finally I gave her one of the fruits."

"That was my share", Mataji exclaimed. "Do you see, now the number is complete !"

The Kashmiri lady confirmed : "In fact when I handed the fruit to the cow, the thought crossed my mind : It must be Mataji who is claiming the fruit in this guise !"

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Varanasi, March 26, 1949.

Someone was reading out a poem of his own creation. It began with a conversation between Siva and Parvati. Parvati wanted to know whether all people who die at Kashi would be liberated then and there. "No," was Sankara's reply, "not all, only bhaktas who possess firm, unflinching faith."

Now the question arose as to what was the criterion for firm, unflinching faith. For it is by no means always possible to judge of the depths of a person's faith by outward appearances. In order to test people's faith Siva and Parvati in disguise went to Manikarnika Ghat. Parvati sat down on the steps with her dead husband lying across her lap. In pitiful words she begged every passer-by to bring her some firewood for her husband's cremation. Many people, deeply moved by the sight of the poor widow and her dead husband, were only too eager to comply with her request. "But," said Parvati, "there is one condition. Before my husband passed away, he voiced the express wish that the firewood should be supplied only by men entirely free of sin. I am therefore in duty bound to ask this great kindness only from those of you who are not guilty of even a minor sin."

On hearing this not, a single person was prepared to fetch the firewood, for none could deem himself completely free of sin. Just then a man, who had come to bathe in the Ganges, approached. He was not only a drunkard, but he indulged in other vices as well. As soon as he came to know of Parvati's request, he exclaimed : "What is there so difficult about it ? Just wait a moment till I have had my bath in the Ganges." He dived into the sacred waters and speedily returned to the poor widow with firewood in his arms. "Are you quite sure that you are entirely free from sin ?" questioned Parvati. "How dare you doubt it," replied the drunkard. "Have you not with your own eyes seen me immersed in the purifying waters ! At that very instant all my sins were washed away. This is Sankara's own promise. — Here, take the wood and go ahead with the cremation !"

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Someone who had listened to the story did not feel convinced : "The story sounds good enough. Nevertheless, is it really possible for a man of such unshakable faith to live in sin ?"

Someone else explained : "From a man's outer behaviour one cannot guess what stage of spiritual development he may have reached. He may be highly advanced and yet have to work out a little bad karma that has been left over. Through the force of his *prārabdha* he may have been obliged to misconduct himself for a time in the manner mentioned in the story. In this way, his unusually strong faith becomes understandable."

Another person put in : Both statements are the truth.

*Mataji* : Truth is one. How can there be two truths ?

*The same person as before* : Whatever anyone perceives from his own standpoint is for him the truth.

*Mataji* : Where there is no question of standpoints and opinions, where the food he who eats and the action of eating are one – there Truth is one and nothing exists beside the One Truth. But where 'something' is, it is due to the veil of ignorance. At the very instant of Enlightenment this veil will be rent and all ignorance and sin, however grave or manifold, will be burnt up. In such a state wrong action cannot occur. Yet there is another thing to be said : A man may have accumulated a great deal of merit and yet have to work out a tiny little bit of karma.

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Varanasi, 23-9-49.

A lively discussion was going on. Mataji ; "It is said, that the question calls for the answer. Someone for instance says : 'How can I find Truth? How can I learn to meditate successfully ?' If one keeps on asking persistently, the answer must come."

At this point, some gurgling sounds could be heard from among the audience. These were being uttered by a European gentleman who fell back unconscious, with his eyes turned upwards, his face becoming bluish and foam forming on his lips, as it happens with epileptics. Everyone's attention was instantly diverted to him. Mataji said, "This old gentleman has been practising meditation for the last 30 years. His practice was based upon instructions received from books and not directly from a competent teacher. What is happening to him is the natural consequence of this. Whenever he sits down for meditation, he falls into a trancelike condition. It is not true meditation, for his mind, not being purified in a proper way, cannot contact Eternal Peace within the heart and attain to stability. Failing this it strays away along different channels and this leads to unhappy consequences which point clearly to the necessity of direct guidance by an efficient master. The prescriptions and directions of the Guru are in strict consonance with the actual needs and capacities of the disciple, as a result of which he will be free from the troubles which follow from wrong direction.

There is one more thing : He who has no deep yearning in his heart for realization of the Divine, but merely practises breath-control mechanically may have to face unhappy results, such as you are witnessing here.

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Usually when people return from a journey they greet their family more or less briefly, and only after refreshing their body by washing, bathing, eating and drinking, they attend to all other business. Not so Mataji. First of all Her family does not only comprise the whole of humanity; all sentient beings as well as so-called inanimate things receive Her loving attention with one exception – Her own body. So when She arrives She has a smile, a kind word, a garland, a flower or a tulsi-leaf for everyone who has come to welcome Her. At once the whole place is lit up with joy and a sense of fulfilment.

Next to human beings, She lavishes Her grace on plants. She takes keen interest in every tree, every creeper, plant, shrub and flower. She often strokes and caresses them affectionately and not only gives minute instructions as to how they can be made to grow better, but also sees to it that what She suggests is carried out then and there.

She inspects the kitchen and the dining-rooms, the Satsang hall and the rooms that have been got ready for visitors, inquires about every little detail, gets a carpet moved here and a picture changed there; has a phone-message conveyed to one person and a note sent to another; scrutinizes those who had been ill when She last saw them and those who are in indifferent health at the moment, and speaks words of comfort and advice.

When at Varanasi, She also goes to greet the cows and calves, each individually. Then She may recount some incidents from Her recent travels, tell of old bhaktas or new people She has met. In fact, everything imaginable is being attended to for an hour or two or longer until at last one of Her attendants succeeds in getting Her to retire to Her room. I noted all this down when Mataji arrived at Varanasi some time ago. But of course, there are instances when Mataji behaves quite differently. At times She seems utterly distant, Her eyes look far away. She is obviously deeply preoccupied with some thing that we cannot perceive.

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There is a hush in the atmosphere and everyone present just gazes at Her in mute awe and wonder. She is entirely unpredictable – all possibilities are contained in Her.

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The Varanasi Ashram was inaugurated in 1945. Although by now quite an imposing block of buildings, it never seems to near completion: some construction or other is usually in progress.

Bricks and other building materials had been heaped up in a corner of the courtyard. One afternoon at about two or three o'clock, Mataji suddenly rushed out of Her room and walked straight towards that pile of rubble, shouting : "Quickly remove all this, some plants are being choked underneath !" Those present at once set to work. Sure enough five pomegranate plants were found hidden below the bricks. No one had remembered that they were there. Mataji explained : "When I was lying on my bed resting, these plants came to me pleading for their lives, drawing my attention to the fact that they were in danger of being suffocated".

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Mataji was taking Her evening stroll on the terrace of the Varanasi Ashram overlooking the Ganges, while a number of people stood lined up on either side. Mataji had just told me something and I prostrated. She did not notice it, as She had already turned to someone else. She suddenly stepped backwards, with Her foot right on to my back. For a second my mind stopped functioning, became dazed, then thoughts started pouring in. What was this ? Mataji had nearly fallen, had literally walked over me, yet there had been no pain, no weight, no pressure, it felt as if a hand had lightly touched my back. How was this possible ?

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I stood up as quickly as I could. "Does it hurt much ?" asked Mataji. "No, not at all. How light you are !" I could hardly speak for amazement. "Very light ?" laughed Mataji and walked away. "The weight of a flower," remarked an old *sannyasi* who had witnessed the incident.

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### Mataji and Children

Mataji calls all children Her friends. Children no less than grown-ups adore Her. I know some youngsters who can never sit still for five minutes, yet they love to go to see Mataji and as if fascinated, sit quietly before Her for an hour or two without showing any restlessness. It is of course true that Mataji gives them a lot of attention. She presents them with garlands and flowers that have been offered to Her and whenever possible with sweets and fruits. She laughs and jokes with them, while at the same time She takes them very seriously. She asks even small children of five or six to think of God. "You are my friends, aren't you? Then will you listen to me ? Are you willing to do something for this friend of yours ? All right, be careful to remember what I am going to ask you !

"First of all, as soon as you wake up in the morning do *pranama*, bow down to the ground before God, pray to Him to make you a good boy or girl and say `Lord, I do not know where you are, grant that I may find you !' At night before going to sleep do *pranama* again, and if you have done anything wrong during the day, ask God to let you do better the next day.

"The second thing is, try to obey your parents and teachers. Thirdly, study well ! Give your mind to your lessons and endeavour to master them.

"Fourthly, always do your utmost to speak the truth, and, fifthly, laugh and play, run and jump to your heart's content ; and if you carry out the first four things I have asked of you, there is no harm in being a little naughty as well."

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To bigger children Mataji frequently says, "How much time can you spare for me ? Don't reply in a hurry, think it over and see how much time you can give me. Five minutes daily or ten ? Not only once in a while but every day for the rest of your life. All right, for those five or ten minutes think of God. Choose the time of day which is most convenient. If you can sit still and be by yourself, so much the better. But if this is not possible, whether lying, standing or walking, think of Him – lying in bed or whilst having your bath – but never give it up. These few minutes of every day belong to God, although you may be travelling by train or bus – under all circumstances."

On one such occasion a very-old man asked : "Mataji, do those five precepts apply to me also ?" "Certainly," replied Mataji. "Even the 5th ?" "Well, old people cannot run and jump, but they should walk. They must prevent the body from getting stiff by taking plenty of walking exercise. As to the other four things, to think of God and to speak the truth goes without saying. To obey one's elders in the case of old people means to obey the Guru, and to learn one's lessons well – their study is *Brahmavidyā*, the science of Reality."

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"Never let your mouth be empty, keep *misri* (sugar-candy) in it at all times – namely the *misri* of God's name. No bitterness will then have a chance of accumulating." This is one of Mataji's ever recurring sayings.

Once She visited a town after an absence of two or three years. She noticed that one of Her bhaktas kept a dainty little silver box with him, which he opened occasionally to take something out and put into his mouth. "What do you keep in this box ?" asked Mataji. "When you came here last," was the reply, "you told me to keep *misri* in my mouth at all times. I have religiously been carrying out your advice ; this is why I got this little silver box." Mataji laughed : "Oh, is that it ? But you see, real sweetness can be got from God's name only. What I meant was

that you should never remain without the remembrance of God. Nevertheless," She added, becoming quite serious, "you have done well to practise faithfully what you understood, for thereby, you have learnt a great lesson, which is to keep one thing in mind at all times. It will come in useful when you change over to the *misri* I meant."

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When the Satsang was over, an, old man was taking leave. "It is getting late," he said, "I must be going home."

"Late indeed," agreed Mataji, "there you are right ; but go to your real home, not to the *dharmashālā*.' The gentleman had no inkling of what Mataji was driving at. "I am not staying in any *dharmasāla*, I have my own home here." Mataji shook Her head and smiled, "Do you call this 'home'? You won't be able to stay there for ever. Your days are counted and when your time is over you have to leave. I call it *dharmasālā*. There are rules and regulations, you may remain for a while and then you have to quit.

"But this body tells you to find your real home from which nobody can drive you out, which is not of this world. Dive deep and unearth your real wealth, find your real home in God who is your own Self."

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A great number of people approach Mataji with the following question : "I do not know how to meditate, neither do I feel inclined to do so. I cannot find much interest in spiritual things, but the hum-drum of daily existence also has little charm. What is the solution ?" "What this little child would recommend for you is to sit under a tree." (Mataji always speaks of Herself as a little child).

"But there are no trees where I live," a lady once retorted ; and on another occasion someone said : "Under a tree ? What kind of tree ? A peepal tree ?" "Yes, a peepal tree," said Mataji. "By tree I mean a real saint. A saint is like a tree. He does not call anyone, neither does he send anyone away. He gives shelter to whoever cares to come, be it a man, woman, child or an animal. If you sit under a tree it will protect you from the inclemencies of the weather, from the scorching sun as well as from pouring rain, and it will give you flowers and fruit. Whether a human being enjoys them or a bird tastes of them matters little to the tree ; its produce is there for anyone who comes and takes it. And last but not least, it gives itself. How itself ? The fruit contains the seeds for new trees of a similar kind. So, by sitting under a tree you will get shelter, shade, flowers, fruit, and in due course you will come to know your Self. This is why I say, keep satsang, take refuge at the feet of the Holy and Wise, keep close to them and you will find all you need."

"It is not so easy to get satsang," people often contradict, "there is no great saint in my town or village." "If you can't get the company of living Sages," is Mataji's counsel, "read books about them or written by them, that is to say study sacred texts and above all try to remain in the Presence of God by the constant remembrance of one of His Names. If you do this you are sure to find a living Guru who will guide you."

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"Mataji, what is the use of doing *sadhana*, *japa*, meditation, ceremonies and all the rest ? We go on practising for years ; but whether we get anywhere by all this exertion and self-denial we do not know. Does it bring us nearer to Reality ?" This is a very common question and I have heard Mataji reply something like this :

*Mataji* : When you wash your clothes you have to apply soap. It is of course true that the clothes will not be clean unless the soap is rinsed off again. But can dirt be removed without soap ? The thought of God is the soap that in the end has to be washed away by the purifying waters of the Ganges of Supreme Knowledge ( *jñāna gangā* ). Don't worry about results. In business you give and you get something in return. This is called a bargain, but it is no real gain. If you adopt this sort of mercenary attitude you will not get anywhere. Never leave off your practice until there is Illumination. You must be adamant in your pursuit. The remembrance of God is like a flame. In whichever direction it is blown, there it will burn up whatever gets into its way. According to your actions you will reap the fruits. No effort is ever wasted. Good works and bad works will yield their harvest in great abundance – for He is extremely generous. Perhaps you will argue, "I want to be a king, but my wish is not granted." "You get exactly what is due to you – nothing less and nothing more. When a pitcher full of water has a hole, however small, all the water will leak away. This is how it is with you : your concentration is never complete, there is a break in it, you do not want anything with your whole being.

A dose of poison kills a man. But the objects of the senses act like slow poison, gradually they push you towards death. So long as you are worldly-minded you get a 'return ticket,' you remain bound to the round of birth and re-birth, repeating the same kind of experience over and over again.

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God is immortal. If you aspire to find Him you become a pilgrim on the path of immortality. Try to keep company with the pilgrims on this path and you will realize your Self as the Immortal.

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Mataji is very emphatic about the importance of obeying the Guru's orders implicitly without criticism.

"Be very careful whom you accept as your Guru. Don't be in a hurry. Take your time over it and use your intelligence. But once you have accepted a Guru, it is irrevocable and you must surrender completely. If you fail in this, I maintain you have not accepted him as your Guru."

Several years ago some Westerners came to Mataji and had a discussion with Her, which throws an interesting sidelight on this question. One of them asked : "How can I get Self-realization ?"

*Mataji* : He is Self-effulgent, it is not you who can bring it about.

"Still, should we not make an effort ?"

*Mataji* : Yes, the Self is hidden by a veil, you have to wear it down by your own exertion.

"What is the process by which this can be accomplished ?"

*Mataji* : Do you really want Self-realization ?

"Of course, I do !";

*Mataji* : Then are you prepared to do exactly as I tell you without letting your judgement interfere ?

Here the gentleman became thoughtful and hesitated. He evidently was feeling uncomfortable.

Mataji smiled at him encouragingly.

*At last he said* : "I regard Sri Ramana Maharshi as my Guru, but I have not met Him as yet. I intend going to Tiruvannamalai shortly."

*Mataji* : Then you must do exactly as He instructs you. But do you really want Self-realization ?

"Certainly, have I not come all the way to India for this purpose?"

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"For this and nothing else ?" questioned Mataji once more.  
 "For this and nothing else," confirmed the seeker.

Three times Mataji had repeated the question and three times the response had been the same. Mataji became very serious. Her voice was definite and powerful when She spoke : "If this is so, if you want Self-realization and nothing else, it does not matter whether you do as I tell you. If you really want this one thing only, you will find a way, there is no doubt about it !"

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Varanasi, October 1951.

One morning someone asked : "Is it of any use taking initiation from a Guru who does not show the signs that the *Shāstras* have laid down for a real Guru ?"

*Mataji* : There are two possibilities. One is to "take on" a Guru and the other : the Guru is the Guru – there is no question about it, no taking on, no leaving. The Guru is the Self (*Khuda*). If he is not, he can show you a way, but he cannot take you right to your goal, to Enlightenment (*prakasha*), because he has not reached himself. If you make someone your Guru you can also leave him, but then I will say, you have never had a Guru. The Guru cannot be left, He is Guru by His very nature, He naturally supplies all that is lacking. Like the flower gives its perfume, naturally, spontaneously, so the Guru gives initiation by sight or hearing or touch or teaching or mantra, or even without any of these, just because He is Guru. The flower does not make an effort to give its perfume, it does not say : "Come and smell me !" It is there. Whoever comes near it will enjoy the scent. As the ripe fruit falls from the tree and is picked up by man or eaten by the birds, so the Guru gives to all what they need, they are His own, whoever they may be.

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In the course of a discussion about the relationship of Guru and *Shisya*, someone asked Mataji : "What is the work of the Guru and what the work of the *Shisya* ?" Mataji : "It is said, that the *Shisya's* task is to efface the ego and become as a blank.

"There is a story of a King who invited the best artists to paint frescoes in his palace. Two painters were working in the same hall on opposite walls, with a curtain between them, so that neither of them could see what the other was doing. One of them created a marvelous picture which evoked the admiration of every onlooker. The other artist had not painted anything at all. He had spent all his time polishing the wall – had polished it so perfectly that when the curtain was removed, the picture of the other painter was reflected in a way that made it appear even more beautiful than the original. It is the disciple's duty to polish away the I-ness."

"But then the major portion of the work has to be accomplished by the disciple ?" put in the inquirer.

"No", said Mataji, "because it is the Guru who paints the picture."

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Mataji sometimes tells the following story to illustrate that it is not enough just to hover about in the proximity of sages and saints :

"A large lotus was growing in a pond. A wanderer passed by who had never before seen a flower of this kind. Struck by its beauty he stopped to admire it. He noticed that a frog and a fish were living in the water just below the lotus. 'What is this wonderful plant right above you ?' he asked the frog. 'Well, what should it be ? It is nothing very particular, just the ordinary thing', was the answer, and he turned away to hunt for insects. Disappointed, the man addressed the fish who replied: 'Have you not heard what my friend the frog told you ? It is the common everyday thing, nothing special.' At that moment the wayfarer saw a bee flying at great speed towards the lotus. He tried to stop it in

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order to inquire, but the bee said : 'I have no time now, wait a little !' So saying, the bee sat down right in the heart of the exquisite blossom sucking nectar for a long time. At last he flew back to the man. 'Now you may talk to me.' The wanderer repeated his question and added : 'Tell me, what have you been doing there all this time ?' 'Don't you know,' said the bee joyfully, 'this is a lotus full of delicious nectar, which I have been sucking and now I am a changed being.'

"It is possible to live for a long time in the close proximity of sages and saints, sadhus and *mahātmās*, without being able to recognize their true quality ; whereas one who has the *adhikāra*, who is inwardly prepared and really ready for such a contact, may come from a great distance and within a minute know the Great and Holy for what they are and derive great benefit in a short time. It depends on one's capacity to penetrate to the essence of things."

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Varanasi, February, 1951

A young English *sādhaka* who had studied philosophy at the Benares Hindu University had a talk with Mataji before returning to his country. Amongst other things, Mataji said to him :

"Meditate on God all the time, whatever you may do, wherever you may be. Remember, whatever you see, whatever you hear is his manifestation. Pain exists because you believe yourself to be separate. Don't consider anyone as separate from yourself. Regard everyone as your friend. Consider yourself to be God's tool (*yantra*) and think that He is moving you. Dedicate yourself entirely to Him, feel all the time that He is doing everything. Even when you walk, feel that He is moving your legs.

Whatever work you do, offer it to Him, then you will be incapable of any baseness, for how can you offer anything ugly to your Beloved. The little knowledge you possess you have to give up to Him and in return, because there is nothing left, He will give you all.

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The mantra that you repeat is the sound of Brahma, His own *Swarūpa* (essential form). So when you perform *japa*, you are with Him – that is satsang. Therefore, at all times keep up either *japa* or meditation. Contemplate the oneness of all, of everything. There can be nothing outside of Him. Everything that exists is necessary to make up the world. If only one finger is missing, you call the man a cripple ! So don't see anything as apart from Him – your Self. Then you will be incapable of anger. How can you be angry with your Beloved, your own Self ?

Think that you have been with God in your meditation, though you may not be aware of it. Keep a separate place for your *sādhana*. Just as the perfume of a flower spreads, so the perfume of God will be produced by your daily meditation and you don't know where the wind may carry it."

"Why should onions and garlic be avoided ?"

"Because they take the mind in the wrong direction, down instead of up."

"And meat ?"

"Meat also. You are already fleshy, if you eat meat you become more fleshy. It keeps you down to worldliness, whereas you are aspiring to the Divine."

"Is there immorality involved in eating meat ?"

"Certainly. To kill is a sin."

"Only for the *sādhaka* or for all ?"

"For all."

"I am returning to England because my parents are pained at my absence. But how far should I comply with their wishes ? They expect me to settle down and get married."

"If you wish to get married you may do so, although you get caught in the endless round of the world. But remember that the Rishis of old

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were married. Together with your wife continue to aspire to Divinity.

But if you do not want to get married, nobody can force you. If you can keep your mind pure without marriage, so much the better."

"Should I take up work either for my father's estate and property or welfare work for Indians and Africans?"

"Why not work, since you are going there. But don't take up work that will bind you."

"When I get home I shall no doubt be asked to give talks on India over the Radio, in Clubs, and Societies, etc. should I respond to such requests or keep quiet?"

"Most certainly you should respond. Before starting your discourse, mentally prostrate before God and pray that you may be a pure instrument to be used by Him. Then tell your countrymen that just as in the West many ways and means have been devised for people to be trained in various professions in order to be able to earn their livelihood, so India has since time immemorial devoted her energies to the discovery of the innumerable paths that lead to the Supreme Goal of human life, which is Self-realization."

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## On Pranama

November 15, 1950

Mataji was speaking about *pranama* (*doing obeisance*). She said :  
 "Whenever obeisance is being done there is, without fail, a give and take of power. The qualities of the person to whom one does *pranama*, be they good or bad – are transmitted to the one who bows, regardless of whether he offers salutation from his heart or merely as an outward gesture. Therefore whenever you bow down before one spiritually advanced, irrespective of whether you do so with real faith and reverence or not, by virtue of the very act of saluting him, something will flow out

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from him to you. When one does *pranama* to one's parents it is the expression of genuine love and respect. To bow down to them is therefore beneficial."

*Someone asked* : "Suppose one does obeisance to one who apparently is a great saint but in reality is a wicked person ; it therefore will have an adverse influence on one's character. How is one to save oneself from this ?

*Mataji* : By regarding whomever one salutes as the Supreme Being. Everyone, be he good or bad, is but a manifestation of Him : If you remember this and do *pranama* to the ONE alone in whatever guise, no harm can come to you.

*Question* : So then, how can the evil consequences of bowing to a wicked person be averted ?

*Mataji* : By bowing to the Supreme Being alone : *Pranama* must always be done with this attitude of mind.

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Solan, June 8th, 1952

Someone said: "Ma, what is 'ashirvada' (blessings) ?

*Ma* : When you do *pranama* to an elder or a *sannyasi* and surrender your mind, a current of love streams from the elder which removes obstacles and obstructions and makes for your , '*kalyān*' and '*mangal*' (real good). It gives you strength to proceed to whatever you are aiming at. The power is of course always present, but a contact is made that establishes a harmony and takes away the separation of your mind. Just as with a tree, when it is watered the fruit grows, so the blessing that pours down is like the water that helps the tree to bear fruit.

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"While doing *pranama* one receives His Power into oneself with the intaking of breath and when exhaling one should feel that one is breathing out one's 'I-ness' and remain as long as possible in *kumbhaka*. When doing *pranama* to a living person or to a *vigraha*, one should always look at the object of one's reverence first, so as to receive the *adhikāra* (the right and capacity, as it were) to do obeisance.

When this body was playing the play of *sadhana*, the hand that offered the food became one with the oblation and with the act of offering and hence this body would remain lying motionless for hours and hours. Lots of large red ants would collect and eat the offered food, crawl all over this body and get entangled in its hair, but never a single ant bit it. When this body got up again it felt that God had come in the guise of ants to partake of the offerings, that it was He who was crawling, running, jumping and playing all over this body ; that this body had become the Kingdom of God. This is what it felt, not disgust that the little insects had come and eaten the *prasada*."

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On another occasion, namely on February 18, 1955, Mataji was asked about the meaning and the right way of doing *pranama*. From what She said I noted down the following :

"To do *pranama* means to put one's head where it should be – at the feet of God. His lotus feet are everywhere and therefore one may do *namaskar* everywhere, remembering the feet of God. To do *pranama* means to open oneself to the Divine Power, which is always streaming down on everyone. Only one usually shuts oneself away from it. To do *pranama* means to give one's mind, one's I to Him ; to surrender oneself to the ONE, so that there should be only He and not you. Dedicate yourself to Him without reserve, with all that you possess, your virtues as well as your shortcomings and vices.

"There are two kinds of *pranama* : one is like sprinkling powder through the tiny holes of a powder-box and the other is like emptying your pitcher to the last drop. If your knots are untied then all the contents of your vessel will be poured out. To dedicate oneself means complete surrender."

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Kishenpur, July 1, 1962

*Question* : What is the right way of doing *pranama* ?

*Mataji* : When doing *pranama* to a deity or living saint or *mahatma*, first have darshan of his whole figure. Start with the feet and let your eyes wander right up to the head, while inhaling slowly. Imagine that together with the breath you are absorbing power into yourself from him to whom you are bowing. Then let your gaze descend slowly again to the feet while exhaling; at the same time offer yourself to God with all that is in you, good and bad. Try to pour yourself out completely, without reserve. When your head touches the feet of the deity or saint, his power enters your head. The head is said to be the root of a human being. When his hand is put on your head as you touch his feet, power is transmitted to you through his fingers.

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July 19, 1951

*Question* : When you yourself are present why should people worship your picture ?

*Mataji* : When this body was engaged in the play of *sadhana*, at times if any person approached it in a spirit of deep faith, this body would feel as if suffocated. If someone came and touched my feet, I would in return touch his. One day, when Bhaiji did *pranama* to me, I

also did *pranama* to him. Needless to say he bolted away, but where could he go? As quick as lightning I followed him and catching hold of him did *pranama*. See the play of the Divine Power, he was unable to escape. Yet later again, whether anyone touched my head or my feet, it made no difference at all. Once, the feet of this body became sore as a result of being touched by so many people. It also happened that when I was walking someone would catch hold of me and stop me by force in order to do *pranama*. Then again, at the time of playing the role of a *sadhaka* it occurred that when people offered flowers in worship or placed a garland round my neck, this body would become as if paralysed. At other times if a bhakta put my feet on his head this body would feel an electric shock. Once it was as if this whole body were burning. Then also, when someone as much as put his hand on my foot it became difficult for this body to breathe; yet on other occasions, people could touch my feet or seize my hands and it did not matter in the least. Someone would bow down to the ground before this body and it would remain seated quite comfortably, feeling nothing – so much so that someone remarked; "Look how grandly She is sitting, just like a *Mahant* !" It happens that people do *pūja* and arati to this body and someone observes : "Do you see how She accepts worship and adoration !"

There is only ONE – so then, what wrong is there in letting people do as they wish ? When one is in duality and does not perceive the ONE in everything, then to allow people to worship one is wrong.

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### **Birthday celebrations in Punjab**

In 1951 Mataji's birthday was celebrated in the Punjab, the time of the celebrations being divided between several towns. Mataji stayed in each one of them for a few days. Before the final function which took place at Ambala, three days were spent at Doraha, a small town surrounded by open fields. It is a charming country-side and Mataji used to go for evening walks on the banks of the canal and for some time would sit down in some solitary place under a tree, where a small group of us gathered round Her. Then we could ask questions informally and Mataji would reply. One evening a *sannyasi* had an interesting discussion with Mataji. HE told Her that some Punjabi ladies had approached him and asked some questions. He wished to know whether Mataji approved of the replies he had given. One of the questions, he said, was as follows : "What should a woman do in case of a family dispute ? Should she side with her husband, her father or her father-in-law ?" I told them that it was a wife's duty to support her husband always and under all circumstances. Was I right?"

"Well, yes," replied Mataji, "but on the other hand her father-in-law is her husband's Guru and one's own father is one's elder and has to be respected. Therefore, whichever side the God within the woman's heart prompts her to take that is right for her."

"Then," continued the *sannyasi*, "the ladies told me that they were so unfree, so dependent in every respect. What were they to do to improve their lot ? I explained to them that it could not be helped, that everyone was dependent on something or other. We *sannyasi* depend on the Guru, on the Dharma, etc. Every human being is in bondage. Surely, this is correct, is it not ?"

"No," said Mataji, "dependence is due to fear. As long as you are afraid you will be bound. But the moment you are fearless you will be independent and free. The householder is bound by rules and regulations, but the *sannyasi* who is not afraid of anyone or anything is free."

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Then Mataji proceeded to relate the story of a woman who did not get on with her husband and could not bring herself to obey him. In her despair she turned to God with such fervour and concentration that her husband by and by also began to take interest in religion which gradually made him change his behaviour towards her, so that finally their problem became solved in this way.

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In 1952, Mataji's birthday was celebrated again in the Punjab, this time in Khanna, a small town where Sri Triveni Puri Maharaj had resided for many years. It was his keen desire that Mataji should bless Khanna with Her presence during Her birthday celebrations that year. He had built a couple of rooms for Her use, adjoining the Saraswati Sanskrit College, which is situated in the open country on the outskirts of the city of Khanna. The College, by the way, owes its existence largely to the initiative of Sri Triveni Puri Maharaj, who was eager to spread Sanskrit learning in the Punjab.

Unfortunately, Sri Triveni Puri Maharaj passed away shortly before the celebrations started. However, Sri Krishnanadaji Avadhuta and the disciples of Sri Triveni Puri Maharaj prevailed on Mataji to visit Khanna all the same and made excellent arrangements for Her and Her bhaktas' stay.

At Khanna also Mataji's evening strolls were often found to be occasions on which She seemed in a delightfully communicative mood, at times relating incidents from Her early life at Dacca and Shahbag.

One evening, we came to a cluster of houses amongst some trees in the open fields in the vicinity of Khanna. We were told that only Mahātnās lived there. Mataji sat down on a brick platform under a peepal tree and all of us who had accompanied Her sat on loose bricks on the ground. The tree had lovely fresh green leaves inspite of the grilling heat of May and Mataji remarked on it. Then She began to tell us about the trees in the garden of Her abode at Shahbag.

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The following is the gist of what She said : "There is a tree there of a Madrasi species of mangoes. That kind of mango is not to be found in Bengal. But anything may become possible in a spot where so many Mahātmās have lived. Who knows, perhaps someone ate a Madrasi mango and threw the stone away in the garden and the tree grew. The leaves of that tree shed honey. I noticed that the veranda was always besieged by ants and one day I told someone to put a brass tray under the tree. Soon it was full of honey. So much honey dropped down from the tree that it could fill a jar. Some people said that the tree was not a tree but a Mahātmā in the shape of a tree. Then there is a jack-fruit tree which bears fruit all the year round.

Where so much kirtan is sung many miraculous things may occur and in Shahbag kirtan was performed day after day. Two cypress trees grow near the house where this body used to live. The wood of these trees has turned into sandalwood. Not only has it the scent of sandalwood but its other properties as well. People used it to make sandal paste for their puja. Manmohan Baba (the architect of part of the Varanasi Ashram) cut a piece of wood from the trunk and took it to Varanasi. It is there even now. The leaves, flowers and fruits of those trees are still those of a cypress, only the wood has changed. "Are there any sandalwood trees near about ?" asked someone. "No," said Mataji, "sandalwood trees do not grow in Bengal."

Then Mataji told a story of a man who went to a forest for hunting but could not find any prey. Finally he saw smoke in the distance and walked towards it. He came to the hut of a hermit and saw a tiger and a deer playing together peacefully. Feeling thirsty and hungry he asked the hermit for water who gave him some from his *kamanḍalū*. The hunter noticed that it never became empty. There was always some water in the vessel. Then the sadhu gave him a little something to eat. To his amazement he found that his hunger had been satisfied as if he had had a square meal. Because of all these extraordinary happenings a temple was later erected on the spot.

Further Mataji related to us how one evening She felt like going to a certain temple for darshan. Bholanath said "What is the use ? The temple is closed in the evening." But Sri Ma had the *kheyāla* to go there and started off. "The urge to walk on did not leave me until I got there. The temple had been closed for the night but then a disciple came there and so the gate was fully open and I had darshan although it was after closing time. When we all left, the disciple just vanished, he did not go anywhere."

What Mataji says is alive. When She tells a story, it is not a story but an experience relived and shared by those who listen. It uplifts the heart and enlightens the mind. The incident may be forgotten but the effect remains with us for ever after.

For several days Mataji related the most charming stories of a similar kind and also of a more personal type.

Twice or three times Mataji visited the little house in the narrow lane, of Khanna, where Sri Triveni Puri had spent about forty years of his life and where still lives the very aged lady who attended on him for many years.

On Mataji's birth anniversary a Vedic Puja was performed all through the night. On the veranda of the College, Mataji reclined on a couch profusely decorated with flowers, and everyone gathered round Her, occupying the College hall behind the veranda and the spacious courtyard in front. Not only Mataji's devotees, who had come from far and near, sat up all night, but also a surprisingly large number of the inhabitants of Khanna, especially women, remained in their places throughout the function, spell-bound and obviously fascinated by the great outpouring of divine blessing that is always felt on these occasions.

The next day, after the enormous quantity of sweets placed before Mataji as an offering during the puja, had been distributed to all, Mataji left for Jullundur. For three days, She and Her party put up at the Savitri Devi Ashram. One cannot help being touched by the warmth and the

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spirit of selfless and efficient service that are so outstanding at that fine little Ashram, which is put at Mataji's disposal whenever She cares to make use of it. It is maintained by Sardar Sadhu Singh<sup>1</sup> and his three sons, whom Mataji has named Rama, Lakshman and Satrugna (the fourth, Bharat, passed away some time ago). Mataji obviously feels at ease there in spite of the crowd thronging round Her most of the day. Of Her own accord, She Herself led the kirtana several times during Her short visit. Mataji's grace was lavished on all abundantly and our generous hosts must have felt more than rewarded for the great pains they had taken.

Mataji spent only twenty-four hours at Hoshiarpur, at the Ashram of Sri Haribabaji's late Guru. A programme of kirtana, reading of scriptures, and discourses on spiritual topics, had been arranged throughout the day until late at night. The crowd was almost unmanageable. The whole city seemed to have come to hail Mataji and to do homage to Her during those few hours, as if to make up by intensity and number for the shortness of the time that Mataji was able to spend in their midst.

After one more day at Jullundur, Mataji proceeded to Solan on the night of May 17th and from there on May 19th to Simla, where the Raja of Solan has recently built for Mataji a charming little cottage in a lovely garden. It is half way up Jacco Hill amongst tall deodars, with a fine view on the surrounding Himalayas. Sri Krishnananda Avadhutaji and Sri Gopal Thakur went with Her and only very few others were allowed to accompany Her and were accommodated in a larger house in the same compound. Of the ten days of Mataji's sojourn at Simla, the first two or three days were really solitary.

There, one early morning, Mataji composed an unearthly beautiful song, Radha's call to Krishna. Gurupriya Devi and Brahmachari Vibhu,

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1. The Sardar passed away several years ago.

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whom Mataji called to listen, could not make out the language. Afterwards, it was identified as perfectly correct *Brijbhāsha*, the language spoken in the villages round Mathura and Vrindaban where Sri Krishna was born and lived.

Mataji cannot nowadays remain in solitude for long. Rapidly enough the news of Mataji's arrival spread throughout Simla and within a few days the house could no longer hold all those who in spite of the great distance and a very steep climb, were eager to attend the satsang both mornings and evenings. Towards the end of Her stay, Mataji visited the Kali Bari and the Ladies' Club at Chhota Simla where large numbers had the benefit of Mataji's *darshan*.

On May 28th, Mataji returned to Solan and remained there for one full month until June 27th night, occupying the lovely and comfortable Ashram which the Raja and the Rani of Solan had built for Mataji nearly six years ago just below the palace on the tennis court. Mataji's large party which comprised devotees from places as distant as Calcutta, Bombay, Ahmedabad, Jaipur, Varanasi and so forth, were accommodated in the Raja's guest-houses nearby.

Only once, on June 15th, Mataji interrupted Her stay at Solan by a visit to Kasauli for a few hours accompanied by Sri Krishanandaji and others. A tremendous welcome was accorded to Her. A kirtana party carried Her on a palanquin in procession from where the car stopped, down to the Gurdwara in the Bazar, a distance of nearly a mile, where the Satsang took place. The attendance was spectacular and everyone regretted the shortness of the time.

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July 25, 1951

A letter arrived from a devotee stating that while sitting in his village home he suddenly had a vision of Mataji. After a short talk with Her, She vanished.

*Someone asked* : Did you go there with this body of yours ?

*Mataji* : One's body can be in all places at once and also it may appear in a particular place. This will be understood through the knowledge of Brahman.

Once at Simla there was a man called Lakshman and this body saw him standing before it in twelve bodies. Lakshman himself did surely not see this. If he could have seen it, it would have meant that he had attained to union with the Supreme. Within God's Creation there is indeed an endless variety of possibilities.

*Question* : In God's Creation no two things are alike. How then could it be as you just described ?

*Mataji* : In His Creation, although no two leaves are alike, yet can they become exactly alike through the vision of a yogi. For God everything is possible. Just consider : so many people worship Gopal. Nevertheless, they have visions of Gopal in the particular form in which they worship Him—depending on each one's conditioning (*samskāra*).

The other day Sri Haribabaji's devotees were performing a play in which a yogi assumed the form of a merchant and appeared to his wife who was unable to detect the deception. But he who knows can discriminate between what is genuine and what is only an imitation.

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*Question* : Is it possible for a human being to be reborn as an animal ?<sup>1</sup>

*Mataji* : *Manush* = man, means *man hosh*, which signifies being conscious of what one really is; but at present you are *be-hosh* = unconscious.

*Question* : Can we after death take part in meetings of this kind ?

*Mataji* : When you say 'we', you are speaking from the level of the 'I' and the 'many.' As long as this is so, there may or may not be meetings. In reality all are contained in you. When you have come to know this, your question cannot arise.

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Varanasi, August 1952

Between Jhulan Ekadashi and Janmastami the young brahmacharinis of the Kanyapeeth<sup>2</sup> usually every night stage dramatic performances of religious scenes or plays, songs and dances. Mataji is the chief guest of these performances, which are quite informal and not meant to be a show, but the few bhaktas, especially women who happen to be present at the Ashram after 9 p.m. when the Satsang is over, are also allowed to attend at the Kanyapeeth hall.

One night, Mataji said, "Suppose this body arranged for tomorrow's *lilā*, would you be willing to cooperate and act the parts to be assigned to each one of you ?" Most people agreed.

The next night we found them all arranged in a most original way, in fact there was no audience, everyone present discovered that he was

1. These notes are incomplete. Mataji replied to the effect that it was possible to be reborn as an animal although rare, and gave one or two examples from the *Shāstras*. The nature of one's re-birth depends on one's karma.

2. Shree Shree Ma Anandamayee Kanyapeeth, the school at the Varanasi Ashram, where girls are educated according to the ancient ideals of Hinduism and are at the same time instructed in all subjects of the modern curriculum.



joining in the *lilā*. The main parts however had been distributed among the brahmacharinis of the Kanyapeeth, teachers as well as pupils, and among a few others closely connected with the Ashram. The whole performance was improvised, everyone knew his own part only, not what the whole would be like. At the west end of the hall a Śiva altar had been put in one corner and one for Krishna in the other. Didi had been asked to sit before the Śiva altar in silent meditation and Gangadi before the Krishna altar. Both of them sat very still and straight, with their eyes shut, and were obviously deeply absorbed. Their faces were turned half-way towards us so that we were able to observe them well.

At the East end of the hall a large swing is suspended from the ceiling every year during the *Jhulan* week. It was artistically draped with Banaras silks and parted in the middle by a sari only. On either side of it, images of Sri Rama and Sri Durga had been placed respectively and worshippers were sitting in front of each of them, performing *pūjā*. The south of the hall was occupied by Mataji, Didima and Mounima, sitting on raised seats and by one of the girls, dressed up as Sri Shankaracharya, surrounded by some younger girls who acted as his disciples; a little further off the smallest children, bare to the waist, were engaged in the performance of yogic āsanās.

When the people who had no special parts were allowed to enter, Mataji asked them to join whatever worshippers were nearest to them and to remain concentrated in complete silence. The women were accommodated in the hall itself and the men on the veranda just outside, from where they could watch through the wide-open doors and windows. Mataji left the hall and went on the small balcony at the south side. There She wrapped Herself into a *dhoti* so as to look like a very old woman. A young woman graduate who acted as the speaker called out to Mataji : "*Tirthavāsini* Ma ! a book is wanted over there !" Mataji came and handed the book to her. Then a drum and later an incense burner were required by other groups of worshippers. The

' *Tirthavāsini* Ma' provided whatever was needed. The lights went out and everyone proceeded with their meditation with great seriousness and in complete silence.

Mataji changed into Her ordinary dress and occupied Her seat in the hall. The lights were turned on again. The speaker said, "See Didi and Gangadi absorbed in meditation. It looks as if they had attained to the object of their contemplation. And there, behold Sri Shankaracharya with his disciples and further some young children who are performing *hatha yogic* postures with great skill and accuracy ; Sri Rama and Sri Devi are worshipped over on that side."

It was a play and yet it was real life also, for everyone who acted his part had to actually live it with all earnestness and not for show; moreover everyone had been assigned the role that suited him best. The atmosphere was overwhelming. One of the girls started singing a hymn to Sri Krishna, followed by a hymn in praise of Śiva sung by another girl. After this a hymn to Sri Rāma and passages from the Rāmāyana were recited. Next, the worshippers of Durga chanted from the Durga Sapta Shati. Then, someone recited the Guru stotra, the Guru vandana, etc. Arati to Sri Rama and Sri Durga were performed one after another with the various appropriate songs. The '*lilā*' ended with *praṇāmas* to the Guru, to Sri Devi, Rama, Krishna, Śiva, etc. which always form the conclusion of every Satsang at the Ashram.

It was a most impressive evening and for a long time after, its influence could be felt by those who had taken part. Was it not symbolic of Mataji's *lilā*, namely the *lilā* of Her life ? Does She not in Her ashrams unite in friendship and harmony adherents to every cult and sect ? '*Tirthavāsini*' means one who stays in places of pilgrimage. Wherever Mataji goes men's minds are turned towards religion, in fact, every place becomes a place of pilgrimage by Her very presence, besides She does very frequently visit sacred places. And does She not provide

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for everyone exactly what he needs, be it a book (a symbol for learning and wisdom), a drum (a symbol for music), incense (a symbol for worship and ceremony) or anything else that may help any particular person ? Everyone who approaches Her is drawn into Her *lilā* and has to play his part. It is perhaps not without significance that three European bhaktas were present on that particular evening.

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Khanna, May 11th, 1952

In course of conversation, Ma said : "Whatever you do, do it with your might, put your whole being into it. Don't be swayed by blame or praise. When someone reproaches you, you waver and when you are patted on the back you feel encouraged. That means you are not really out for what you are doing, but rather for the approval of others."

"Well, we are all like this", said the Ashramite She was, talking to.

*Mataji* : Why do you shield yourself by saying this? How is it your business to see what others do ? Improve yourself ! Let the improvement shield you. Then turning to me, She said : "Sometimes when I reproach you for something, you say : 'Why only me ? So many others act in the same manner and you let it be done.' But what I say is : Improve yourself, turn your criticism on yourself, don't look to others' mistakes for justification !"

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One morning at Hardwar in May 1953, Mataji said to me : "Anger is also one of His beautiful modes of being." I was rather taken aback as Mataji had often urged me to get over my bad temper. I asked, "Why then should anger be avoided ?" *Mataji* : Because it is very painful for the one who gets angry, for no other reason.

*Question* : So then, if one could recognize anger as one of His beautiful modes of being, there would thus be no need to overcome it ?

*Mataji* : Long before a man can reach this stage, he will have become incapable of anger.

*Question* : What about the ancient Rishis ? We are told that some of them did at times get very angry !

*Mataji* : That is on a different level altogether. One who has the power to create also wields the power to destroy. Besides, the state of a Rishi is also a stage.

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In May 1953 Mataji's birthday celebrations took place at Baghat House, Hardwar. A number of *Mahatmas* and learned men who were present for the occasion delivered talks on religion, philosophy and *sadhana* daily for several hours. Only half an hour every morning was reserved for '*Mātri Satsang*', that is to say, Mataji would during that time either reply to questions or delight the audience with one of Her sweet songs. One day the following discussion took place between Mataji and a devotee of many years' standing :

*The devotee* : We listen to so much that is beautiful ...

*Mataji* : Beautiful ? As long as you make a distinction between beautiful and ugly you have not listened.

*The devotee* : ...and some we understand ...

*Mataji* : "We understand" – that is useless, for he who understands and what is understood have remained separate.

*The devotee* : ... and some we forget ...

*Mataji* : Forget ? Forget the forgetting ; death must die.

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*The devotee* : ... and some we remember ...

*Mataji* : Remember? That means you keep it in your mind. Throw it away; lay it at His feet. What I say is : Keep satsang. Satsang in Reality means the realization of WHAT IS ! (*Sat Swarup ka Prakash*). Remain in the shade of 'trees' – trees meaning *Mahatmas* , seekers after Truth, those who do not call anyone, nor send anyone away. Listen to them! Who can tell when you will learn how to 'listen' and then you will hear the *Śabda Brahman*, so that there will be no more listener and no listening. A similar thing holds good for what is called "darshan." People come, have darshan and go away again. But real darshan means that one can never be apart from the vision anymore.

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### **Matri Satsang at Kishenpur**

After the birthday celebrations at Hardwar, Mataji proceeded to the Ashram at Kishenpur near Dehradun. The following are notes taken there in June 1953.

*Question* : How can one develop faith ?

*Mataji* : By keeping company with those who have faith. Travel with a traveller on the Path and sit in the shade of a 'tree.' But you never sit still, your mind strays here and there, even your eyes keep on wandering.

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*Question* : How does the state of *ajapa* come ?

*Mataji* : First of all you yourself must do *japa*.

*Question* : How is it that *japa* continues during sleep ? Does this not indicate that one is in the state of '*ajapa* ?

*Mataji* : How do you know that you are doing *japa* during sleep ? By waking up with it ? But are you ever awake ? You are asleep even now ! First put your whole 'I-ness,' your effort, your entire strength and capacity into practices like *japa* and *dhyana*, etc., and then the state of *ajapa* will emerge of itself. Some people say : 'What is the good of such a state ? Simply to go on spontaneously doing *japa* day and night?' Oh no, not so, you will then become *japātita*, that is to say, you will transcend *japa*, go beyond it, and then the *Swarūpa* , the essence of things, will be revealed.

When practising *japa* in rhythm with one's breath, the *japa*, in the case of some *sādhakas* mingles as it were with the breath, becomes associated with it so indissolubly that breathing without it is impossible and thus it continues throughout the 24 hours. This is called *ajapa*.

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*Question* : We often hear you say : "Think of God !" But surely, God is unthinkable, and formless. What can be thought of must have name and form and therefore cannot be God.

*Mataji* : Yes, without a doubt, He is beyond thought, form and description, and yet I say : 'Think of Him !' Why ? Since you are identified with the ego, since you think you are the doer, since you say : 'I can do this and that,' and since you get angry, greedy and so forth, therefore you have to apply your 'I-ness' to the thought of Him. True, He is formless, nameless, immutable, unfathomable. All the same He has come to you in the form of Śabda *Brahman* and of *Avatara Śabda*. These are also He Himself and consequently, if you abide by His name and

contemplate His form, the veil which is your 'I' will wear off and then He, who is beyond form and thought, will shine forth.

You think that you are engaging in *sadhana*, but actually it is He who does everything, without Him nothing can be done. And if you imagine that you receive according to what you do, it is not correct either, for God is not a merchant, with Him there is no bargaining.

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Ahmedabad, Jan. 17th, 1953

An old gentleman asked : "Is it right for girls to earn money ?"

*Ma* : At the present time people think they have to look after themselves, so they go and take up a job. They do not realize that as soon as they give of their knowledge, their necessities are already arranged for. Knowledge should not be sold.

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In the course of Mataji's sojourn at Kishenpur in June 1953, She and Her party moved to New Forest, Dehradun for a couple of days following the invitation of a devotee. There Mataji was accommodated in a tent in a very large garden and another big tent was erected for satsang. One morning Mataji came to the satsang tent and distributed flowers and garlands to the few people present. She was in a joking mood and there was talk and laughter. Taking up a *bougainvillea* twig, She said :

"How beautiful ! Look, the leaves are *gerua* !" <sup>1</sup>

"In my country all leaves become *gerua* in autumn," I remarked.

"In your country?" said Mataji, "which is your country?"

"Where I used to be before I came to India !"

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1. *Gerua* is the colour worn by *samnyāsis*.

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"Before ?" questioned Mataji, "what does it mean ? And before that where were you ?"

"With you !"

"With me ? How do you know?"

"You know !"

"How do you know that I know ?"

"I don't know !"

"How do you know that you don't know?"

"I don't know anything, I am a fool !"

"How do you know that you are a fool ?"

"Now I shall have to become silent !"

"And what will be the use of this silence ?"

"Idle talk and nonsense will remain unsaid."

"And to what good ?"

"I don't know."

*Mataji* : You don't know ? Again you repeat that you don't know? Has one who does not know anything the right to become angry ? One who knows gets angry because this or that is not as it should be. But a fool cannot be angry since he does not know how things should be. Always remember that you are a fool and that therefore you cannot become angry. It is the 'I' that gets angry and it is the 'I' that has to be dropped. Then the fool (*buddhu*) may perhaps become enlightened (*Buddha*). Anyway, bear in mind that you know nothing and therefore there is no rhyme or reason in getting angry. Then the 'I' will go and 'Atmananda' may become revealed.

Mataji handed the bougainvillea twig to me and said : "Pluck all the petals that are *gerua*, dry them and keep them." The dried flowers are still with me, but they have lost their beautiful colour.

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## A Practical Question

Almora, May 1954

One of Mataji's outstanding characteristics is that She usually does not reply from any particular point of view, but throws light on every problem from various angles. Here is a striking example :

*Question* : Suppose I have business dealings with someone and he cheats me by not giving me my money's worth ? Is it right to go to court or should I shrug my shoulders and keep quiet ?

*Mataji* : Some feel, if I do not give this person a lesson, he will go on cheating and become worse, and so they go to court.

But there is another way of looking at it : "Who is it that has cheated me ? Are not all forms, all beings, manifestations of Him ? What I have been deprived of was evidently not my due, it is God who has taken it from me."

There is a third way of dealing with the culprit, illustrated by the following story : A thief broke into the hut of a *sādhū* and stole whatever he could find. As he was escaping with his loot, the *sādhū* returned. From a distance he saw the burglar with the load on his head. He quickly followed him, shouting, 'Wait a moment, brother, there are a few more things that you might want. Would you not like this, and that, and this as well ?' The thief was so overcome by the astounding way the *sādhū* reacted that he fell at his feet, left off stealing and became *asadhu* himself.

There is a fourth way of looking at the problem, 'Is it my business to punish the evil-doer ?' Listen to another story :

"One day an ardent *bhakta* of Sri Krishna was walking absorbed in the contemplation of his Beloved, completely oblivious of his surroundings. Without noticing it, he stepped right on some newly washed clothes that had been spread out on the ground to dry by a washerman. 'Have you no eyes,' furiously shouted the washerman, whose work had been spoiled. Getting hold of a stick he was about to beat the *bhakta*.

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"At that moment Sri Krishna was having food with Rukmini. All of a sudden, he jumped up and without explanation, hurried away, returning after a short while. 'My Lord,' questioned Rukmini, 'why did you leave so suddenly in the middle of your meal and how is it you have come back so speedily?' Sri Krishna replied, 'A very dear *bhakta* of mine was in danger of being belaboured with a stick, so I hastened to his rescue. But when I saw that he had picked up a stone, ready to throw it at his adversary, I returned here without delay. Since he was protecting himself, there was no need for me to intervene.'

There is still another aspect of the matter to be considered. Once a saint was being badly abused by someone without any reason. He reflected, 'What a terrible punishment this man has incurred by his grave injustice!' He, therefore, gave him a light slap to lessen the disagreeable fate his offence would inevitably bring about.

And lastly, if the person who cheated you were your own brother, would you call his action cheating? To remove something from one's home is not called stealing, one takes one's own. Are not all men brothers, children of one Father? Who is to punish whom?

Whichever of these points of view appeals to you most, according to it you should act.

*Question* : Suppose one feels the evil-doer must be taught a lesson and goes to court, does one not thereby injure oneself, especially if one happens to be a seeker after Truth?

*Mataji* : "Yes, certainly, for by acting thus one's ego will be enlarged."

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Almora, June, 1954

An elderly lady with a Western education asked for an interview with Mataji. She was well-to-do and childless, but had adopted a couple of young children, whom she was looking after to the best of her ability. Religiously inclined from her childhood she had given much thought to spiritual matters and met quite a number of saints and sages.

"Mataji, I want Self-realization," she said, "and quickly too ! For so long have I been after it, and now I am getting on in years."

"Self-realization is not in time," replied Mataji, "why do you want to bind it to time ?"

"Anyway before I die I must attain it," insisted the lady. "I really mean it. Please, tell me how to get Self-realization ?"

"You must keep still as much as possible and meditate in solitude," was Mataji's advice. "But since you are so keen on Self-realization, why have you taken on yourself the care of those children ? This obliges you to pay far too much attention to worldly matters."

"But I do not want to withdraw from the world. Why can't I realize here and now, in the midst of my worldly activities ?"

Mataji shook Her head, "It can't be done. Look at it in this way," She added with a smile, "when you want to write a letter you don't do it in public. You take your pen and paper and sit by yourself. Once it is written you may read it out to everyone."

"Once the Self is realized the question whether to live in the world or in seclusion does not arise. But while you are striving for it, you must be by yourself."

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A Punjabi lady had come for Mataji's darshan. "Do you attend to your *japa* regularly ?" asked Mataji. "I do," was the reply, "but my mind does not become still." "All the same you must not give up the attempt," warned Mataji. "My children are so noisy," complained the lady, "not always, it is true, but no sooner have I sat down for my *Paja* than, without fail, they get quite uproarious." Mataji smiled, "Suppose you stand at the seashore wishing to go into the water. Can you wait until all the waves have subsided ?"

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Mataji told someone who is a worshipper of Sri Krishna, "Try to see Krishna in everyone and in everything." He answered that he could not possibly do so with regard to the particular person with whom he had just been angry – in fact, he could not bear him. "To remain calm in the solitude of your room is easy enough," remarked Mataji. "It is when you are with people who get on your nerves that you have to prove your faith and devotion."

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In June 1954, at Almora, someone wanted to know what '*māyā*' was. It often happens that when learned men are present, Mataji will not open Her mouth until each one has had his say. This time also various opinions and theories had been advanced before Mataji spoke : "One day the great sage *Narada* came to Śrī Krishna and said : 'What actually is this *māyā* of yours ?' '*Maya* ?' replied Śrī Krishna, 'Alright, come for a walk with me.' They trudged along for some time, when a village came into sight. Śrī Krishna said : 'I am feeling very thirsty. Will you please get me a glass of water ?' *Narada* went to the village while Śrī Krishna waited for him. *Narada* entered a house and the housewife

sent her beautiful young daughter to fetch water. When she returned with it, the woman said to the stranger : 'Why don't you marry her ? She will make you a good wife !' *Nārada* thought : 'She really is beautiful,' and he agreed.

"They had a son and a daughter and lived in great happiness for several years, until one day torrential rain caused a flood. Water penetrated into the house. *Nārada* piled up the furniture and put his family on top of it. But it was of no avail, the water kept on rising and the house became submerged. They all went up on the roof, but the water rose higher and higher. Finally, *Nārada* had to guard his whole family and keep them afloat. The situation was precarious. First his mother-in-law lost strength and got drowned. *Nārada* consoled himself: 'Well, she was old, and might have died anyhow.' Next his little daughter was taken away by the turbulent waters. 'My son is still alive !' *Nārada* thought. However, soon the boy also let go his grip and disappeared into the rushing stream.

'As long as I have a wife I may have other children,' reflected *Nārada*, trying to keep up his spirits. But his wife was unable to hold out much longer and after some time she also shared the fate of the others. *Nārada* was getting quite desparate and exhausted. Gasping for breath and about to give up the ghost, he found himself standing near Śrī Krishna. 'What is the matter with you,' questioned Śrī Krishna, 'and where is my glass of water ?' *Nārada* replied : 'Now I know what your *māyā* is !'

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When Mataji visited Meerut on November 6, 1954, the following conversation took place :

*A Samnyasi* : How is it that diversity has developed out of oneness ?

*Mataji* : Developed ? It is there.

*The Samnyasi* : Is it then nothing more than an appearance ?

*Mataji* : Your question itself contains the answer.

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*Question* : How can we get Self-realization ?

*Mataji* : Not by anything. 'Something' means a little. By doing something, you will get something which is not worth anything. God is Wholeness, Totality. When the clouds fade away He stands revealed. In very truth there is One Self, duality has no real existence. *Durbuddhi*, evilmindedness and stupidity arise from the conception of duality – mine and thine. As a result there is *durgati*, hardship and misery, and *durbodha*, difficulty in understanding. The two, the pairs of opposites, (*dvandva*) are nothing but blindness (*andha*).

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Bombay, November, 1954

Here are two questions from some Bombay devotees, and answers during the Samyam Vrata.

*Question* : God has given us the sense of 'I', He will remove it again. What need is there for self-surrender ?

*Mataji* : Why do you ask ? Just keep still and do nothing !

*Question* : How can one possibly keep still ?

*Mataji* : This is why self-surrender is necessary !

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*Question* : God lavishes His Grace on some and not on others. How can one speak of equality and justice ?

*Mataji* : He does according to His pleasure.

*Question* : Why should His pleasure be to our cost ?

*Mataji* : Where there is 'mine' and 'thine' it appears as you complain. Actually, He claps His own hands and hears Himself the sound – just the one SELF.

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*Question* : "Must the fruits of one's actions always be reaped ?"

*Mataji* : Certainly.

*The Questioner* : The following is being told about Maudagalayan, one of the beloved disciples of the Lord Buddha. One day when Maudagalayan was deeply absorbed in meditation, some dacoits came and belaboured him with sticks until he was mutilated and died. When asked why one of his beloved disciples should be subjected to such a dreadful fate, Lord Buddha explained, that in a previous birth Maudagalayan, misled by the wicked advice of his wife, had lured his parents into the jungle and dealt with them in very much the same way as the dacoits had with him.

My question is, although Maudagalayan no doubt had incurred deadly sin by his despicable action in a former life, could not the fruit of his strenuous *sadhana* counteract the evil results ? Is it not possible to neutralize vicious karma by deep devotion to God and by *sadhana* ?

*Mataji* : So long as Truth has not been realized one is bound to reap the fruit of each action. Since every effect is the cause of a new effect, as long as one moves in the circle of action and its fruit, one can go on indefinitely, there is no end to it. But when you reach the state where you become a mere tool in His hand and feel that He is the actor, then you become free from moral responsibility. In that state, fire cannot

burn you, nor water drown you. But if you only think you are His instrument without this actually being the case, fire will burn you and water drown you. Then to leap into fire or water amounts to suicide.

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Someone asked whether the *śrāddha* ceremony which is performed for the dead, benefits a man even if he has taken birth in another human body.

"It does," replied Mataji, "I have heard the following story : A man in a certain village in Bengal was very friendly with a fakir. One day when the fakir came to see him, he said : 'How lucky that you have come. I am greatly puzzled and perhaps you can solve my problem. Since this morning I have been getting a strong scent of jackfruit and even the flavour of it in my mouth. I have looked everywhere in the garden and in the neighbourhood without being able to locate the source of this sensation. I cannot discover any ripe jackfruit anywhere. Besides it is not the season now, although there are trees that bear all the year round. Neither can I get rid of that flavour, nor take my mind off it. I wonder whether you can help me with an explanation.' 'Come with me', replied the fakir.

He took his friend across the river by boat and after walking some distance they came to a house where they saw a very old man performing *śrāddha* and offering jackfruit to his deceased father. 'This was your son in your previous birth,' explained the fakir. 'You used to be very fond of jackfruit then, so he has managed to procure some for the ceremony although out of season. Now you understand, don't you ?'

"This story illustrates how prayer offered up for a person will certainly have its effect, although he may have taken birth in another body."

*Question* : If someone has no relatives at all and nobody therefore performs *śrāddha* for him, how will he progress ?

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*Mataji* : If a man endeavours to attain the Supreme Goal of human life his progress depends on his capacity and on the intensity of his efforts. It is the son's duty to perform *śrāddha* for his father so as to make his path smooth. In case there is no son, another relative may carry out the ceremony, as for instance the husband for his wife, and so forth. If a person does not get married and regards the Almighty as his one and only support, leaving all matters to Him, God Himself will draw him towards his goal. Do not forget one thing : in actual fact nothing exists but the ONE. If you think, without a wife or son or husband you will miss all the good they could have done for you, you are greatly mistaken. He, who is the Creator of all, has made perfect arrangements for His creatures. Keep in mind : 'Thou art father, mother, friend and master' – there is no cause whatever for worry.

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In February 1955 some Italians had come to Varanasi for Mataji's darshan. "Which is right for me," asked one of them, "to live an active life in the world or a contemplative life in seclusion ?"

*Mataji* : To whichever of the two you can give your heart and soul, that is right for you.

"Have you anything to say to me ?" questioned a young woman who had travelled all the way to India to study Buddhism.

*Mataji* : Live the teaching that you profess.

"How can I avoid saying the wrong thing at the wrong time ?" a third person wanted to know.

*Mataji* : By waiting before you speak. If you pause for a little while, you may think better of it and never say it at all.

"I know that certain people have a bad influence on me, yet I fall a victim to it. Is there a way of saving myself from it ?"

*Mataji* : Curtail to a minimum the time you spend in their company.

The questioner happened to be an American film actress.

"How can I," she said, "my work forces me not only to be with them, but also to eat and live with them."

*Mataji* : How then can you save yourself from their influence ? If you go near fire, won't you feel its heat ? If you put ice on your hand, won't it freeze ?

"We feel greatly honoured to have had the privilege of meeting Mataji," said one of the foreigners on taking leave.

*Mataji* : 'Honoured' ? When you meet another you may feel honoured, but when you come to your own self, there is only joy and happiness.

