

DIARY LEAVES

Part III
1956-1963



An animated discussion was going on, one argument following another, without its leading to any feasible solution. Someone who was getting tired of this endless controversy said, "Mataji, there is a saying that when a lemon is squeezed too much it becomes bitter."

Mataji: When a fire is raked up it burns brighter. Similarly by discussing religion and philosophy one's interest in these subjects grows. Of course, it is also true that a lemon ,becomes bitter if squeezed too much. But when an earnest seeker discusses with the sincere desire to find Truth, his eyes will be opened. Some people's confusion is cleared up by reasoning, while others become only more perplexed by discussions. Everyone has his own way. When one's problems are made more acute one feels disturbed and thereby one's Search will be intensified. Before thread can be spun and woven into cloth the pod in which the cotton was enclosed has first to be broken and entirely destroyed. To prepare oneself really means to uproot completely the sense of "I." So long as a trace of it is left He cannot shine forth, the revelation of Truth cannot dawn.

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It was at Vindhyaachal in January 1956. Only a very few people were sitting in Mataji's room. Mataji was relating details of the serious illness of someone whom we all knew quite well. She gave a vivid description of how, after trying all sorts of medicines and treatments, he was finally restored to health quickly and easily by the skill of one of the first surgeons of the country. "I always say," continued Mataji, "if you are ill, go and consult the very best and greatest doctor. If you put yourself into the hands of the greatest you may then remain free from worry and feel : 'Whatever happens is alright, I have done my utmost.' But to approach the greatest is difficult and it costs so much, one has to give, one has to give ! When approaching God one has to give everything,

all one possesses. But people say : 'How am I to give up my pride, my anger, my self-importance, how can I bear insult without a murmur ?'"

At that moment two ladies entered the room, each offering a garland of flowers to Mataji, who quickly took up two rose-garlands that were lying by Her side and put them round their necks. Someone remarked : "Well, here at least one has not only to give, one gets something as well." Mataji said, "*When you give everything, you get everything.*"

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Kishenpur, July 13th, 1956.

This morning Ma said to some Ashramites who were put in charge of a large garden : "By working in the garden you will serve the trees and plants and living with them try to become like them. Let the trees be your Guru. A tree gives fruit and shade. When the fruit is ripe it falls down, it is sweet to the taste. The wood of the tree you use for cooking your food. So the tree gives itself entirely, it holds nothing back. Watch how the trees grow, make them your friends and learn from them. Also from the grass. Grass is lowly and puts up with everything. People tread on it, cut it and it does not defend itself. So also the earth; everyone walks on it; you hammer it, powder it – do anything you like with it, it remains quiet and friendly.

When serving the trees and plants, you will raise some money which will be used for the Ashram schools, to educate the brahmacharis, not to satisfy anyone's greed. Whatever you need for your own food you may take from the garden, and that also will be offered to the Lord to keep your body fit for the work. Weigh it and write down how much you take so that you know how much you produce. Your whole day will thus be dedicated to worship and whatever you do will be a service.

Be friendly with the servants. Do not get angry with them but see that they do their work well."

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On December 15, 1956, the day before Mataji left Varanasi for Vindhyachal, a very aged gentleman who loves to discuss with Mataji, asked :

"How is it that so many people, old and young are attracted to you?"

Mataji (Laughing) : This child is so very small and does not belong to anyone in particular, so all come to her. It is also like this, one who owns nothing and nobody in the world finds that all are his own.

The old man : Now you say you belong to nobody, whereas usually you call everyone your father and mother.

Mataji : This also is true. All are my mothers and fathers, and this is why they come to see their little daughter.

The old man : That is what *you* say. But we cannot look upon you as our little child.

Mataji : Well, then you come because you are so merciful, so compassionate, you just take pity on this tiny child.

"No," vigorously contradicted the gentleman, "certainly not, I am neither merciful nor compassionate. Under no circumstances will I accept this kind of explanation."

But Mataji – cannot be cornered. "Alright," She said, "Look, is it not natural to come to one's own Self, does it require a reason or an explanation ? The most natural thing for everyone is to come to his own Self."

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Vrindaban, February–March 1957.

In the course of Mataji's stay at Vrindaban two Dutch ladies, both Jungian psychologists, came to see Mataji. The following conversation ensued :

Question : Psychologists cure patients by talking to them. With you it seems that your emanation cures people even without words.

It is our endeavour to help people. What is the most essential thing we should do for them ?

Mataji : Who can be said to be normal in this world ? Everyone appears to be mad after one thing or another; some after money, some after beauty, some after music, others after their children and so forth – nobody is really quite balanced.

Question : What then is the remedy ?

Mataji : Just as one does not water the leaves of a tree but its roots, so also one has to grapple with man's disease at its root. Man's root lies in the brain. Therefore the remedy for all ills is to still the mind. When man's mind has been stilled, all will be well with him, both physically and psychologically.

Question : How does the mind become still ?

Mataji : By treading the path that leads to the realisation of "Who am I ?" Your body that was young and is now old with its graying hair and its teeth falling out, does not last for ever. It is not the real "I." Therefore man has to find out who he really is. When he tries to do this, his mind will be supplied with the right nourishment that will calm it. The right sustenance for the mind cannot be had from anything that is of this world and hence perishable, but solely from that which is Eternal. The taste (*rasa*) of the Eternal will still the mind.

The Universe was created out of joy and this is why you find joy in the fleeting things of the world. Without joy life is an ordeal. You must try to attain to that great Joy which has brought forth the world.

Question : What is the contribution a woman has to make as apart from a man ?

Mataji : A woman is essentially a mother and consequently her duty is to serve everyone. Also since you are daughter, wife and mother all in one, to recognise the oneness of the three. Besides in every woman is contained a man and in every man a woman. If man were not

contained within you, you would not be able to recognize a man ; and if woman were not contained within a man, he would be unable to recognize a woman. Thus one of the tasks of a woman is also to discover the man in herself.

Question : What then is the special contribution a man can give ?

Mataji : Man is the reflection of the Supreme (*Purusha*), the one who upholds the Universe. True manliness means divinity. But then there is the *Atma* which is beyond man and woman. Everyone has to find the *Atma* that lies hidden within himself. It is the task of every human being to unfold both the man and the woman potentially contained within him or herself and to realize the *Atma* which is beyond man and woman.

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During Mataji's stay at Kishenpur and Hardwar in April 1957, an American lady asked a number of questions of general interest. These questions and the gist of Mataji's answers were taken down afterwards from memory.

Question : When waking in the morning, I feel near God; but by the time I have got up and sat down for meditation this mood has evaporated to a certain extent. Is it alright to meditate lying down ?

Mataji : When you learn something by heart it is irrelevant in what position you do so. Some people learn better while sitting, some while lying and others while walking up and down. If you find it easy to keep your mind on God while lying, you may do so, lying straight. But the best position for meditation is to sit straight and absolutely still in the posture which is most comfortable for any particular person.

Question : Is it good to sleep in the day ?

Mataji : Ordinarily life is in any case a kind of sleep from which one has to wake up; it is therefore good to keep awake as much as possible. Brahmacharis and *sādhus* are not allowed ever to sleep during

the day. As one progresses in one's meditation, one needs less and less sleep. The ordinary person contacts his Self in deep sleep only, while at all other times he is separated from it. This contact is unconscious, yet it is there and this makes life bearable. Therefore sleep is absolutely necessary for the average individual. The aim of all *sādhana* is to become fully conscious of one's Self. When this has been accomplished a state has been attained which transcends both sleep and what is commonly called waking.

In sleep the body rests and recuperates, this is why people are given sleeping draughts when they are ill. When you are very interested in something, you do not feel sleepy, you are able to stay up till late at night : but afterwards you get a reaction and have to make up for lost sleep. When you become really interested in the Quest of God or Truth, you will find ever greater joy in meditation and need less and less sleep. The time of sleeping should be reduced gradually, but not forcibly.

The necessity of sleep has to decrease spontaneously, otherwise one will feel tired and be unable to do one's work well. However, by taking say 10 minutes off one's 6 hours of sleep there will be no adverse effect. The need of sleep depends to a certain degree on one's state of health and on the quality and quantity of one's food.

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Question : Many people beg out of habit even when they are not really in need. Should one give to such beggars ?

Mataji : If one happens to know that they are not in need one should definitely not give. For, if they misuse the gift, part of the evil results will have to be borne by the donor. Sometimes one feels intuitively whether a beggar is in need or not, but by no means always. In such cases, one should give with the thought that it is God in that guise who is asking for alms. When giving with this attitude, no evil consequences for oneself will follow one's gift.

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Question : If a person lives alone and therefore feels that he or she should keep a pet dog or cat, will it be a help since every creature is essentially God in one shape or other, or will on the contrary one's affection be directed outwards instead of towards God ?

Mataji : If someone has to live alone and wishes to keep a watch dog there is no harm, for he is not likely to get attached to the animal. But if he keeps it as a pet and is all the time busy looking after it, it will disturb his meditation. What one thinks about, that one becomes. Already, you are bound to attend to your own physical needs; by taking on a pet you will only multiply your material duties.

This reminds me of a story, although it is not quite to the point. A *sādhaka* complained to his Guru that he was quite incapable of concentrating on his meditation. The Guru tried in vain all sorts of devices. Finally, he asked the disciple, 'Whom do you love most ?' 'My buffalo,' was the reply. 'Very well', said the Guru, 'sit down and concentrate on the buffalo.' The disciple arranged for the animal's food and drink and then locked himself into his room. To engage himself in the contemplation of his beloved buffalo was easy enough for him and he continued to do so until he forgot everything else and became absorbed in *dhyāna*.

One day the Guru came to see how the disciple was faring but could not find him anywhere. He called his name several times but the disciple did not hear. After much calling and knocking, he was at last roused from his meditation. 'Open the door and come outside,' shouted the Guru. 'How am I to get out,' replied the disciple, 'my horns won't go through the door !'

You see, what you think about, that you become. This is why it is said that one should meditate on the Self (*Ātma*) rather than on any particular form. Nevertheless, if there is no other means of concentrating, this also may be a way. The disciple having learnt one-pointed concentration, later was able to go beyond the form of the buffalo and attained real Union.

Another incident was reported to me some years ago. A European lady had been deserted by her husband whom she loved dearly. She found it impossible to get over the loss of 'him and in a state of acute mental distress approached a saint with the request to teach her how to forget her sorrow. The saint advised her to sit before her husband's photo and contemplate it with the idea that it was an image of God. The lady did as had been suggested and got much solace from her meditation. As she got closer and closer united with her husband's soul, the physical separation seemed to matter less and less. After a few years her husband repented of his behaviour and returned to her. But the woman refused to live with him and asked him to leave her again. She had contacted something real that remained with her always and consequently lost her attachment to the physical form which comes and goes.

Question : I still don't know whether to take on a pet animal or not?

Mataji : Practise meditation for some time and see how you feel. Rather than caring for a dog or cat turn your thoughts to the Divine.

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Question : Is it necessary for grown-ups to drink milk ?

Mataji : Milk and *ghī* are necessary not only for children but also for grown-ups; old people become like children again when their teeth fall out, so they need milk as a matter of course.

Question : Is it good to take buffalo's milk ?

Mataji : You worship Gopal, don't you? Gopal was a cowherd not a buffaloherd. Cow's milk and milk products are best.

Question : A buffalo is a lazy, heavy animal. Are these qualities absorbed into man when he drinks its milk ?

Mataji : Certainly, these qualities will be communicated to those who drink the milk.

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Question : In India the custom is for parents to arrange for their children's marriages, in the West young people choose their own partners. Which is the better method ?

Someone from the audience : For India, arranged marriage is more suitable ; and for the West to choose for oneself.

Mataji : Parents love their children and are eager to see them happy; besides they have the advantage of many years of experience of the *grihasthashrama*. Young people are likely to be deluded by mere physical attraction which is temporary. Love marriages are therefore often a failure. Marriage that is arranged by wise parents is best.

Question : Sometimes young people are being married who mix like oil and water. How can the parents know beforehand whether this will not be the case especially when the bride and bride-groom have not even met before the wedding ?

Mataji : Parents have a very good chance of knowing intuitively what is right for their children, and they will think very carefully before deciding on their child's husband or wife; and children (in India at least) have great faith that whatever their parents do is for their best. Moreover the mantra which is pronounced at the wedding to unite them and the ceremony itself establishes a bond between the couple. Their union is consecrated to God and the wife is called the husband's *sahadharmini*. Their life together is meant to help them towards the goal of human life which is Self-realization. If they see each other for the first time during the ceremony, after their union has been consecrated, this will be an aid to their living the *grihasthashrama* in the right spirit. If on the other hand they have seen each other beforehand, they have, as it were, had a foretaste of mutual enjoyment before their union has been sanctified before God. The ideal marriage, which in our days can hardly be found at all, is when after one or two sons and daughters have been born,

husband and wife adopt the *vanaprastha shrama* and live together like brother and sister or father and daughter. The Rishis of ancient times were married and had children. They lived as what is called 'married brahmacharis'. In our times, there are quite a number of unmarried brahmacharis but married brahmacharis are very exceptional indeed.

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Question : If one has surrendered to God completely, is it right to take legal action in case of a misappropriation of one's possessions ?

Mataji : The fact that you ask whether you should go to law-court shows that you should do so. At the moment you probably feel that it would be nicer not to take any action. But later when you may be in need of what has been taken away, you will regret that you kept quiet and it will worry you. However, when seeking your right you should do it in a strictly lawful way, always speaking the truth, etc. If you had really surrendered to God completely you would never ask such a question.

Question : Some people say that a thief steals only from a thief. Surely, I am not a thief !

Mataji : When someone secretly removes what belongs to you, you call him a thief. But there is a stage of spiritual achievement where God is perceived in all forms and actions. What then will be the significance of 'I' and 'mine' ? Find out who you are and what belongs to you ! Then, when someone removes anything without your knowledge you will not feel that it has been stolen. If there is only one *Atma*, how can there be a thief ?

There is another state where one may say such and such a person is a thief, without judgment and without resentment, for at the same time one will also see that it is the ONE who expresses in countless ways, that God's hand is in everything that happens.

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Kishenpur, July 1957

One evening Mataji was talking about the time when She first came to Raipur near Dehradun, where She stayed with Bholanath and Bhajji. She told us how Bhajji (J. C. Roy) who was a high Government Official tried to serve Her and Bholanathji, attempting to do the most menial work such as he had never before done in all his life. It was a difficult undertaking, but by his great devotion and perseverance he soon acquired skill in this direction. He insisted on walking barefoot. Having worn shoes and socks for so many years, his feet became cracked and sore, but he remained undaunted. After two years of practice he said, "Now I have won the right to wear shoes, for I have learnt to walk barefoot."

Mataji's older bhaktas who have known Bhajji are still grieved at the loss of him, who was a living example to every one at the Ashram. By his brotherly love and by his spirit of service to all without distinction he had earned for himself the name "Bhajji" (brother). When newcomers came he would help them to approach Mataji and make room for them near Her, whereas he himself kept in the background. In fact, he never sat down in Mataji's presence, but remained standing at the back of the hall or room. Only after he left his home and came to stay with Mataji and Bholanath, he was obliged to sit down in Her presence as he could not remain standing all the twenty-four hours.

He would tell people, "If you come to Mataji and accept Her guidance, do not think that you must practise this or that *sadhana*, but do exactly as She bids you."

Mataji is surrounded by people of the most varying types, belonging to all classes and castes, with different outlook and different upbringing. None of them is perfect, for they have all come to improve and perfect themselves. It is therefore difficult for everyone, as he has to put up

with the habits, customs, weaknesses and idiosyncrasies of all the others. Yet, he should bear in mind that this is an important part of his *tapasyā* or *sadhana*, which will teach him patience and forbearance and help to break down his ego. He should therefore not attempt to reform others, but try to endure things as they come and strive to improve himself rather than his companions. By this he will profit greatly.

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Kishenpur, July 1957

As—so often happens, a bereaved mother had come to pour out her heart to Mataji, lamenting the loss of her son. Mataji spoke soothing words of comfort to her, reminding her that her son was in the care of the Almighty wherever he was and that by turning her mind to Him she would also draw ever closer to her son. When the woman kept on crying, Mataji related a true story, which we have heard Her tell before on similar occasions.

"When I stayed in Bengal, I used to visit Tarapith about once a year. One day a woman came weeping at the loss of her daughter who had died at the age of seventeen or eighteen on the eve of her marriage. The woman had still a younger daughter, aged about ten or eleven. This body told them both to turn to God for comfort and the little girl also started practising *japa* regularly every morning and evening with the help of a rosary which I presented to her. She became very fond of this practice, and even when she fell ill she would keep her rosary under her pillow and continue her *japa* with great regularity. But as fate would have it, she succumbed to the illness and died.

When this body came to Tarapith the following year, the woman was again in mourning. Having lost both her daughters, she was naturally broken—hearted. I told her that her grief would react on her children, keeping them tied to the earth instead of their being able to proceed

unhampered on their upward path. After much talking, she finally promised to try her best to remain cheerful. She made a sincere effort, but often She could not help longing for her children. One evening, she was thinking with regret, "Not even in dreams am I allowed to see my little darling." That night she dreamt of her younger child, who appeared to her dressed in white, with a wreath of flowers in her hair, looking radiant and beautiful. She motioned to her mother to follow her and led her to a place where many girls of her age were singing the praises of God. All were dressed like herself and decorated with flowers. A venerable old man with a long white beard, who looked like a Rishi, seemed to instruct them. They all appeared full of joy and peace. When the woman awoke from her dream she had a distinct feeling that her little daughter was happy where she was and she made up her mind not to disturb her.

However, after some time the lonely woman started pining again for her lost children. One night her husband had a strange dream. His younger daughter came and put her arms around him, saying, "Mother is so sad and lonely without me, I can't bear it anymore to see her cry, I am coming back to you." And in his dream, the father took his child in his arms and placed her in her mother's lap. Ten months later, a baby girl was born to them. When I came to Tarapith the next year the woman brought her tiny baby to me. The child grew up and is now a woman. In this way, it may happen that the grief of their loved ones drags souls back to this world, but it is better to leave them free to progress on their upward path. God alone knows what is best for everyone and provides for it.

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Kishenpur, July 1957

The Principal of a college related as follows. In the town where I live there is a quite uneducated young man who, whenever he lies straight on his back (in *savasana*) goes into a kind of trance. In that state, he recites the Vedas and holds discourses on spiritual topics, often for one or two hours. He also replies with great learning to whatever questions that are put to him. But in his ordinary waking state, he is an ignorant person, who remembers nothing of the wisdom that he displays when in trance - in fact, he does not even know that he falls into a trance. But when questioned about this strange phenomenon while lying in trance, he declares that he was a Rishi, who burnt one of his disciples to ashes to punish him for some misdeed he had committed. Brahma then cursed him as a result of which he was born in an uneducated family and had neither the inclination nor the capacity to acquire knowledge. "It seems to me," added the gentleman who related the incident, "that the Rishis are using the said young man as a medium to give teachings to the world." Mataji did not directly comment on this but started talking about spiritualistic seances. "There was a woman," She said, "who contacted her deceased husband by using a planchette. She seemed to be successful and got much satisfaction out of this practice. But I explained to her the danger of being deceived by some other spirit and persuaded her to drop the practice.

Another widow, however, would not listen to the advice of this body, and continued the table-tapping. She got more and more fascinated by it. To contact another world, which is not ordinarily accessible, tickles one's vanity and when one has become addicted to this kind of thing it is difficult to give it up. The woman gradually became mentally disturbed and finally raving mad. To get in touch with spirits is dangerous, for one may become subjected by them. "There is a certain sadhu who feels that he on occasions gets inspired or overshadowed by Sri Krishna. Many people have intense faith in

him and firmly believe that the inspiration is genuine. In that state he replies to questions on spiritual topics and recites poetry. The replies he gives are of a mixed quality, some are true to the spirit of the Bhagavad Gita but others are not. I told him, 'If these states do not bring about transformation in you, what is the use of them ? Moreover when the replies you give are sometimes right and sometimes wrong how can you be sure who it is that inspires you ?'

The extraordinary thing was that at that very moment the sadhu about whom Mataji had just spoken entered the room, arriving quite unexpectedly from a far off place in the Punjab.

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Varanasi, October 10, 1957

An Irish journalist and a South Indian research student of the Benares Hindu University came for Mataji's darshan. The following conversation ensued :

Question : Am I right to believe that you are God ?

Mataji : There is nothing save Him alone, everyone and everything are but forms of God. In your person also He has come here now to give darshan.

Question : Then why are you in this world ?

Mataji : In this world ? I am not anywhere. I am myself reposing within myself.

Question : What is your work ?

Mataji : I have no work. For whom can I work since there is only ONE ?

Question : Why am I in the world ?

Mataji : He plays in infinite ways. It is His pleasure to play as He does.

Question : But I, why am I in the world ?

Mataji : That is what I have been telling you. All is He, He plays in countless forms and ways. However, in order to find out for yourself why you are in the world, to find out who you are in reality, there are the various *sādhana*s. You study and you pass your exams, you earn money and enjoy the use of it. But all this is within the realm of death in which you continue life after life, repeating the same kind of thing again and again. Then there is another path as well, the path of Immortality, which leads to the knowledge of what you really are.

Question : Can anyone help me in this or must each one find out for himself ?

Mataji : The professor can teach you only if you have the capacity to learn. Of course, he can give you help but you must be able to respond, you must have it in you to grasp what he teaches.

Question : Which is the best path to Self-knowledge ?

Mataji : All paths are good. It depends on a man's *saṁskāras*, his conditioning, the tendencies he has brought over from previous births. Just as one can travel to the same place by plane, railway, car or cycle, so also different lines of approach suit different types of people. But the best path is the one which the Guru points out.

Question : When there is only ONE, why are there so many different religions in the world ?

Mataji : Because He is infinite, there is an infinite variety of conceptions of Him and an endless variety of paths to Him. He is everything, every kind of belief, and also the disbelief of the atheist. Your belief in non-belief is also a belief. When you speak of disbelief it implies that you admit belief. He is in all forms and yet He is formless.

Question : From what you said I gather that you consider the formless nearer to Truth than God with form ?

Mataji : Is ice anything but water ? Form is just as much He as the Formless. To say that there is only One Self (*Ātma*) and all forms are

illusion would imply that the formless was nearer to Truth than God-with-form. But this body declares : every form and the formless are He and He alone.

Question : What have you to say about those who insist that only one religion is the right one ?

Mataji : All religions are paths to Him.

Question : I am a Christian.....

Mataji : So am I ; a Christian, a Muslim, anything you like.

Question : Would it be right for me to become a Hindu or is my approach by the Christian way ?

Mataji : If you are fated to become a Hindu it will happen in any case. Just as you cannot ask : 'What will happen in case of a car accident?' When the accident occurs, you will see.

Question : If I feel the urge to become a Hindu, should I give way to it or is it right to suppress it, since it is said that everyone has been born where it is best for him ?

Mataji : If you really felt the urge to become a Hindu, you would not ask this question but would just go ahead with it.

Yet there is also another side to this problem. It is true that you are a Christian, but something of a Hindu is in you as well, otherwise you could not even know anything about Hinduism. Everything is contained in everything. Just as a tree yields seed and from a single seed hundreds of trees may develop, so the seed is contained in the tree and the whole of the tree potentially in the tiny seed.

Question : How can I find happiness ?

Mataji : First tell me whether you are willing to do as this body bids you to do ?

The Questioner : Yes, I am.

Mataji : Are you really ? Very well. Now suppose I ask you to remain here, will you be able to do it ?

The Questioner : No, I will not (Laughter).

Mataji : You see, happiness that depends on anything outside of you, be it your wife, children, money, fame, friends, or anything else, cannot last. But to find happiness in Him who is everywhere, who is all-pervading – your own Self, this is real happiness.

Question : So you say happiness lies in finding my Self ?

Mataji : Yes. Finding your Self, discovering who you really are, means to find God, for there is nothing outside of Him.

Question : You say all are God ! But are not some people more God than others ?

Mataji : For him who asks such a question, this is so. But in actual fact God is fully and equally present everywhere.

Question : Is there no substance to me as an individual ? Is there nothing in me that is not God ?

Mataji : No. Even in 'not being God' there is only God alone. Everything is He.

Question : Is there no justification at all for professional or any other mundane work ?

Mataji : Occupation with worldly things acts like slow poison. Gradually, without one's noticing it, it leads to death: Should I advise my friends and my fathers and mothers¹ to take this road ? I cannot do so. What this body says is : Choose the path to Immortality, take any path that according to your temperament, will lead you to the Realization of your Self.

Nevertheless, even while working in the world, you can do one thing. Whatever you do throughout the day, endeavour to do it in a spirit of service. Serve God in everyone, regarding everyone and everything as manifestations of Him and serve Him by whatever work you undertake. If you live with this attitude of mind, the path to Reality will open out before you.

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1. Mataji addresses all unmarried people as Her friends and married people as Her fathers and mothers.

Ever more seekers from abroad write to Mataji; asking for help and advice. The following are extracts from a letter by a European gentleman, received last winter, and Mataji's reply.

The letter : "..... Will you hear my desperate appeal ? For the last 35 years, I have been seeking God and have not found Him. During 35 years, I have been questioning all religions so as to get peace : At first European religions, then Indian ones. I have questioned Masters of India, but alas ! none could help me and now after 35 years of vain search I am without hope, desperate....."

"I am asking whether as a result of this search one will be driven to madness or suicide? I can no longer run after Masters, I am exhausted. Ma Anandamayi is my last chance, I ask this question : Ma Anandamayi, Happy Mother, Divine Mother, Pure Mother, will you help me?..... I want to become pure as Ma Anandamayi. Why are you in this world, if not to console your unhappy brothers ?....."

Mataji's reply : "God is everywhere, He pervades every thing. He, whom you think you have sought in vain for so many years, is not apart from you. Just as a man cannot be without bones, blood, flesh and skin, so the ONE is present everywhere, at all times, interwoven with everything that exists.

"A man who has gone forth in search of God – God will never give him back again. God is one's very own Self, the breath of one's breath; the life of one's life, the *Atma*. Not until his true Self has been revealed, to him may a seeker ever relax his search. By seeking one will find the Self within one's own grasp. To feel fatigued, exhausted because one has not found Him is a very good sign indeed. It indicates that one is nearing the purification of one's heart and mind.

"But what is this ? What is this that you say ? You wonder whether as the result of searching for God one will be led to suicide ? By the search of Him, whose contemplation, whose Name conquer death ! To indulge in desires for sense objects, this is indeed what must be called

suicide; and he who thinks of committing suicide is, at that moment, mad. Never allow the mind to dwell on the idea of suicide, it is a sin to do so. For one who has sought God for 35 years it is not right to contemplate suicide or madness. His mind should much rather be absorbed in the remembrance of God.

"In God's creation, the possible becomes impossible and the impossible possible at all times. In order that this fact may become evident one must ever remember to sustain the thought of THAT which is REAL. Verily this small child is always with you.

"Write to him that for the present it is imperative for him to remain concentrated with single-mindedness on the One Goal. He should stay in solitude and endeavour with the help of *japa* and *dhyāna* (meditation) to control his mind and thereby become firm, calm and unwavering in his determination."

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From January 13th – February 2nd, 1960 Mataji stayed at the Kumbh Mela at Allahabad. On February 1st, I noted down the following conversations.

Question : Is it right to eat meat ?

Mataji : You should partake of whatever food that is helpful in your *sādhanā* and abstain from what hinders it.

Question : But meat is tamasic !

Mataji : Exactly ! This is why I said what I said. You can reason it out for yourself.

Question : When a man kills in order to eat, will not this affect him adversely ?

Mataji : Certainly, it will.

Question : What about animal sacrifice ? It is advocated in the *Śāstras*.

Mataji : This body does not comment on what the *Śāstras* ordain or forbid. However, it must be understood that the actual significance

of the term 'animal sacrifice' is not the sacrifice of animals but of one's own animal nature.

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Question : What is the purpose or the fruit of *pūja* ?

Mataji : When performing *pūja*, specific *asanas*, *mudras*, and *bīja* mantras are used, depending on the particular aspect of the Godhead that is being worshipped. *Pūja* is done so that real *pūja* may come about; just as one takes *sannyāsa* so that real *sannyāsa* may supervene : What now does it mean to perform real *pūja* ? To give oneself entirely to the object of one's worship. When this is the case, the appropriate *asanas*, *mudras*, etc. form of themselves. The purpose of *pūja* is the realization of Him whom one worships. When one's dedication becomes complete, He reveals Himself. To find Him means to find Oneself and to find Oneself means to find Him. It is said, only after becoming one with the object of one's worship is one able to perform genuine *pūja*. Thus, the purpose and fruit of doing *pūja* is that he who worships may become one with Him who is worshipped. The purpose of *pūja* is the revelation of the essence, of Him whose name one repeats, then alone the *japa* has become fruitful. The aim of engaging, say for instance, in the *japa* of *Rama* is the realization of what *Rama* is in reality. The same holds good for any other *japa*, be it of *Krishna*, *Siva*, *Durga*, etc.

Question : May women perform the *siddhasna* ?

Mataji : When this body played the play of *sādhanā*, *siddhāsana* came about effortlessly. It may be performed by women as well as by men. When an *asana* forms spontaneously, that is to say as an expression of a particular state of mind, it will be perfect, in other words the position of the legs, feet, arms, hands, the head, and the gaze – every single detail will be precisely as it ought to be. Whereas an *asana*

performed by an effort of will can never have the same perfection. *Asanas* are closely connected with one's breathing and the breath with one's state of mind at any particular time. If *asana* are engaged in as yogic practice, that is to say in order to attain to the revelation of the union with the ONE which eternally exists, then only will they yield the desired result. If, on the other hand, *asanas* are done merely as physical exercises, they may bring about better health and fitness, but not union (yoga).

When one has achieved perfection in a particular pose, while practising *asanas* as a yoga, and its essence has been fully revealed, one feels, 'I have accomplished this much, but what of it ? This is not my final goal.' Such an attitude of mind is called *vairāgya*. One is prompted to go on striving for the next stage and the next – further and further. Not unless one keeps on relentlessly until nothing remains to be reached, can the ultimate attainment come. If one's attitude be otherwise, one will be apt to linger for a long time at any particular stage. Side by side with *hathayoga* (yogic postures) one has to practise *rājayoga*, otherwise the performance of *asanas* amounts to mere gymnastics.

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Allahabad, February 2, 1960.

A Chinese Professor of the Allahabad University asked the following question : "Once while meditating in a dark room, I had the impression that the room was full of moonlight. I opened my eyes and found the room dark. How am I to explain the moonlight that I perceived?"

Mataji : To see light is a good sign. How can one see anything unless the path becomes lit up ? Just as in the physical world one cannot distinguish anything without light. At present, there is outer light and inner darkness. When inward light comes, then this outer light appears dim, dull and unsatisfactory. We see this tree, but we cannot perceive its roots, for they are hidden under the earth; similarly do we perceive

nature (*prakriti*), but we do not know from where it originates. The root of all that we perceive is hidden within. We see the tree, but we fail to see the seed from which it sprang. However, when the tree is fully developed, it yields again the same kind of seed. When looking at a seed, we see only the seed, yet infinite possibilities of unfoldment are contained within it. The One is contained in the infinite number and the infinite number in the One. When light is thrown on the inner world, outer appearances fade into insignificance. Albeit, at that stage there is differentiation between the inner and the outer. But a state exists where there is no more distinction between the inner and the outer, where all is seen as One Complete Whole.

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Vindhyachal, February 19, 1960

A young French lady who was touring India visited Varanasi. She had never heard about Mataji. Putting up in one of the big hotels at the cantonment, she happened to meet there one of Mataji's admirers, who advised her not to leave India without having Mataji's darshan. She took a taxi and came to Vindhyachal for just two hours. The following is part of the conversation she had with Mataji.

Question : Is it one's duty to act according to the wishes of one's parents or should one live one's own life ?

Mataji : If it is a life dedicated to the search after Truth (*paramartha jivan*) nothing else need be considered.

Question : Well, it is not exactly a life of this kind. I am asking on principle. Is it my duty to conform to my parent's wishes or should I live my own life ?

Mataji : I have already told you ; this body speaks of the Supreme Quest. There are two kinds of seekers, the one who wants to dedicate his life to the search for Reality and for him there are no other duties. The other one would like to lead a religious life, but there are obstacles. If you choose to tread the Path to Self-realization but have a bad

conscience for having left your parents, your thoughts will wander away to them and you will not be able to meditate. One must make a definite decision one way or the other. Even so there will be difficulties at times, but if one has made up one's mind once-for all, these can be overcome. If on the other hand one feels pulled in two directions, one will not be able to proceed.

Question : Shall I ever find peace and happiness ?

Mataji : Peace and happiness are found on the path to God, never in the world, where one gets a little happiness which is invariably followed by its shadow – sorrow.

On parting the young lady said, "I shall never forget this day and I shall never forget what you told me."

Mataji : Forget ? This is not enough. You must meditate. Meditate at least for five minutes daily along the lines prescribed by your own religion. Not less than five minutes, but the more time you can give the better. Try to dedicate at least fifteen minutes out of every twenty-four hours to meditation, no matter what kind of life you may choose, and do not forget your friend ! This (pointing to Herself) is your friend. Think carefully before acting, do not act thoughtlessly, only to repent afterwards !

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Kishenpur, April 23, 1960

During the satsang, two blind men came to talk to Mataji. One of them asked, "How can I get the vision of God? Please tell me the easiest way to it ?"

Mataji : Seek Him for His own sake.

The blind man : Which is better, the path of devotion or that of knowledge ?

Mataji : Adhere to God's Name. Repeat His Name day and night and get engrossed in its sweetness.

Question : When I still had some eyesight, I used to read many books. But now this is impossible. How will I gain understanding ?

Mataji : Turn to God, He will give you understanding.

The second blind man : Mataji, give me your blessing !

Mataji : Pray to God and you will feel His blessing !

A lady from the audience : You said, "Seek God for His own sake." Well then, if I seek Him with selfish motives, will I not find Him?

Mataji : Of course, if you seek God with whatever motive, you will get something of Him, and if you pray for anything of this world you will also obtain it. Yet the things of this world are not worth praying for. One should seek God, not with any motive but solely for His own sake. Neither should one feel concerned about one's spiritual progress, for this is also not unselfish. Seek God because it is your nature to do so; because you cannot remain without Him. Whether and when He will reveal Himself to you rests with Him. Your duty is to call out to Him constantly and persistently and not to waste your energy on anything else. It is not fitting to compare and reason, saying, 'Such and such a person has been engaged in *sadhana* for so many years and yet has not reached anywhere.' How can you possibly judge of what is happening to anyone inwardly ? At times it occurs that a person while practising *sādhana* appears to have changed for the worse. How can you tell whether certain undesirable tendencies had not been hidden within him and have been brought to light through his spiritual endeavours? To say, "I have performed so much *sadhana*, but no transformation has been effected," is also not the attitude to be taken. All that you have to do is to call out to Him unceasingly and untiringly and not to look for the results of what you are doing. Who can tell whether you may not, by any chance, be the fortunate one among millions who will succeed !

Question : Sometimes I feel quite desperate, because I do not seem able to succeed.

Mataji : You feel desperate when you have desires and they remain unfulfilled. But when one aspires to God for His own sake, how is it possible to feel desperate ?

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Kishenpur, July 22, 1960

In the course of conversation Mataji said, "It is well to keep in mind that whatever one enjoys of worldly happiness, be it good food or anything else, uses up some of the merit (*punya*) that one has accumulated. It is therefore commendable to remember God at all times, and to enjoy whatever comes as coming from God. Similarly should one try to bear in mind that any suffering or adversity that one has to go through, expiates one's accumulated *pāpa*, (wrong or evil actions and thoughts).

Mataji then related the following story.

"A very rich man died leaving his wealth to his son. Before closing his eyes for ever, he told his son that if ever he got into very bad straits, so as to be utterly helpless and destitute, he should open a certain cupboard in the house. However the cupboard was not to be opened under any other circumstances.

"The son was a spend-thrift and soon had exhausted all his wealth. At last he was virtually penniless, there was not even enough to provide the barest necessities for his family ; moreover, there was illness in the house besides all sorts of other troubles. He remembered the cupboard and managed to open it with great difficulty. To his utter disappointment, he found it empty. It was an ordinary black cupboard, so he threw it outside into the compound and started to dig and search everywhere for the hidden treasure – in vain. In his despair he finally went to solicit the help of a *mahātmā*. The *mahātmā* agreed to come to his house and see what could be done. On arriving there, he looked around and then asked. "Give me a seat beside the black cupboard." He sat down and scraped the varnish off the old piece of furniture, and lo and behold, it was found to be made of pure gold. "Similarly", Mataji concluded, "the gold is to be found in everyone's own heart where the ONE sits enthroned on His lotus seat. But unless one is completely empty the gold cannot be found."

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Kishenpur, July 11, 1960

During Mataji's darshan hour someone asked : "How does the remembrance of God come ? By attending Satsang¹ and listening to religious discourses (*Bhagavat katha*) ?"

Mataji : To some people the remembrance of God comes easily, they cannot remain without it. In this way, they keep satsang with God. When repeating a mantra or one of God's names, He is present as that mantra or name ; one should bear this in mind. Some say they go on repeating 'Rama' but to no effect. '*Jemon bhāva temon labha*' : the benefit derived from one's practice depends on one's sincerity and fervour. Kirtan, satsang, listening to religious discourses, etc. are only the means of sustaining the remembrance of God. When one speaks about Him or sings His praises He Himself is present.

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A European lady who had recently lost her husband, wrote : "Ma, you told me : 'the husband is the Guru'. Now my husband died and I feel terribly lost. What am I to do ?"

Ma replied : "The husband who is the Guru does not die. Think of your husband as the Guru."

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Kishenpur, October 9, 1960

A French lady who had come by plane from Paris for the only purpose of spending a few weeks with Mataji, asked the following question :

"You say that everything is God's *Lilā* ; thus, there seems very little scope left for human freedom. It looks as if we were like marionettes and He pulling the strings. On the other hand, you also say that *jagat* (world) means perpetual movement and that which ever moves

1. Satsang in this context means a religious meeting. It also means the company of sages, saints and seekers after Truth and in its widest sense the practice of the Presence of God.

cannot be tied down and is therefore free. There seems to be a contradiction in these two statements. Is there any freedom for the individual and how much ? Have we not the freedom at least to choose at every moment between advancing further into worldliness or towards Reality ?

Mataji gave a detailed and enlightening reply. The following is the gist of what She said.

Mataji : Everything is God's *Lilā* , but since you do not know this you ask questions, yet even your questions are part of His *Lilā* . The world is indeed perpetual movement and the individual is that which is bound. However, the bondage is only temporary because it is of the world that is in constant flux. You may lock your room and go away, but the lock cannot last for ever and neither can the door. Every *jiva* (individual) is indeed Siva in reality. You are longing for freedom because you are in fact eternally free. When one is advancing towards God, it will be found difficult to move toward the world and vice versa.

What now is the freedom of the individual ? Mataji asked a young *sannyāsinī* who is learned in Sanskrit to state the opinion of the *sannyāsinī* on this point. The *sannyāsinī* said : "The *Śāstras* declare that the position of the individual resembles that of a cow tied to a post by a fairly long rope. The cow cannot get away from the post, but as far as the rope goes it is free to move as it pleases."

Mataji : Yes, this is indeed a beautiful simile. But one thing has to be said : If the individual uses the whole of his will–power in anything he undertakes, he gets in touch with *Mahāśakti*, the Supreme Power – and then, where is the boundary ? Think of a plant that is surrounded by a fence or by bricks while it is young and weak. But as it grows into a strong tree, it breaks the boundary and spreads far beyond it. Sometimes it happens that a cow digs up the post and runs away with it and the rope. In some cases, the Guru may destroy the boundary.

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Kishenpur, October 12, 1960

Today the French lady wanted to know what exactly was the meaning of Mataji's saying "*Vipad diye Tini vipad haran koren* — " (By adversity does He destroy adversity), since this may be understood in various ways.

Mataji : First let us hear what according to your opinion these various possibilities are.

The Questioner : To be an individual is in itself pain, since it means bondage and separation from the ONE. But immersed in worldly happiness the individual is not aware of his sorrow; so, God sends suffering and adversity, so as to wake him up to the consciousness of his innate misery.

Mataji : Yes, you see, happiness of this world is always short-lived and so you begin to search for permanent happiness. What other meaning do you think of ?

The Questioner : It may also mean that He sends misfortune to prevent disaster.

Mataji : This does indeed happen at times ; a great disaster is due, but averted by a smaller one. Furthermore, whatever suffering is in a person's fate has to be borne, but when it is exhausted it is over. From that point of view also suffering is beneficial. Moreover if a very great difficulty arises, one is obliged to turn to God, since one feels utterly incapable of coping with it. Although one may doubt His existence, yet one will start praying to Him in so grave an emergency.

From the audience : Mataji, this reminds me of something that was related to me. Some people were sailing in a boat that was about to sink. One of the travellers who did not believe in God, said : "If God exists, let Him save us !" The boat did not sink.

Mataji : This again reminds me of something else. Sri Modi once related to me that on one occasion, when he was journeying by aeroplane, some engine trouble arose. The passengers were given to

understand that they had only about 15 minutes more to live, as the engine could not work longer than that. A panic broke out, people started lamenting and bewailing their ill-luck. Mr. Modi however said : "Why lament ? You are indeed very lucky. This is the time to pray. If you die with the thought of God you will go straight to Him." Thereupon most people began to pray with intense fervour. Lo and behold, the pilot somehow managed to land at some town. Mr. Modi and some others got out. The engine was repaired ; but when the plane took off again it hit the electric wire, caught fire and instantly was consumed by flames with all those who were still aboard it.

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Kishenpur, October 11, 1960

In reply to a question Mataji said : "It is difficult for the householder always to find opportunities to sit down in his shrine-room for his prayers or meditation. It is difficult to cultivate the company of saints and sages at all times or to attend religious gatherings frequently. But it is easy and always possible to keep company with God in the shape of His Name or a mantra received from the Guru. One cannot constantly have an image or picture of a deity in front of one's eyes, but the *vigraha* (living presence) of God as *akṣara*¹ can be one's constant companion under all circumstances."

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Naimisharanya, October 26, 1960.

Question : It has been said that in 1962 the planetary constellations are very inauspicious and that there will be a great disaster in the world. What is the means to save ourselves from it ?

Mataji : You hear people say all kinds of things and since you are full of fear you feel apprehensive. Remember that there is a state in which there is no fear; to attain to that state must be your endeavour.

1. *Aksara* means letter of the alphabet (or syllable) and verbally 'indestructible.' Here it stands for God's name or a seed-mantra.

Tread the path that leads to fearlessness. There is no such thing as a 'means.' You must have recourse to the means which is no means and beyond all means. In the world there is always some trouble or difficulty. The only way out is to reach a condition in which one is not afraid of anything.

Question : But what about the rest of the world ?

Mataji : First become fearless yourself.

Question : What is your opinion about the prophesy itself ?

Mataji : This body does not reply to questions of this kind.

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Question : We are asked to practise self-restraint and *sadhana*. We are trying our best, but we do not find God. What are we to do ?

Mataji : Do not relax your efforts, go on steadily. Just as when you study you pass your exams and then become an officer automatically, and in course of time get your pension ; similarly, in the spiritual field also, if you persevere and continue with steadfastness, everything will come to you of itself.

The Questioner : What you say gives us great hope.

Mataji : It is indeed as has just been explained.

Question : Is it possible for a liberated person to have a desire ?

Mataji : To be liberated and have a desire is a contradiction in terms. Liberation implies desirelessness. How can one be liberated and still have a desire ?

Question : But has not God divided Himself into the many because He desired to do so ?

Mataji : Yes, that is so.

Question : But you have just said that one who is liberated cannot have desires.

Mataji : There is a great difference between God's desire and personal desire. Divine desire is Divine Will and quite another matter.

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Naimisharanya, October 31, 1960

This evening Sri Akhandananda Swamiji of Vrindaban gave a brilliant talk on anger. The main points of it were that desire is the cause of anger, and the ego (*abhimān*) the cause of desire. Unless one surrenders completely to the Guru and becomes absorbed in His service, anger cannot be conquered. Anger is a fire that saps the atmosphere generated by one's spiritual endeavour, and interrupts the current of one's *sadhana*.

A little later, during the half hour in which Mataji usually replies to questions, people referred to his talk.

Question : Mataji, I have noticed that *sādhus* who live in places such as Gangotri and can do without clothes and blankets in the icy cold of the mountains, are those who get most violently angry. How is this to be explained ?

Mataji : So long as one is not established in the state where no more 'I' and 'you' exist, where one knows by first-hand experience that the Self is One and all-pervading, how can anger be wholly conquered ?

Question : What difference is there between such a man and God? Moreover have you ever come across a human being that is incapable of anger ?

Mataji : When this body was very young, someone asked : 'We hear that even the Rishis could get so angry that on occasions their anger burnt people to ashes. How then can you expect us to conquer our anger ?' This body has had no education and at that time had not had any satsang with Sadhus and Mahatmas either. It replied, 'Yes, it is true that the Rishis could burn someone to ashes, but they also had the power to call back to life whom they had burnt. Their anger was on quite a different level. You are unable to create, so you should not destroy either.'

Question : Suppose I have a picture of my Mother and someone comes and knocks it down; should I not get angry ?

Mataji : No, you should say to yourself, 'My Mother Herself has knocked down the picture. Whatever happens is Her doing.'

Question : Suppose I have a picture of my Mother in my heart and someone insults it. Should I not get angry ?

Mataji : No, you should say, 'Mother Herself has spoken. She is all-pervading. She has spoken in this manner so as to test my endurance, to give me a chance not to get angry even when there seems to be a very good reason for it.'

Here someone in the audience quoted a verse from the Rāmāyana in which it is said that if anyone abuses one's Guru one should not listen, and avoid the company of the scoffer.

Mataji : The quotation is beautiful indeed ! At a certain stage this is the right behaviour.

Question : When Sita entered the earth after having been subjected by Rama to the test in public, was her motive not anger ?

Mataji : No, there was no anger. Circumstances had arisen under which Sita simply could not remain in the world any longer. It was imperative for her to leave.

Question : What exactly did Sita feel ?

Mataji : You are not playing the instrument;¹ the reply does not come. But you yourself are Sita, and you yourself are Rama.

The Questioner : No, I am neither Rama nor Sita.

Mataji : No, indeed, 'I' am not Rama. Where the 'I' is, Rama cannot be ! I did not say, 'I am Rama.' There is only Rama, nothing but Rama. All are Rama.

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1. Mataji often says of Herself, 'As you play the instrument, so you hear the sound;' which means that Mataji's replies respond exactly to the attitude of mind of the questioner.

Kishenpur, October 12, 1960

This morning a very young French lady arrived here from Kabul. She had gone there for some professional work and was able to break journey in India for ten days only on her way to Paris. When seeing a film of Mataji and Her surroundings, which Mr. Arnaud Desjardins is showing in France, she had been so profoundly stirred that she seized this rare opportunity to come and see Mataji. She left Kabul only yesterday, arrived in Delhi in the evening, and took the night train to Dehradun. After an hour of Mataji's darshan in a fairly large crowd, having to listen to questions and answers in Hindi and Bengali, of which she could not understand a single word, I asked her what was her impression of Mataji. "My expectations were very great," was her reply, "but I have found much more than I expected." To the question whether she did not want to see anything of India, she answered without hesitation. "No, I want to remain with Mataji."

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New Delhi, January 21, 1961

A French lady had a talk with Mataji. Amongst other things she asked, "How does the love of God come?"

Mataji : Does it not happen that you make friends with utter strangers and come to love them? To love God, who is your own Self, is natural. If you feel drawn to a particular form of God, such as Christ or Krishna, contemplate that form of His, repeat His Name constantly, think of Him, read about His greatness and His glory, let your mind ever be occupied with the thought of Him.

Question : Suppose one does not feel attracted to any particular incarnation of God, how should one proceed?

Mataji : Sit perfectly still and dive into yourself, trying to find out who you are. To find your Self means to find God, and to find God means to find your Self.

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November 1960

The following is a letter with instructions by Mataji to some *sādhikas* : "At every single moment, try to be aware of Him, for have you not chosen this path to dedicate your lives to Him ! Therefore, when speaking, speak of Him; when thinking, think of Him; when listening, listen to His words or to what is said about Him. Further, try each one of you to keep a diary, so as to check your mind from turning outward. This may also make you watchful and help you in your striving. Those— who are pilgrims on the path must develop great inner strength, energy, mobility and swiftness, so that their lives may become beautiful, to fill their new life with a new current. It will not do to sit and ride in a rickety, jolting bullock—cart. At all times, the mind must be intensely vigorous, energetic and alert— then only can you forge ahead with great speed. Remember that every person has to mould his or her own life. Accept cheerfully whatever He may bestow on you or take away from you."

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Another letter, January 1961

"By constant practice one finally achieves. They all should make up their minds to try and follow the advice of their friend¹ to the minutest detail. At what moment He will grace us with His touch, lies with Him; our duty is to continue to invoke Him without interruption. Enough time has been spent in wandering hither and thither aimlessly, leaving the Path in order to enjoy the sights of the world. Now all one's time should, as far as possible, be spent in the attempt to find one's Self. Vain and idle talk is of no benefit and only prevents one from advancing towards Him — it is but an obstacle to one's efforts. Ages and ages have been wasted in this way. Now, friend, return to your real home !

1. Mataji refers to Herself in this manner.

By lingering on the way you only prolong the agony of troubles and difficulties that have to be endured on the pilgrimage. Ever remember that one who is eager to advance towards Him and practises His Name and His Presence, progresses – no matter what his condition may be. To say, 'I do not feel His response' and therefore to take pleasure in mundane things, can never be for one's good – always bear this in mind."

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New Delhi, January 23, 1961

An American lady, who has come to India for the sole purpose of seeing Mataji, and has been with Her recently in Varanasi and Allahabad, asked a few questions. It is just twelve days since she has arrived in this country.

Question : What is the cause for the sense of unreality of everything I perceive, even though I know it to be good and beautiful, as for instance a sunset ?

Mataji : This sense of unreality comes from within. Whatever is perceived by the senses is transitory, ever changing, and therefore unreal. The *Atma* , which is eternal and real, causes this sense of unreality. It is a good sign to feel this. Turn within and seek the *Atma* !

Question : Since the will of the individual is illusory, and one does not know God's Will, how can one lead a purposeful life ?

Mataji : By contemplating the Self one will find out how to make one's life purposeful. It is man's duty to aspire to Self-realization.

Question : What about self-expression in art ?

Mataji : This also belongs to that which is fleeting. You paint a picture but it cannot last. The most beautiful song fades away in a moment.

Question : Presuming that the striving goes on at all cost, how can one know how to live in relation to human beings and one's own creative energies ?

Mataji : A man who is out for worldly things and occupied with the business of this world, gets satisfaction from what he does, for otherwise, why should he do it ? He feels he is doing well, he gets praise and fame, money and prestige, and his mind is engrossed in his affairs. If someone opposes him and puts obstacles in his way, he gets angry and feels hostile toward him.

A person who strives after Self-realization, will turn to great souls (*Mahātmās*) for advice, guidance, and company. He will read books written by the wise, will admire them, and desire to become like them. Since he is searching after Truth, he will come to be truthful in speech and behaviour. The Self is one, therefore he will be loving and friendly to all. Even when abused and reviled, he will not retort, but remember the oneness of all. A dog may bite you, but you will not bite back.

The man who works for worldly goods and satisfaction is working for death. For everything of this world is constantly dying and giving place to something else ; just as the child dies to the young girl, the young girl to the woman, and so forth. But one who is striving after Self-realization is working for immortality. When living and working in the world and mixing with worldly people, one's creative energies are exhausted in the pursuit of sense objects, and thus one may come to feel weak, tired or ill. Whereas, by aspiring to Self-realization one's creative energy will be preserved and strengthened.

While a person living in the world takes pleasure in parties, meeting people, etc., the one whose aim is Self-realization will delight in meditation, singing the praises of God, reading books of wisdom, listening to discourses on religion and philosophy, and mixing with those who are pilgrims on the Path.

Now about behaviour. The devotee will come to feel that he is the servant of the Lord, and therefore be ever more humble, gentle and sweet. Everyone, no matter what his line of approach, should try to be gentle, kind and loving to all, for the Self is one. The active person will engage in service—not to others, but with the thought that everyone is a

manifestation of God, and that he serves God in whomsoever he may serve. This alone is real service. It purifies the mind and therefore also helps towards Self-realization. A man who is out for Illumination, will reason that all are expressions of the One and so he also will be kind and compassionate to everyone.

When dry leaves fall off a tree, fresh ones grow quite naturally. Similarly one's behaviour and relationship will change automatically when one alters one's attitude of life. There are various paths and ways of living and behaviour for the aspirant, but here this body has pointed out only a few of them. According to his status, the *sādhaka* will have to observe certain rules and restrictions; as for instance, when he is initiated into brahmacharya or becomes a *sannyāsi*, he will have to live up to what is demanded of him.

A young girl : Is it necessary to join an Ashram in order to find God, or is this also possible while living at home ?

Mataji : God is everywhere and can be found everywhere. The home is also an Ashram, namely the householder's Ashram. People join an Ashram or sit in solitude on the banks of the Ganges only to realize that God is everywhere, that there are no boundaries except in the mind. Everyone chooses the type of life which is most helpful to him in his search.

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New Delhi, January 24, 1961

Question : Is freedom an illusion ?

Mataji : No, man is free.

Question : But man is an individual, an ego and the ego is an illusion. Therefore, how can he be free ?

Mataji : Of course, the ordinary person, who is identified with mind and body, is not free. But man – the real man (*Atimanuṣ*), is free.

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Hardwar, February 5, 1961

Today a party of about half a dozen Swiss people came to talk to Mataji. Most of them did not understand English and I had to translate into German what Mataji said. One of them, a middle-aged woman, can heal people by laying on hands, and even from a distance, by imagining the people to be healed. She said, a clergyman had taught her how to do this, but she was apprehensive that her technique was not quite perfect, as she felt exhausted after the healing and also experienced on her own body the ailments she was trying to cure. For instance, she became blind for 10 minutes, when attempting to make a blind man see – although in this particular case she was unable to effect a cure. A certain Mahatma at Rishikesh had advised her to give up the healing of illnesses, as it would retard her spiritual progress. She wanted to know, what Mataji had to say about this. (The Swiss lady is a mother of several children whom she has to maintain. Healing means a livelihood to her.)

Mataji : It is true that the laying on of hands in the way described will arrest one on the level from which the healing is performed, and one will therefore be prevented from going beyond it. For one who has dedicated his life entirely to the Supreme Quest, this kind of healing represents an obstacle. But the position of the householder, who in any case has to do some business or other in order to earn money, is different. You may accept payment from some patients and treat others free and thereby be able to do service. Some people will be benefited by this. In some cases you may not be able to effect a cure, as it does not lie in the patient's fate to get well, but at any rate you will be able to do some good. The householder, who has to make a livelihood and educate his children, cannot live without compromise. However, a person, who has given his life completely to the search after Truth, knows no compromise. He has to adhere to truth at all costs. For such an one, activity of this kind would represent an obstacle.

Question : We intend founding an international spiritual centre in Europe, where yoga of all types will be taught. The spiritual hunger all over Europe is acute and ever increasing. Should we go ahead with our project ?

Mataji : Who is to instruct in yoga ?

Questioner : We are getting people from all over the world to come and teach. Some have already offered to give their cooperation.

Mataji : If you can secure really competent teachers, then it is no doubt a good plan to found such a centre. But mind you, all depends on the capacity and the inner qualification of the instructors.

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Hardwar, March 1961

Sometimes letters are read out to Mataji during darshan time. A devotee from Germany, who is not keeping good health, had asked among other things, whether it might not perhaps be better to stop speaking and thinking about her ill-health and to ignore it altogether. Mataji replied : "Do as much for your health as is your duty to keep your body fit. But your mind should be engrossed in God."

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Hardwar, April 1, 1961

We are staying at Baghat House, Kharkhari, where the Raja of Solan has built a *dharmaśala* with a Siva temple in the centre. One portion of the building is reserved for Mataji and Her party. So many foreigners come to see Mataji nowadays that when She gives darsana in Her room, which is small, it sometimes happens that there are more Europeans than Indians.

Today at midday, the Maharani of one of the Rajputana states and her daughter were in Mataji's room. A German lady, a young girl from Switzerland, and myself were called and asked to join them. A little

later an American gentleman and another one from Scandinavia arrived from Rishikesh. Six different nationalities had gathered in the small room.

The German lady asked : Has the mind a limit ? and where is the limit ?

Mataji : The limit of the mind is to find the Self.

Question : Is the mind inside or outside ?

Mataji : When the mind remains outside, it wanders here and there; this is why one should turn it inside so as to find one's Self.

The Swiss girl : How should one meditate ? Is it better to concentrate on some object, say a flower or the like, or should one try to make the mind blank ?

Mataji : There are two methods : one is to concentrate on a Deity, such as Śiva, Kali, Durga, Krishna, Rama and so forth. This is meant for those who feel attracted to any particular aspect of God. The other procedure is to empty the mind and stand back as a witness. It depends on the temperament and inclination of the person who meditates. However, to keep the mind empty is extremely difficult for the great majority of aspirants. Therefore, one may concentrate on the inner light, the light by which all outer objects are also perceived. Even a blind man sees an inner light. Another method is to sit absolutely still and watch the movement of one's breathing. This will steady the mind.

After having said this much, Mataji was called, and left the room. The Maharani told us that she had wanted to ask that very same question about meditation, but had felt too shy to do so. She had therefore hoped that perhaps Mataji would of Her own accord enlighten her on this point. To her great joy she found that the Swiss girl had voiced her question and so the Maharani had received her reply as well. She said, this had happened to her a number of times already when she was with Mataji.

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Kankhal, April 4, 1961

A newcomer, an elderly Brahmin by caste, related that he had been living in Hardwar for a number of years, devoting himself to spiritual practices and to satsang for the purpose of attaining to liberation. But in spite of all his efforts he was disappointed to find that no real transformation had taken place. He wanted to know whether, if he was to die in his present condition, he would attain to liberation ?

Mataji : If a person lives in a holy place in holy company, spending his days in *sadhana* and in spite of this does not progress as he had hoped, it is due to his intention not being quite pure. This is the reason why, together with the good effects of what he is doing, undesirable things will crop up as well. The influence of the sacred place and the satsang are bound to have a beneficial effect, but side by side with it the results of one's bad karma have to be experienced. Karma will work itself out to the minutest detail. At any'rate, one should continue steadfastly to exert oneself and persevere in one's determination and efforts. It is said that during the *Kaliyuga* man is so weak that his mental sins are forgiven. He has to bear the consequences only of what he actually does, not of what he thinks – for otherwise there would be no chance at all of attaining to liberation during this *Kaliyuga*.

Question : We are told that if a man dies in Kashi or in certain other sacred places he will be liberated. Is this true ?

Mataji : There is a story of a man who had committed some wicked deeds, but because, below the spot on which he died, there happened to be a *Saligrama*, the messengers of death had no power over him and he was taken by the messengers of Viṣṇu instead.

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Kankhal, April 9, 1961

A well-known industrialist asked, what was the sense of calling a doctor and undergoing medical treatment, since everything was in any case ordained beforehand by Providence ?

Mataji : The fact of your consulting a doctor and submitting to medical treatment is also part of your fate. Unless you are fated to be cured, the doctor is helpless. But, when you are meant to get well, the right medicine will be given and you will recover.

Question : Suppose one has intense faith in God and leaves everything to Him and does not consult a doctor ? Can one be cured even so ?

Mataji : There are two ways : one way is to have intense faith that God will do all that is needed and pray to him to be cured. If one has reached a state of genuine faith it will have the power to bring about the cure. If on the other hand, one's faith is merely superficial, it will not act.

The other way is, not to pray to God for anything, but leave everything to Him. Then, whether one gets well or not is exactly the same.

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Kankhal, April 10, 1961

This morning, a lady who had a beautiful voice, was asked to sing. She sang one song in praise of Rāma and then kept silent. When Mataji asked her to sing another song, she replied : "Mataji, the flies are disturbing me too much !"

Mataji : It is only the 'me' or the 'I' that feels disturbed. Let the flies also have some fun !

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Pune, June 18, 1961.

Today Sri Haribabaji Maharaj related to us that Mataji had once explained to him the significance of doing *namaskara*. It meant to dedicate oneself to one's *Ista* or to God with all that constituted one's nature at the moment, be it good or bad, one's virtues, vices, capacities, talents, shortcomings – everything; to offer one's whole being at His Feet. Then, purified by His touch, to receive oneself back, as it were, as His by His touch, to *prasada*.

Haribabaji further said that the custom of washing one's feet before entering a temple or any other sacred place was symbolic for washing off one's sins. On hearing this it suddenly struck me that the fact that so many people lose their shoes or sandals when coming for Mataji's darshan may have a similar significance. I suppose we should be grateful for being deprived of our footwear on those occasions, instead of grumbling!

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Pune, July 1961

Every evening Sri Haribabaji Maharaj relates to us a story of a *bhakta*. One evening Mataji said, "Today this body will tell you a story of a *bhakta* which it has heard somewhere.

"While Sri Ramchandra lived in the jungle, he one day went to a lake to drink water. He left his bow and arrow on the shore standing upright, stuck into the earth. When he returned and took out the arrow, he saw that a frog had been pierced by it. "Why did you not complain, when I hurt you so badly," he asked? "Rama is my refuge," was the frog's reply. "Therefore, if Rama Himself pierces me with His arrow, to whom am I to complain?"

Another day, someone, referring to the story, asked: "Mataji, since Rama is supposed to have been omniscient, He must have known all along that He had wounded the frog. Why then did He do it, and why did He ask?"

Mataji : It was His *lilā* . Just as it was His *lilā* to search for Sita desperately when *Ravana* had carried her away. Moreover, if He had not asked, how could the frog have given such a beautiful reply ?

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Pune, July 3, 1961

A *sannyāsi* asked : It is said that God is all-knowing, all loving, and all-powerful. Why then does he allow so much sorrow and grief to continue in the world that is His creation ? If He were all-knowing and all-loving, but not all-powerful one could understand; or if He were all-loving and all-powerful, but not all-knowing; or even if He were all-knowing and all-powerful, but not all-loving. How can He be endowed with all those three attributes and in spite of it let the misery of the world run its course ?

Mataji : Everyone has to reap the fruit of his actions. The suffering is for your own best. A mother occasionally gives a slap to her beloved child for his own good, in order to keep him on the right path. By what you call suffering, God cleanses you from the effects of your actions committed life after life. When a fond mother gives her baby a bath, the child may scream desperately, yet the mother will not let the baby go until she has thoroughly washed and scrubbed him. Then she will carefully wipe the child, dry his tears and take him on her lap.

Likewise, when you have been cleansed, God will comfort you and take you into His arms. Whatever happens in this world is His *Lilā* , His pleasure.

The Sannyāsi : Pleasure at all the misery ? Where then is His love ?

Mataji : Who is it that loves and who that suffers ? He alone stages a play with Himself; who exists save Him ? The individual suffers because he perceives duality. *Duniya*¹ means '*du-niya*' (based on duality) and

1. World.

it is duality which causes all sorrow and grief. Find the ONE everywhere and in everything and there will be an end to pain and suffering.

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Pune, July 5, 1961.

It has been raining almost incessantly for days. This morning Mataji was commenting on this and how sorry She was that people had to take so much trouble in order to be able to get to Her. Then She said, "It is pouring and pouring. If everyone's *bhakti* rained in a similar manner, how wonderful this would be ! It is said that the rainy season is congenial to the feeling of love and devotion for God. In this way even nature can be helpful to *sadhana*. Let your devotion for Him stream uninterruptedly like this rain.

Question : Why does God allow so much suffering in the world ? Ask everyone of the people assembled here; none of them is quite happy, and yet they all long to be.

Mataji : God is teaching you that there are two possibilities. If you desire the things of this world, you will be unhappy; but by advancing towards Him you will find happiness. This is how he induces you to turn to Him. If you had no troubles or sorrows you would never even think of Him.

Question : Why does God not cause us to move towards Him ?

Mataji : He does, indeed ! For it is only by His Grace that you are able to remember Him. But you – are not singleminded, you crave for all kinds of things and therefore you remain unhappy. There is a story which aptly illustrates what your position really is.

A *dhobi* kept a few donkeys to carry the clothes he collected for washing. Since he was poor and his house small, he left the donkeys in the open during the night. Often they would wander far away and the *dhobi* had to waste hours in search of them. Since he did not have enough rope to tie up all the donkeys for the night, in his plight he invented a device that worked admirably well. Every evening he touched

the four legs of each donkey with a rope. The donkeys, having felt the touch of the rope on their legs, took it for granted that they had been tied to the spot and thus remained standing in the same place all night long. A similar thing happens in the world. *Maya* touches you and you imagine yourself to be bound. You think, 'how can I be without my husband or my wife, my children, parents, my house and comforts and so on.' Thus, you remain standing where you are instead of advancing towards Him.

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Vrindaban, January 20, 1962

Two American ladies arrived here four days ago. One of them had come last winter and spent about three months following Mataji wherever She went. This year she has brought a friend of hers, who, nearly a year ago, lost her husband, a renowned physician, who suddenly died at the age of 52. She showed us her husband's and her children's photos and told us what a happy life she had enjoyed, with all that she could possibly wish for, until this severe blow of fate destroyed her happiness in a moment. Now she feels at a complete loss, wishing that instead of her beloved husband she could have left this world. "I suppose," she added thoughtfully, "when one feels perfectly happy one does not search for anything. We always believed in God and went to church, but I cannot say that we were deeply religious."

I asked her to show the photos to Mataji. When looking at the doctor's picture, Mataji exclaimed : "He seems quite well known to me." This moved the widow visibly.

Mataji was talking to some Gujarati visitors. She then, of Her own accord, turned to the American lady, saying : "We must always remember that we are God's children and that it is therefore right for us to contemplate Him and to try to realize Him. God does not give sorrow, He is the one Father, Mother, Friend, Beloved, Husband. But there

certainly is sorrow in the world. A beloved person leaves us, and we are in pain. As long as we remember that we are God's children and give our minds to Him, we shall be happy. But when we forget Him, He sometimes gives us a slap to remind us of Him, just as a fond mother at times slaps her child for his own good.

'World' means duality, the world consists of the pairs of opposites, and so there is happiness and grief alternating. Without searching for the Supreme, one cannot find lasting happiness and peace. Your husband's body is no more, but his Self (*Atma*) is one with you eternally. He is not separate from you. Just as you discard worn—clothes and get new ones so the body has to die so that you may realize THAT which is eternal and can never be lost. Your husband has not really left you, his body only is gone, so that you may lose your attachment and find the real Self in which you are one with him.

It is natural for human beings to cry. If you cry for worldly things, it only increases your attachment to them and more and more impurity accumulates. But by crying for God, all impurity is washed away. You should ever keep in mind that God has taken away your husband's body to show you the path of brahmacharya, so that you may realize your husband's true Being and thus know that you are one with him eternally.

Happiness and misery are of the mind. When the mind merges into the ONE, you have reached beyond them. In order to find real and lasting happiness, man has to contemplate the Supreme. Happiness that depends on anything, be it a person, money, comforts, and so forth, cannot endure. If we are deprived of the comforts we are used to, we feel troubled. But if we accept cheerfully whatever comes, we shall always be at ease.

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Vrindaban, January 25, 1962.

Four German people are now staying with us. They like it here immensely. This evening, one of them asked what was the difference, if any, between prayer and meditation, provided one did not pray for anything in particular.

Mataji : When praying one asks for the fulfilment of one's desires, even though it be the desire to become one with God or to serve Him or realize Him. Whereas meditation (*dhyana*) means to be absorbed in the contemplation of Him. In this there is no room for desire.

Question : How can one attain to such meditation ?

Mataji : It comes spontaneously. At first you remember Him and ponder over Him and then contemplation sets in of itself. Just as while sitting here the remembrance, the thought of your home and children comes to you unasked and you cannot help pondering over them. Similarly, the contemplation of the Beloved comes naturally, of its own accord.

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Vrindaban, January 26, 1962

Today the German lady asked : "I have read in a book on meditation that it is good for a beginner to concentrate on some concrete object or on a symbol, such as the cross, a chalice, or the light of a candle, since, to concentrate on the Supreme is very difficult."

Mataji : Is this all that the book suggests ? Why not concentrate on Jesus Christ ?

The Questioner : I have not got the courage to do this. The Christ is too holy, too sublime. I could only go wrong in trying, I do not feel pure enough to dare this.

Mataji : All that you perceive, you behold because there is light. Without light nothing can, be seen. There is only one light. Whatever anyone perceives, be he a man or, an animal, is seen by that same light. The outer light originates from the inner light, even a blind person is

aware of an inner light. The Light of the Self is present everywhere and in all. Whether you worship Christ, Krishna, Kali or Allah, you actually worship the one Light, which is also in you, since it pervades all things. Everything originates from Light, everything in its essence is Light.

An Indian lady : You often say we should constantly think of God, be immersed in Him. But when attempting to do this, one's daily duties in the home will be neglected. Suppose a child comes and asks for something – one will attend to it hurriedly : or guests arrive and one does not look after them with the care they desire. What then is one to do while living a householder's life ?

Mataji : If you are immersed in God, why bother about the world? Let happen what may, you are absorbed in God.

The Questioner : But my people find fault with me. They say that I am half here and half there and therefore not successful in any line.

Mataji : Oh no, you are not half "there," very much less than half, and with that little bit of other-worldliness you can attend to your household duties very well indeed, even better than you could otherwise. Keep some hours reserved for your meditation, and for the rest do your work as a service to God. If you think of God all the time and look on everyone as a form of Him, your work will be done excellently and satisfy everyone.

When a man is intent on accumulating wealth, he hides what little he has, and even when his treasure grows, it has to be kept carefully concealed. Similarly foster in your heart what little inner wealth you have gained and outwardly occupy yourself with the service of your family. There is no need to make a show of the little you have acquired.

But when you become really immersed in the One, so that it is impossible for you to attend to your work, then nobody will find fault with you. On the contrary, people will feel the divine presence in you and be only too eager to serve you. Even if guests are not looked after, they will not mind it, for they will be happy to be in your company. But

that state is quite different from what you know now, the world will then no longer exist for you.

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Vrindaban, January 28, 1962

In reply to a question, Mataji pointed out the importance of what one thinks at the moment of death. For, just as a leech does not leave its place without hooking on to something else, so the soul at the time of leaving the body hooks on to some kind of new existence according to the state of mind of the dying person. But at that moment one has no control over one's mind. It will automatically dwell where it usually dwells. This is why one has to practise the Presence of God while one is well and fit, so that the thought of God may come spontaneously when one is ill and weak. To illustrate this fact, Mataji told two stories :

"An old woman, who had spent many years of her life selling oil, was about to die. Her relatives had assembled round her and were urging her to repeat 'Rāma' or 'Krishna'." But the dying woman was only half conscious and her power of hearing was impaired. To the shouting of her children and grand-children : 'Repeat the name of God!' she kept on replying what she had been used to say to beggars who came to her shop begging for oil : 'Not a drop will I give, not a drop !' Saying this, she passed away."

"The following actually occurred in your Ashram at Varanasi. The aged mother of one of the Ashramites had come to spend her last days in the Ashram. She used to attend to her *puja* and *japa* with great regularity from early morning until nearly midday, without eating or even drinking a drop of water. She would then cook her food, eat and scrub her vessels. Towards evening she got busy again with her *sadhana*.

After some time she fell ill and was confined to bed, but continued with her *japa* all the time, Whenever some food or drink was brought to her, she would indicate by signs that she had not finished her *japa* and could therefore not take anything. Finally she breathed her last with her fingers in the correct position for doing *japa* according to the prescribed rules. The people who took her body to the burning ghat related that, when it had burnt to ashes and only the bones were left over, even then the skeleton remained in the same position, until at last the arms crossed over the breast. The people present declared that they had never before witnessed anything of the sort."

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Later, Mataji spoke about the close connection between the kind of food a person eats and the quality of his mind. This is why it is so important for a *sādhaka* to avoid *tamasic* food, such as meat, fish, eggs, onions, garlic, etc. Unless one partakes of *sattwic* food it will be difficult to develop a *sattwic* mind.

For *paja* people often wear silken clothes. Human magnetism is always oozing out and a constant exchange takes place. During prayer and meditation the activity of the magnetism is more powerful. Silk prevents it from being dissipated. For a similar reason one has to sit on an *āsana* for meditation. *Kushāsana* preserves the magnetism well and so does deerskin. Deerskin is not as a rule used by householders but only by brahmacharis.

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Hardwar, March 6, 1962

A couple who recently lost their son, had come from Calcutta. They wanted to know what was the sense of a child dying before he had lived his life. Mataji replied : "Everything happens according to one's karma. It was your karma to serve your son for a few years, and his karma to accept your service. When it was over, God took him away. It is all God's Play. Some flowers fall off without bearing fruit. Similarly the child was given to you by God for a time. This is the way of the world. There is bound to be loss and bereavement."

The bereaved father : From where is one to take strength. to bear all these troubles and tribulations ?

Mataji : Remember that the *Atma* of the child and your own *Atma* are one. The *Atma* was neither born nor will it die, it eternally *is*. The body, like a worn garment, falls away. Endeavour not to be attached to the body and not to cry for it. Cry for God alone. Remember Him, repeat His holy Name, contemplate Him, and regularly read scriptures, such as the Bhagavad Gita, the Srimad Bhagavata, the Rāmāyana, and so forth, and you will feel comforted. Your grief will become much lighter. Let your life be a dedicated life. The house holders's ashram is also an ashram. Blows come in order to remind you to turn your mind to that which is Real. Someone who had lost all his six sons, found much solace in reading the Bhagavata.

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Hardwar, March 1962

Now-a-days many interesting letters arrive from abroad. An American couple wrote to Mataji. They had heard about Her from a devotee who had recently stayed with Mataji and on returning to the U.S.A. showed them Her photos and tape recordings of Her voice. Their letter contained snapshots of their three little daughters, seated in meditation in the lotus pose. One of these little girls felt so attracted to Mataji that she declared, her one and only wish for her forthcoming seventh birthday was to go and meet Mataji. Since it was impossible for the parents to take their daughter to India, they requested Mataji in their letter to send a birthday message to the child. They also mentioned that she seemed to be specially fitted for the spiritual life and had already declared she would get married to none save God. Mataji gave the following reply : "How beautiful the pictures of my friends are ! Immersed in meditation –moving indeed to look at.

"At the very moment my friend had the desire to come, she did come and she met her friend. My friend should keep this in mind. In order to realize this fact, man engages in hundreds of *kriyās*, practices, meditation and so forth. This friend is with her friends at all times. Man's duty as a human being is to be a pilgrim on the path to the Supreme. One who can be wedded to God has indeed fulfilled the purpose of human existence."

After some time another letter arrived from the couple to thank Mataji. "The whole family is benefiting by Mother's message. Our daughter told us that she indeed met Mother during her birthday meditation. She told us this in a matter of fact fashion."

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The following is quoted from a letter by a European gentleman, who has been in correspondence with Mataji for some time.

"... You say, 'He who seeks will no doubt realize Him and one who realizes Him goes beyond death.' Mother Divine, can you guess the awful pain of a man who has sought for 37 years and has found nothing but despair. I write this letter with tears of agony. My heart is crushed, my soul is burning like fire. I spread myself on the ground and await death. I would become a great saint and you see what I have become. I cannot understand why I am always thinking of Anandamayi. She can give me only words on a sheet of paper. Words cannot help a man who has sought for 37 'years and has no strength'to go forth."

Mataji's reply : This time also Mataji says : If someone really and truly seeks God, he will certainly find Him. You say you have sought for 37 years – does He always reveal Himself within a specified number of days, months or years ? He is eternal, ever present, everywhere, in everything – He alone IS. The first step on the path to this realization – be it induced by something read in a book or by direct word of mouth and accepted – the first step is the manifestation of unbroken endurance and never ending patience.

My father, who is also a small child, it is only natural that fatigue and despair should overwhelm you, for this road is extremely difficult. So long as one's feet have not been set on a smooth and simple path, the condition in which you find yourself at present is natural, this is also a state that may occur on the path. This small baby¹ says, do not long for death, while you are travelling on the path to conquer death. You are out to find immortality and yet awaiting death. Of course, to look forward to the death of death is very good. One who goes out in search of Truth, for the realization of Truth, must walk with firmness, wide awake and full of vigour. Yes, it is true, this little baby,¹ can send you only a few words. But through these words can be found the way to

1. Mataji often spoke of Herself as "this small child" or "baby" or "this daughter of yours."

the realization of *Śabda Brahman*, *Akṣara Brahman*, provided someone is actually a traveller on the path.

Pilgrims on the path of the Supreme must endeavour to be receptive. Only that which is all the time falling away has to be relinquished. To the limit of your power try not to give way to despair and to remain at every moment an aspirant towards Self-realization. The duty of a pilgrim is to aspire constantly at Him who is beyond everything, who is at the same time in all forms, qualities, moods, and modes of being, and yet eternally beyond, who is all in all, the SELF of the Self. When the desire that lies at the root of all yogic practice becomes self-revealed, then He is found.

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Kishenpur, June 4, 1962

In summer 1962, Mataji stayed in Kishenpur for several months. After the birthday celebrations were over and most of the crowd had dispersed, Mataji used to come out of Her room daily at about 11 a.m. and sitting on the veranda of the Siva Temple, reply to questions for about an hour. These were quite informal and very delightful meetings. Mataji was often in a joking mood and the whole audience was roused to hearty laughter. In the beginning most questions were asked by Dr. Pannalal and Pandit Sundarlal, but later many others joined in the discussions.

Question : People think they must crowd as near as possible to you. Do those who sit at the back get less than the ones in front ?

Mataji : Suppose someone sits very close to this body but his thoughts wander away to his family or home or business, while another person right at the back keeps his mind on God and feels His presence. He surely is nearer to God than the one who sits close to this body.

Question : What about doing *pranāma* (obeisance)? People think they must do it right in front of you.

Mataji : *Pranāma* is done to God alone, never to a person, and therefore can be done anywhere at all, for He is allpervading.

Question : When people pray for something while doing *Pranam*, do you know it ?

Mataji : If God did not know what people asked for, would they pray ? Of course He knows. But He will not grant you everything you ask for. Do you give your child whatever he wants ? The child does not know what is good for him. God does not give you everything you pray for, He gives you what is best for you.

Question : Why do people come to you ?

Mataji (pointing towards the *Siva*-mandir) : They come here for *Siva* darshan. In actual truth they themselves are *Siva*. *Siva* is everywhere; but those who believe that He specially dwells in this temple, come and do *paja* and *arati* , and in that case they have, of course, to come near.

This little child does not know how to serve anyone, but they love her and therefore put up with any amount of inconvenience for her sake. They renounce so much. Some wear white and others ochre – having left their homes and everything.

Question : Does it help one's *sādhana* to wear the ochre robe ? Once I asked Swami Sharananandaji this very question and he replied, "It provides food." Is that all ?

Mataji : If he has said this, it is alright. This body will not refute it. But to wear the ochre robe does help some people to constantly remember their true calling, and they wear it for this purpose.

Question : But is it not the Guru who tells them to wear the *sannyāsi* colour ?

Mataji : Well, if the Guru tells them, He does so because it is helpful. For those who believe in it, it is an aid, for others all colours are alike, be they white, red, or black. The robe of the *sannyāsi* is flame coloured to remind him that he has burnt *rajas*-greed, passion, anger and so forth to remind him that he is enveloped by fire, that he is always at the burning-ghat. For this reason he also has to shave his head, for when entering fire, the hair will be burnt first of all.

However, there is of course, a state where one has risen beyond colour, for colour is part of this world. In that state it is quite immaterial in what colour one is dressed. But while one is still influenced by one's surroundings, it is helpful to adopt the garb of a *sannyāsi*.

Question : The *sannyāsi* is dead to the world. Is it therefore right for him to live in society ?

Mataji : Certainly. What is this world, but a constant dying ! Does not the child die to the adolescent and the adolescent to the man, and so forth – indefinitely. To remind people of this fact, the *sannyāsi* who has understood the true nature of the world and therefore renounced it, should live in society.

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Kishenpur, Summer 1962.

On some days Ashramites got a chance to ask questions and voice their own problems.

June 17, 1962.

A sadhaka : What exactly does *Bhagavat chintan* (the thought of God) mean ? Since I have not seen God and do not know Him, how can I think of Him ?

Mataji : At times you want to buy something that you have never seen. You nevertheless think of it, go to the market and finally get it.

At present you are on the level of belief and acceptance of what you have been told. You know the mantra and you know the Guru. The mantra is God and the Guru is God. In actual fact there is nothing but God. Anyhow, you accept the Guru; therefore meditate on Him.

Question : But I do not know the Guru, I only see His body.

Mataji : Never mind. Concentrate on the little that you know of

Him and on the mantra, and carry out the Guru's instructions. The mantra is the seed; having obtained the seed, the whole tree is potentially there. All you have to do is to bury the seed in good earth and tend it carefully; the tree will grow of itself. When you have found the Guru and received His instructions, you have in very truth found everything, just as the tree is contained in the seed.

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June 18, 1962.

A sadhaka : How does *sadhana* become intense (*tivra*) ?

Mataji : By one-pointedness (*ek lakshya*). '*Tivra*' means to direct the arrow (*tira*) towards the goal : '*Tira kā vrati hona*', to aim with single-mindedness at the Goal and at the Goal alone.

Mataji then enlarged on how to practise *sadhana*. She pointed out that it was certainly very good to sing *kirtana*, to chant holy texts and perform puja. But if, while engaging in those practices one enjoyed the praise and prestige one earned from those who listened, then this would become an obstacle to one's progress. "*Sadhanaki gati khandit hoti hai*", the stream of *sadhana* will be interrupted. Suppose someone says to you : 'How beautifully you sang ! Let me copy your song.' He then notes down your address, a correspondence ensues and he starts sending you presents. This is not *sadhana*, but worldly enjoyment."

Another sādḥaka : Should we then stop singing *kirtana* ?

Mataji : No, sing as much as you can – but sing for God only. Sing His praises, get absorbed in Him, be oblivious of whether people praise you or take no notice of you.

Your way of doing *sadhana* is like travelling by bullock-cart, and there are hundreds of them on the road. At times the driver falls asleep and then the bullocks take a wrong path and one has to retrace one's steps. Therefore one must constantly remain watchful and alert.

Someone else : Suppose I buy a ticket and travel by train. Then surely, I need not worry ?

Mataji : The driver has to be alert. But so must you, for if you fall asleep you may miss your destination and stay in the train too long.

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Kishenpur, June 25, 1962

Question : While living in the Guru's Ashram, what is better, serving the Guru (*Guru sevā*) or engaging in meditation (*japa-dhyāna*) ?

Mataji : Whatever the Guru advises is best.

Question : But the Guru does not say anything about this.

Mataji : Then he is not a Guru.

To do the Guru's personal service is not possible for everyone. It requires special capacity. Suppose you do the Guru's personal work for a time and then someone else is asked to continue and does it in a different way, and this upsets or irritates you. This is not called service. You should, on the contrary, feel happy that some other person also has the chance to serve your Beloved in his or her own way.

Always remember that whomever you serve, you are serving God (*Janardan*) in that particular guise. So many people come to the Ashram and there is no end to the opportunities of serving them in this spirit. Even if some of them be bad or mean, do not forget that they have come to the temple of God. For this reason, serve them to the limit of your capacity, although they may not keep the same attitude after leaving the Ashram. Serve the pure intention that has moved them for the moment. Whether you provide them with food or water, or sweep the place for them or assist them in any other way, it is service to God in the shape of man. Thus there is any amount of scope for service in an Ashram.

Obey the Guru implicitly ! Whatever He may ask you to do, try to carry it out. If it be disagreeable or troublesome, accept it as your *tapasya* . Although it is true that, so long as one is bound by the knots

(*granthi*) of the I-ness, perfect faith is impossible, nevertheless exert yourself to the utmost to act upon the Guru's orders. – If you are able to remain in meditation continuously, nobody will even dream of expecting any service from you. But if you linger about aimlessly for part of the time, you should certainly do service of some sort.

Question : What is *mantra chaitanya* ?

Mataji : A mantra that has become alive; that is to say, that which the mantra represents becomes revealed. The seed is sown by the Guru, but unless the soil is properly prepared the tree will not grow. An ordinary seed may die if not tended, while the seed which the Guru sows is immortal. All the same, the earth has to be dug up and made soft and receptive, then the stones have to be removed and the earth is sieved, etc. If the seed is not watered it cannot develop. The regular practice according to the Guru's instructions provides the nourishment that will make the seed grow into a tree.

Question : What is *chitta 'uddhi* ?

Mataji : When the mind becomes empty and, like a clean mirror, reflects the Self, this is called *chitta 'uddhi*.

Question : Is the hour of death fixed beforehand ?

Mataji : In the realm in which the laws of nature function it is fixed and cannot be averted. But by the Will or Grace of One who has gone beyond those laws, it may be altered. As a rule, fate will have its way; somehow or other it will work itself out.

To illustrate this fact, Mataji related a story which She often tells : "Once upon a time there was a learned Brahmin. One night, while he and his family were asleep, a poisonous snake entered the house and stung his wife, son and daughter. Within a few moments all of them were dead. The Brahmin naturally felt sorely grieved and dejected. What to do now ? He watched the snake crawl away and leave the house. In his despair he ran behind the reptile. After following it for some distance, he saw the snake change into two fighting bulls. After they had killed each other, a beautiful young girl emerged on the spot.

Two men started quarreling over the lovely lady, a fight ensued and they stabbed each other to death, while the young beauty went on her way. Deeply pained and puzzled the Brahmin kept close to her heels. Finally, she turned around and said : "Why do you follow me.? Leave me alone !" "Not until you explain to me who you are. First you were a snake and your poisonous fangs blotted out my whole family. Then you turned into two fighting bulls that perished; and now, taking on the shape of a charming girl, you have caused the death of two men. Tell me who you are ?" The young woman tried to escape, but the Brahmin would not let her go. "First disclose your identity, then you may go where you please." At long last he got the reply : "I am destiny. I do not kill anyone. But man, by the results of his own actions, causes his own death in some manner or other." "If this is so," said the Brahmin, "tell me how I shall die ?" "By drowning." With these words the woman disappeared.

The Brahmin made up his mind to counteract destiny. "Let me see how I shall die by drowning, if I keep far away from water," he thought. After attending to the funeral rites for his wife and children, he disposed of his house and wandered high up into the mountains. There he decided to spend the rest of his life.

One evening, when as usual he was looking for shelter for the night, he sighted at some distance a large and well-built house, obviously the mansion of a wealthy person. When the owner saw the Brahmin approach, he invited him with courtesy to be his guest. He started talking to him and soon found that he was a learned man. "How much further do you want to trek ?" he said. "Please make your home in my house. My whole family will benefit by the company of such a learned and cultured pandit." The Brahmin also felt attracted to his host and his sons. He thought : "The family seems pleasant and well-to-do. There are hills on all sides and no watercourse anywhere near. What better place can I find ?" and he remained. He stayed for a number of years, teaching the sons. Grandsons began to grow up. One of the little boys got greatly attached to the old pandit and spent much time near him.

One day, the head of the family said to the pandit : "We are all going down to Benares to bathe in the Ganges, since a very auspicious day is nearing which occurs only once in hundred years. Please, do join us !" The Brahmin flatly refused. However, the little grandson began to cry and declared firmly, he would not go without his beloved pandit and rather stay at home with him. When therefore his host tried again and again to persuade him to join in the trip, the pandit finally disclosed his reasons for refusing to go. "Is that all ?" said his host. "Be without fear, I shall construct a special bathing-place for you, very shallow and surrounded by a strong railing. Not even a small child will be in danger of drowning there." After much controversy, the Brahmin at last agreed to go. His host kept his word. He made excellent arrangements for the pandit's safety, exactly as promised. The Brahmin entered the water, carrying the little boy in his arms. Suddenly the child changed into a crocodile and with the words : "I am destiny !" dragged the old man over the railing into the main current. This is how fate will have its way. According to one's karma, the date and manner of one's death is pre-ordained.

Question : Suppose a man dies, pronouncing God's name, will he not be born again ?

Mataji : It depends on his state of mind, it may of course happen that all his remaining karma is burnt up instantaneously. This may also occur by the grace of the Guru.

Question : Is it possible by the grace of the Guru to obliterate desire (*vāsana kṣaya*) ?

Mataji : It is. The grace of the Guru always pours forth, but you must have mercy upon yourself and allow it to reach you. If your vessel is turned upside down, the grace will merely run down the sides and you will be unable to receive it. (Mataji has on other occasions explained that to keep one's vessel upside down means to be outward turned. When one's attention is focused on God or Truth or on realizing one's Self, one becomes receptive to Divine Grace.)

Question: What about sati ?

Mataji : That is a different matter altogether. A real sati has to be completely steady in mind and body. If, entering the fire, she suffers, she cannot be called a sati.

A few days ago Mataji related to us the story of one of Her ancestors. After circumambulating seven times around her husband's funeral pyre, she put one of her fingers into the flame of a candle to make sure whether she would be able to bear being burnt alive. The finger did not move. She then told her relatives that since one of her little toes had once inadvertently touched the pillow of her husband (which is considered a sin) that toe would, in order to expiate this sin, feel the flame and therefore wriggle, but nobody should feel alarmed at this. She then entered her husband's pyre and at once her body became completely still, just like a corpse. She obviously did not feel any pain whatsoever. She was perfectly steady.

Mataji then referred to a story of a sati, which She had heard from Bholanath. That particular woman did not even have the chance to leap into the fire. While doing *pranama* before entering her husband's pyre, life ebbed away from her, and her dead body was burnt together with her husband's.

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An old woman: Why is it that I never think I am going to die? I sometimes think of other people's death but not of my own.

Mataji: Because you are afraid of death you avoid thinking of it. But then again, you cannot believe that you will die, because in reality you are immortal. It is only the body that dies.

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Kishenpur, July 2, 1962

Question : It is said that if one thinks a certain thing is so, then it is so. If one does not think so, then it is not. For example, if I believe *prasada* brings blessings this will be so, but not if I do not believe in it. What then is imagination and what actual truth ?

Mataji : Imagination is one of the activities of the mind. *Prasada* always carries blessing, whether you believe in it or not. Let me tell you a story : A thief got caught in a heavy rain storm. He took shelter in a shrine dedicated to Viṣṇu. The storm did not subside and so he was obliged to spend the night there. In order to have a dry place on which to lie, he carefully swept all the water out of the shrine and thereby cleaned it. After a short time he died. The messenger of death came to take him away, but the messenger of Viṣṇu interfered, claiming his soul, since he had cleaned Lord Viṣṇu's temple, although he had not even looked to see whose shrine he was sweeping.

"Another story : A man was riding on a very slippery road. Finally, the horse stumbled, knocked him down and due to severe injuries he soon died. The messenger of death arrived. But it so happened that his body had fallen on a saligram,¹ and consequently the soul was carried away by the messengers of Visnu.

"These two stories illustrate the efficacy of *prasada*. Whether one believes in it or not, one is blessed by anything that has been consecrated to God. Therefore, I always advise people to offer their food to Him before partaking of it. On one occasion someone replied to this advice. "How can meat, fish and eggs be offered to God ? This is what I eat." This body said : "At least pray to God with the words : 'Lord, look with what sort of food you are sustaining my body.' The person put this suggestion into practice. After some time he came to me and related that he had fallen ill and that the doctor had forbidden him to eat meat, fish and eggs. He had thus been forced to give them up. This shows how beneficial it is to turn to God. He Himself will see that you are purified."

1. A saligram is a piece of stone symbolizing Viṣṇu.

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January 1963

The following is the translation of a letter that was received by one of the Ashramites in reply to what she had written to Mataji. "How enviable their lives are ! Free from the numerous ills, worries and embarrassments that harass the householder. What a wonderful chance is given to them to perfect themselves, to attain to inward beauty, to make themselves fit for the Supreme Quest. By enduring the difficulties that arise when people from different places, of different upbringing and temperament are thrown together, one's power of forbearance grows strong, the capacity for endurance is developed. Do not pay attention to the shortcomings of others, but try to discover their positive qualities, remembering that, it is your way of looking at things (namely of finding fault with people) that causes you pain.

"All these difficulties are due to your own karma. In God's creation the results of one's actions have to be enjoyed and suffered to the minutest detail. Everything is His dispensation. You will have to find Truth ! Always bear in mind that you have to exhaust all kinds of karma and that He is thereby cleansing you to make you fit to be united with Him.

"At all times and for everyone **HE IS**. The nearer you draw to Him, who is the Fountain of Mercy and Compassion, the more will you experience His Presence. Spend your time in *japa*, meditation, the study of Scriptures, and so forth. Be truthful in thought, speech and behaviour. Let others do as they please, as their nature dictates. To the good the world appears good. Be straight and sincere with those with whom you have to work. By your example others will be changed. A human being should be full of generosity and broadmindedness in outlook and conduct.

"The harmony in the home between husband and wife, between parents and children is based on worldly attraction and affection. But

to live in harmony with a large group of people – in this lies real greatness. In whatever circumstances God may place you at any time, cast aside distractions and be ever intent on the kindling of a spiritual atmosphere. The foundation for it is truthfulness in speech and conduct, patience and long-suffering. Depend on God in all matters. That all kinds of things should occur on a pilgrimage is but natural, it is the rule of the world."

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Vrindaban, February 7, 1963

Someone who had recently come from abroad and was thinking of joining the Ashram, asked : "When one stays in the Ashram one meets with many difficulties. Are these of any help in one's *sadhana* ?"

Mataji : You should understand that the way people behave towards you, be it pleasant or unpleasant, is the result of your karma. Man is born into this world to reap the fruit of his actions of previous lives. The joys and sorrows he experiences are all due to his accumulated karma and should be accepted as such. In the worldly as well as in the spiritual life, one should try to meet troubles with equanimity. On every pilgrimage it is but natural that there should be difficulties. They provide the opportunity to develop forbearance, humility, generosity and friendliness towards all. Keep in mind that by treading this path all impediments will gradually vanish.

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Kishenpur, July 23, 1963

A consecrated priest of the Roman Catholic Church from France who has come to India to see for himself what Indian spirituality is like, arrived in Dehradun a couple of days ago in order to meet Mataji. Today he had an interview with Her. He asked : "What does Mataji consider to be the most essential thing in life ?"

Mataji : To try to find out 'who I am' ! To endeavour to know that which has brought into existence the body that I know : The Search after God. But first of all one must conceive the desire to know oneself. When one finds one's Self, one has found God; and finding God one has found one's Self, the one *Atmā*.

Question : Are there many people who succeed in this ?

Mataji : Quite a few attain to some perfection (*siddhi*) or liberation (*mukti*). But complete Realization is very, very rare indeed – one in ten millions.

Question : Does Mataji think that she herself has attained to that complete perfection ?

Mataji : (Laughs.) Whatever you believe me to be, that I am.

The Priest (to the translator) : It means that she does think so, otherwise she would have said 'No !'

(To Mataji) : From what moment did you have that Realization ?

Mataji : When was I not ?

Question : You can no doubt see people from within. Can you tell me whether I have advanced on the Path, or am I just a beginner ?

Mataji : Many ask similar questions, but this body does not usually reply to such questions. However, it does occur on occasions, that this body says to someone : 'You have reached such and such a state.' It depends on this body's *kheyāla* .

Question : Does Mataji know about Christianity and what does she think of it ?

Mataji : If Christianity claims a special position for itself and places itself apart it thereby breaks up all other religions. We recognize Jesus Christ, but within the unity of all religions. He Himself stands above this exclusiveness.

Question : As a Christian, my first duty is the search after God, but also to love my neighbour as myself. There is so much poverty in India. It is my duty to serve the poor. What is Mataji's opinion ?

Mataji : Exactly the same teaching is given by Hinduism. To serve God in every human being is certainly a path to the purification of the mind (*chitta suddhi*).

Question : You say 'a path,' while for us it is the only path. Do other ways to perfection exist ?

Mataji : There are innumerable paths, and service is one of them.

Question : Is technical progress an aid in the spiritual life or a hindrance ?

Mataji : In themselves technical inventions are neither good nor bad. At the present time one flies by aeroplane, in olden times people also flew, but in special chariots (*pushpaka ratha*). This is the ceaseless play of the world. Anything that is of help in one's search is to be adopted, and whatever hinders, to be shunned.

The Priest : Take for instance the invention of printing. Through books people may be helped in their quest.

Mataji : If someone really wants God, and nothing but God, he carries his book in his heart. He needs no printed books. But there is no harm in making use of modern inventions, provided they are helpful in the quest after God.

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