

MA ANANDAMAYEE AMRIT VARTA

A quarterly journal dealing mainly
with the divine life and sayings of
Sri Anandamayi Ma

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MATRI-VANI

Try your utmost never to succumb to anyone's influence. In order to become firm, calm, deeply serious, full of courage, with one's personality wholly intact, pure and holy out of one's own strength, one has to be centered in God.

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Worldly life is no doubt a battle-field. By becoming conscious of one's spiritual wealth one must strive to emerge triumphant from the battle.

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God's Holy Name is itself the rite for exorcising undesirable influences. In the presence of God's Name ghosts and evil spirits cannot remain.

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On the journey through life in this world no body remains happy. The pilgrimage to the Goal of human existence is the only path to Supreme happiness. Try to tread that path which is your very own, where there is no question of pleasure and pain, the path that leads to freedom from egotism and the highest Bliss.

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Yes, if you can observe silence and be in harmony with every one all round, it will be excellent. Try to remain without the help of signs and gestures for as long as possible.

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The self, self-contained, calling to itself for its own revelation—this is happiness.

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Truth itself will assist in every way him who has gone forth in search of Truth.

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Divine Happiness - that which you call *parama sukhadam* is pure, unalloyed bliss, happiness in its own right.

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Having entered the kingdom of forgetting, everything is forgotten; this world is the abode of non-remembrance.

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No evil can ever overcome him who clings to God's name. What one suffers is in exact keeping with the nature of one's actions. If the flow of God's name is sustained, all work will beget the good.

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Where God may place you at any time and under whatever circumstances, recollect that it is all for the best. Endeavour to go through life leaving your burdens in His hands. He is the preserver, He is the guide. He is all in all.



ON THE TEACHING OF SRI ANANDAMAYEE MA

—Vijayananda (Dr. Adolphe Weintrob)

(Translated from the French)

What is Sri Anandamayi Ma's teaching ? This a question one can often hear, for it is put by most newcomers. All who are close to Mataji must of course have been present at some of the meetings in public or in small groups when Mataji with profound wisdom replies to questions on religious and spiritual subjects, often displaying a keen sense of humour. Many of these discussions have been recorded, noted down and published by men far better fitted for the task than myself. It is not this teaching that I want to talk about in the following few lines, but rather another aspect of Mataji's teaching, much simpler and more direct, which, has nothing or very little to do with big philosophical problems. In fact this side of Her teaching might well appear to be commonplace and as such often pass unnoticed : although in my opinion it appeals to a much deeper layer of our being and can therefore be extremely helpful in our spiritual search, if only we will listen to it and open ourselves to the Divine Blessing that pours down on us constantly in Mataji's presence.

To be in Mataji's company almost invariably brings us in touch with people of every psychological type. In western countries the saying that the face is the mirror of the soul is quite proverbial. Actually all our thoughts are reflected in our countenance, the slightest mental vibration produces a contraction of one or several facial muscles. I have watched a great many faces and never, not even for a fraction of a second, have I seen reflected in them the state "beyond desire and fear." Swiftly the thought waves follow one another, just like the billows on an expanse of water agitated by the wind. But in Mataji's face the mouth expresses a state of completeness, of wholeness, in which everything is included. Never can even the slightest trace of fear or irritation be detected in Her eyes. They ever radiate the same love, the same sweetness, regardless of the most trying circumstances. This is real beauty. What a great joy it is to contemplate such a countenance. To watch and lovingly remember it will unconsciously make us try to imitate its expressions and these will in due course lead us to the attitude of mind to which they correspond.

A reader who has never had Mataji's darshan might perhaps imagine that Her features are always set in a static expression of peace and serenity. But this is not

so. An endless variety of emotions pass over. Her face is like ripples which a light breeze produces on the surface of a quiet lake, while the immutable calm of its depths remains ever undisturbed. Mataji plays with feelings, but never Herself becomes their plaything as most of us do. An intelligent observer will soon notice how She mirrors the emotional states of Her surroundings without ever really being affected by them— like a crystal that assumes the colours of the objects entering its field of refraction.

Mataji's conversation about trivial everyday matters is never trivial. For those who know how to listen, it almost always contains some profound teaching. On several occasions, both in public meetings and in small gatherings, I have observed how Mataji suddenly utters a sentence that appears incomprehensible to us and sometimes perhaps even beside the point. I have repeatedly been able to discover afterwards that this sentence was meant for someone in the audience in reply to a query that had been tormenting him, or that it represented the solution of a problem that until then had seemed insoluble to him.

Last summer at Solan after the celebrations of Mataji's birthday, She was one day as usual taking Her evening stroll just outside of the Ashram veranda. At that hour a dog used to come and beg for prasad from Mataji. The entrance of the Ashram veranda is guarded by two wooden tigers, realistically painted, with their jaws wide open, ready to bite. Jokingly Mataji placed the sweets that were meant for the dog into the tiger's mouth. Everyone was highly amused to see the poor dog standing in front of the tiger, torn between the desire to snatch the sweets and the fear of being bitten by the wooden beast. Mataji then made a remark of which I do not recall the exact words. Its meaning was that the fear which keeps man fettered to the world was just as illusory as the dog's fear of the wooden tiger. Apart from the general teaching this statement conveyed, it was meant for a particular person present. Like an infallible arrow it hit the centre of the target and did its work.

It happens frequently that people coming to Mataji with distressing questions, problems or difficulties find a clear and simple solution merely by sitting in Her presence—the solution presenting itself quite naturally, convincingly and with obviousness. For, what a great Sage, a real Guru brings about spontaneously is not only to clarify the mind and to transmit power, but above all to disperse the mists that hide our true Self, our Eternal Being, and to put us in communion with THAT. Once this contact has been established, it is THAT which advises and guides us with unfailing certainty.

Many of those who live near Mataji have probably like myself experienced that when we approach Her with questions concerning our sadhana, She most assuredly

replies with wisdom and kindness, yet often only briefly, in a detached manner, as if it were a matter of secondary importance. When on the other hand we become actors in some little incident of everyday life and display anger or quarrelsomeness etc., She seems to take great interest. She summons those involved in it, inquires carefully into the details and sometimes spends hours over the solution of some apparently petty difficulty.

Spiritual practices such as meditation, japa and so forth are undoubtedly of great importance. Nevertheless, as I have heard Mataji point out on various occasions, their sole purpose is to assist us in removing the veil that conceals Reality from us. That veil is made up of desires, anger, fear etc. and it is in one's daily life that one has the chance to study these obstructions as they arise to bring them into the field of one's consciousness so as to get rid of them.

One day for some insignificant reason, I lost my temper in Mataji's presence. Impetuously I blurted out a few irreverent words, of which I repented immediately afterwards. She replied, as She always does with great gentleness, although it appeared to me tinged with a shade of irony. I felt ashamed. The same evening I asked for a private interview in order to apologize. I was naturally anxious that the whole matter should be forgotten as quickly as possible and that nobody should mention it anymore. But Mataji on the contrary dwelt on it at length, minutely examining the details and questioning the persons involved, which made me the more deeply ashamed.

A competent surgeon does not feel satisfied by merely making an incision when treating an abscess, but cuts a wide opening so as to be able to drain the sore completely, straightening out the folds in the skin and carefully removing any hidden trace of pus. Similarly Mataji does not merely settle a particular difficulty, but penetrates to the root of the evil and deals with it, so that it may be destroyed with all its ramifications and never sprout up again.

Later I came to understand the psychology of what had happened that day. The rage that had been smouldering within me was bound to explode against someone or other. Mataji Herself had deflected it towards Her own person, so as to direct its *karmic* results. This is how, again and again, She arranges things for our good. Many of Her devotees must have had similar experiences. I am told that She says : "If you must be angry, be angry with me, for you will not be able to keep it up for long." And also : "By *moha* (strong attachment) for this body (meaning Herself), all *moha* will be destroyed."

Wrath or affection felt for an ordinary person must inevitably produce a reaction in that person and set in motion a whole series of *karmic* consequences. Whereas if

the object of one's anger or attachment is a perfect Being, the waves of the emotion will find no resistance and therefore exhaust themselves and die away like fire that has nothing to consume anymore..

Anyone who wishes to remain with Mataji for a lengthy period of time, will have to spend a good part of his life at railway stations and in trains, for Mataji rarely stays in one place for long. The agitation of a railway station, the mental fever that usually accompanies the preparations for a journey are difficult to bear. Most people are unconsciously carried away completely by the current of excitement surrounding them. A few will now and again have bright moments in which they may be able to observe their own and other people's reactions, but those who in the midst of such mental whirlpools can stand aside and watch as disinterested spectators are surely exceptional.

As to Mataji Herself, She is ever calm, unperturbed and cheerful, like a rock that no storm can affect.

However, when travelling with Mataji things automatically arrange themselves: the train that one was afraid to miss arrives an hour late, the carriages are packed and it seems impossible to find a place, but somehow, as if by miracle, everything is managed ... one feels exhausted and longs to lie down and sleep—lo and behold, just then a berth becomes vacant. All the same, it is human nature to wish to direct every thing by one's own strength, while it would be so much simpler to let one self be guided by the invisible Hands of the Divine.

Yet sometimes, Mataji calls us to order. Once for example, we were waiting for a train that would in all probability be overcrowded. We were to reach our destination only the next day, which meant passing the whole night in discomfort. I had purchased an Inter class ticket and was, as it were lying in wait for the train, ready to jump into the first compartment and occupy a berth if possible—an attitude of mind no doubt quite unworthy of a *sadhaka* and even more so of one who had been travelling with Mataji for some time. At the very moment the train came into the station, Mataji passed in front of me and pointing to a large heap of luggage, requested me with a peculiar smile to see it safely into the train. Patiently I stood and waited until the last of the numerous baggages had been stored away in the compartment, imagining in advance the sleepless night I would have to pass amidst the dense crowd. In the meanwhile everyone had boarded the train and I thought I might deem myself fortunate if I could secure even sitting accommodation of some sort. But exactly where I was standing and guarding the luggage there happened to be an Inter class carriage. Someone whom I hardly knew had reserved an upper berth for me and helped me to get in with my bags.

These few lines will give the reader but a vague and limited idea of that which I call Mataji's direct teaching. It is in Her presence that one day after day has to experience for oneself Her Divine radiation. All one has to do is to see with one's eyes, to hear with one's ears, to understand with one's heart.

DEVOTION

—Shivananda

Be with Ma—the world will be thine.
Thou will be human, Thy nature divine.
As thy feet, hands, ears and eyes
Are parts of thy closer ties,
So also bird, flower and tree
Will appear none but part of thee !
Life could never have been without
Ma. Why Her existence doubt ?
Life is Ma and Ma is God.
Everything, everywhere is Her abode.
From base to highest bliss above
Are but manifestation of Her love.

FROM THE DIARY OF A EUROPEAN

—Melita Maschmann

(TRANSLATED FROM GERMAN)

Varanasi, October, 1963.

The Ganga has a fascination that is indescribable. As far back as I can think, all rivers on the banks of which I have stood have been a disappointment : the Rhine, the Oder, the Danube, the Weichsel, the Rhone, the Moskwa, the Nile.....I always knew that this here existed this river, although I had no idea in which country I would find it. If I were a Hindu, I should be convinced that I had lived here in a former life.

The Ganga has the power of an ocean. Early morning, when the opposite bank is veiled by mist, the Ganga lies spread out like a slumbering sea : reposing infinity. Later the distant banks emerge. One perceives a broad, white beach, and beyond it a green rampart limiting the horizon. Towards midday the surface of the water becomes lively : innumerable silvery flashing whirlpools move hastily towards the city. Broad boats with dark square sails drift on the current.

At dusk the opposite bank takes on a rosy hue and recedes ever further into the distance. The water in midstream is deep blue, its colour growing lighter and lighter over on the other side. Near the Ashram the shadows are increasing and colouring the water inky. Before night-fall there is sometimes a brief span of indescribable enchantment : water, banks and sky melting without transition into one luminous purple. Never before have I seen such a mysteriously scintillating light : The air resembles violet-coloured silk, and a shade darker than the silky-violet streaming of the Ganga; here and there a gliding shadow, boats that are seeking the harbour. Gradually the glow fades away and all waxes dark grey before river and sky wrap themselves in nocturnal blackness. The moment in which the last gleam of daylight decays into blackish grey ash, is oppressive like the nearness of death. But already have the stars appeared, pale and tiny. A few minutes later they fill the night with their powerful glitter.

The days have now a fixed programme. In the mornings we meet on the foundation of the hall-to-be. It is laid out with carpets and roofed by a canvas. On

one side, near the temple that is being built, Mataji's couch is placed and next it another couch as the seat of the speaker. The women sit in the right half of the hall, the men to the left.

The morning function starts at 10 a. m. with Kirtan, followed by the collective recitation of portions from the *Gita*, *Chandi* and the *Upaniṣads*. Then silence for ten minutes. Thereupon Swami Bhagavatananda Giri holds a lecture on the *Srimad Bhāgavata*. He is one of the permanent inhabitants of the Ashram. A broad, elderly man with a friendly, bearded face and intelligent eyes. Somewhere he has picked up a few words of German, and he speaks English. Of his lectures I understand only very little, but from what he says in English I gather that he is well-educated and versatile in his interests.

In the evenings we again meet on the platform—about 500 people crowd here together—and Tripurari Babu speaks on the *Mahābhārata*. He is in excellent form, this much I can see, although I do not understand Bengali. Again and again he succeeds in forcing his audience to breathless attention and often the tension relaxes into laughter. The secret of his success as a speaker lies in the fact that he identifies himself. He lives in the Epic which he interprets. Effortlessly he quotes long passages and sometimes he is moved to tears. Usually his talk ends with a homage to Mataji. Then he makes obeisance to her and she decorates him with a garland.

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The conception '*kheyāla*' seems to be one of Mataji's key-words. In its current meaning it signifies a sudden and unexpected psychic emergence, be it desire, an instantaneously arising opinion, memory, or the like. Mataji has invested it with a different meaning. Since in her case there is no ego to account for a sudden impulse of this kind, the word *kheyāla*, when she uses it, denotes a spontaneous upsurge of the Divine in herself. It is free and unconditioned, a divine voice that speaks through her and directs her steps.

Mataji has no ego-will. This is why she never binds herself to plans or engagements. She knows that she has to be available at every instant for the promptings of her *kheyāla* : and it does interfere with an apparently ruthless spontaneity. Therefore Mataji's movements can only rarely be calculated in advance.

In the course of conversation someone said to her : "Ma, I want to ask you a question. Please reply so that I shall be able to understand !"

Mataji : "It all depends on my *kheyāla*."

When questions are put to her, it is not her intellect that answers. She does not reflect. She allows the *kheyāla* to reply from within herself, she serves it as a mouthpiece, as it were. Last year I was present when she turned silent in the midst of a discussion and finally remarked : "There is no *kheyāla* to reply to this question." She then does not answer of her own accord.

In this attitude her total submission to God's Will is expressed. Only because she has given herself up completely, Divine Truth is voiced by her. This is an interpretation of *kheyāla* that one of Mataji's girls gave me the other day. She then added : "It may well be that we ordinary mortals are occasionally used as mouthpieces of Truth. But Mataji is always one with the Truth of God or the *Brahman*; this is what distinguished her from the rest of us. Even when she does not reply to a question, her silence is an expression of the Will of the Eternal Truth."

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In the afternoons Mataji nowadays often sits between the two Ashram temples and gives darśana. In the twinkling of an eye the veranda fills up around her. It is one of my favourite places. One has an extensive view over the Ganga, both upstream and downstream. The course of the river is bent so that one can also survey our bank and a large part of the city. At night one sees the fires by which the dead are cremated.

The veranda is like a large room. As soon as Mataji sits down among us, a personal contact is established. To begin with, severe crowding ensues, as all want to do *praṇāma* and many offer flowers. A blind old woman clad in the ochre robe is often led to her. She looks frail and sickly. The blind woman touches Mataji. Sometimes she utters something that sounds imploring. Mataji bears the touch of the groping hands with complete stillness and with an expression that suddenly reminds me of a blood transfusion. Years ago I once watched a man who had his blood tapped in order to donate it to a child who had met with an accident. This feeling : take off my life-force ! Here the spiritual-there the biological.

When the old woman let her hands sink today, she raised her head and her unseeing eyes were fixed on Mataji's face. Mataji stood close by her. She looked composed and serious. A long, quiet glance sank into the blind eyes.

Did it pierce through the night ? There was suddenly great clarity on the old woman's face. Then she hid it in her hands. Mataji quickly turned away. When the blind woman was led downstairs she wept.

Another woman with a shaven head in *sannyāsi* dress, who also seems advanced in years, frequently sits at Mataji's feet on the veranda. She has a fine,

fair-skinned face. One cannot help thinking that she most likely derives from a distinguished old family. In Mataji's presence her countenance becomes ecstatic. She seems a typical *bhakta* : she has obviously chosen the path of the love of God to attain to Enlightenment.

Last night I could not sleep. Just to kill time I walked to the Ashram after midnight. I was in no hurry. At about 1 a. m. I got there. It was still lively as if it were plain day. I counted nine people who were waiting to have a private interview with Mataji. Every morning when I arrive at the Ashram I am told that Mataji has retired for rest only in the small hours and usually rises again at about 5 a. m. to scan the preparations for the Durga Puja which is being celebrated at present. Throughout the day she has not a minute's rest. Between two engagements I sometimes see her eat or drink something standing. Although for about twenty hours daily she attends rituals, lectures, gives *darśana*, replies to questions, grants private interviews, dictates letters, and so forth, she never seems in a hurry and only rarely looks tired. Ever the same calm, cheerfulness, kindness, alertness and mostly a sparkling spiritual intensity. At that she is now 68 years old and, I am told, not too well physically. What her body achieves under these circumstances is well nigh miraculous. But of course, it is not a bodily but a spiritual achievement. One is reminded of the reports about some Christian saints.

Today an English tourist who had seen Mataji only for ten minutes during *darśana* time, said to me: "I do not understand anything about holiness, but the beauty of Sri Anandamayi Ma is bewildering." Similar statements I have heard several times from Indians. Again and again I ask myself : What is the secret of this beauty that makes an equally powerful impression on men and women, young and old ? Transfigured, sometimes crying, I see them sit before her and their faces express what I feel on occasions when music is divinely beautiful : a bliss that is not my birthright, that I am permitted to sense only rarely for the length of a few heart beats—in order to miss it for the rest of my life.

A woman, aged nearly 70, dressed in the plainest white cotton dhoties, with hair that according to western standards never looks combed. And yet : bewildering beauty ! And that in the most diverse situations, not only in moments of spiritual transparency. I should say : always ! The secret of it is impenetrable, but one might perhaps circumscribe it : for instance Mataji's freedom from any kind of self-observation. She does not either seek herself in the mirror of admiring eyes. Long ago and for all times she has let herself go. Whether—watched by thousands of

eyes—she stands, walks, sits or lies, there is invariably absolute freedom and artlessness in her movements. One has the feeling that she never has to conquer any resistance in herself, be it of bodily or psychic origin, never to restrain any impulse.

When walking there is something royal in her attitude. One senses this distinctly from the manner in which she responds to someone falling at her feet in obeisance. With folded hands she then bows slightly. Usually in silence, occasionally repeating softly God's name : "*Narayan, Narayan !*" This resembles the greeting of the dervishes. "Be greeted, king of kings !" they call to each other who possess nothing but a begging bowl and whose empire is the whole universe.

However paradox it may sound, this majesty in her gesture of thanking has an admixture of girlishness. Or should I say : childlikeness ? At any rate, there is also something delicate, almost shy, unadorned, reverent in it.

Everything has a share in this beauty or calls it out : her unrestrained laughter in which sometimes her whole body participates, the vivacity with which she relates. The play of her features that seems to transform her inexhaustibly—expressing all ages, every temperament, every mood, in every situation. Sometimes this almost frightens me. Suddenly I discover on her face the exact reflex of what I have just been thinking or feeling, although I was occupied with things that lie entirely outside of her world.

Or the expression of detachment and composure when she enters meditation. Or her way of talking to children : the simplicity, directness, unaffectedness. Or the charm and the friendly mockery with which she reacts to challenges in the discussion. The motherly seriousness when she reprimands, the confidence when she comforts, her attention when she listens. The pleasure with which she enjoys fun.

All these situations have something in common : they show Mataji in spontaneous response and ever full of spirit. Besides they disclose the central impulse that pervades all her relationship to human beings : kindness.

Spontaneity, liveliness, kind heartedness—do they make a person beautiful in the sense in which Mataji is beautiful? Do they impart to this beauty the power to transform hearts.? They certainly do. Of course only when they are rooted in the very centre of Being where reigns absolute peace. The Self reposing in Itself establishes undisturbable balance, a harmony expressing as beauty when translated into the physical, although beauty is not of the body. This harmony operates even in the most insignificant gestures : the expression of a hand during sleep; the position of a foot; the sound of laughter, the bearing of the head while drinking. There is no gap whatsoever. The peace originating in the centre of Being radiates

right to the periphery of the hairtips. Mataji's beauty is but her sanctity, her perfect reposing in God.

The elegy of the remoteness of God that has for years been sung with such fervour in the west ! Its pathos is gradually getting on my nerves. Perhaps because I myself have sung it so perseveringly ? Even the sermons and prayers of priests are full of this pathos. It has almost become the only testimony for 'true religiousness.' Does anyone still dare to say : what do you want, He is right here among us, in every selfless action, in every loving word ! The reaction would be an outcry of scorn by those who enjoy their depravity.

Two years ago : the young woman on the staircase who showed me the mark of a child's wet foot. Her face shone as if the archangel Gabriel had appeared to her. Afterwards someone told me that she was the victim of some religious delusion. Perhaps the immanence of God was still real to her ? This would—for the desperate apostles of the remoteness of God, not only for the so-called agnostics—be a reason to declare her as insane.

Mataji just said to an Indian infected with the disease of westernization (a student from Paris): "Do not be so voluble ! You are now in a state in which God is present in the guise of absence. Contemplate the One present even in the guise of absence !"

She herself ever dwells in the fulness of Divine Presence and has surely not the slightest inkling of western philosophy, but one should think that she has read the Christian Existence Philosophers.

Especially impressive I find her during the periods of meditation which are a regular part of the evening programme and occasionally also inserted into the morning function. While the sādhus, both men and women, sit in rather stiff looking yogic postures, Mataji's body is wholly relaxed. Sometimes she sits straight, or else on one side or reclines against a cushion. At other times she changes her attitude. There is a calm flow in her movements, like the broad streaming of the Ganga. Not like the small agitated whirlpools that the wind occasionally excited on the surface of the water. Her eyes are usually shut. I can at times make out that the eyelids of the people sitting around me (I feel this also of myself) are merely let down in the manner of shutters. Our attention remains essentially outward turned, only the flowing in of pictures is interrupted. Mataji's face betrays that her gaze has turned behind her closed eyelids. It is directed towards the centre of her being. Everything in her draws together in that centre, enters into it. Sometimes a momentary effulgence is mirrored from there right in the periphery of her relaxed features. Occasionally her eyelids are slightly raised, Her

look then partly returns. I always have the feeling as if it came from above (in the concrete sense of space), as if her eyeballs had first turned that way, but her look does not fill with consciousness. A smile plays round her eyes and mouth. Is it a reflection of blissful vision ? Today it overwhelmed me : There have been years when Mataji lived almost uninterruptedly in a state of spiritual ecstasy. She has tasted God with every cell of her being—also the physical being. How can she bear the stale taste which our constant relentless proximity must inflict on her ? The other day an Indian Christian said to her : "You yourself are a proof to me of the correctness of the Christian doctrine, "God is Love'. It is only because you are so wholly permeated by God that you are so loving. Or, put differently : only because you are so brim-ful of love do you flow over with God."

Towards the end of the meditation her eyes open and then slowly consciousness returns into her glance. It wanders calmly round the semicircle, radiating peace and kindness.

*"Try to grasp the significance of "all is His'
and you will immediately feel free from all
burdens."*

—Ma Anandamayee

NEW DIARY LEAVES

—Atmananda

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 to it.

The letter : "Will you hear my desperate appeal ? For the last 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 everythng. He, whom you think you have sought in vain for so many years, is not apart from you. Just as 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 *ātmā*. Not until his true Self has been revealed to him may a seeker ever relax his search. By seeking one will find, the Self is 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 God one will be led to suicide ? By the search of Him, whose contemplation, whose Name conquers 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 sin so to do. For one who has sought God for 35 years it is not right to contemplate suicide or madness. His mind should not contemplate suicide or madness. His mind should much rather be absorbed in theremembrance 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 dhyana* (meditation) to control his mind and thereby become firm, calm and unwavering in his determination."

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 *sādhana* and abstain from what hinders it.

Question : But meat is *tāmasic* !

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 *sāstras*.

Mataji : This body does not comment on what the *sāstras* 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.

Vindhyachal, 19th February, 1960.

A young European 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 (*paramārtha jīvan*) 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 parents' 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 of

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 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 !

Kishenpur, 23rd April, 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 eye-sight 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 so to do, 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 *sādhana* 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 now been brought to light through his spiritual endeavours ? To say : 'I have performed so much *sādhana*, 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.

Kishenpur, 22nd July, 1960

In the course of the conversation Mataji said : "It is well to keep in mind that whatever one enjoys of worldly happiness, be it good 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 him 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 *mahatma*. The *mahatma* agreed to come to his house and see what could be done. On arriving there he looked around and then said : Give me a seat near 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. "Simiarly", 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."



"There are two kinds of pilgrims on life's journey : the one, like a tourist is keen on sightseeing, wandering from place to place, flitting from one experience to another for the fun of it. The other treads the path that is consistent with man's true being and leads to his real home, to Self-knowledge."

—Ma Anandamayee

MY DAYS WITH SRI ANANDAMAYI MA

[Nine]

—Bithika Mukerji

The decades of the Forties as well as the Fifties saw Sri Ma very often in our part of the country. She visited Varanasi repeatedly and frequently stayed in Vindhyachal. We, in Allahabad, saw her whenever she was passing though or whenever she came to Jhunsi to stay at the Ashram of Prabhudattaji Maharaj and also at Satya Gopal Ashram in Allengunj.

In July 1943, I joined the University for graduation; Bindu was in College and Babu in School. My sister Renudi joined the Art School of Mr. Sanghal where her talent for water-colour painting was developed to a great extent and received some recognition in Art Exhibitions of the town.

The memory of my University days are shadowy compared to the memory of our life with Sri Ma. I did take part in such activities as were required of me, like debates, and writing in journals or exacting in plays for the annual functions, even in sports, which definitely was my weak point.

I and five other girls had more or less been together since our school days. We were a close-knit group, but I do not recall that we talked about Sri Ma at any time. My friends knew about my allegiance, but they, although respectful and understanding, did not share in my sentiments regarding Sri Ma. I remember one interesting incident which took place at this time _ We had gone to the Railway Station to receive Sri Ma on one of her visits to Allahabad. Here I met a class-mate (not one of the group) Ms Shivani Banerjee who had come to see some one off by the same train. While we were waiting for the train, she expressed her doubts to me about paying such exaggerated respects to a person who after all was a human being. She was very sceptical about our devotion to Sri Ma. The train came. Sri Ma alighted on to the platform. I was amused to see Shivani bowing very low to do a *pranam*, when Sri Ma passed us on her way toward the exit. I asked Shivani as to why she had bowed in *praṇām* to another human being ? Shivani said, " Well, it was involuntary - She truly has a majestic presence !"

So for us the real everyday world of college activities, social engagements, household routines etc. became insubstantial and unimportant., We counted hours and days to our next visit to Sri Ma or her advent in our midst. Other families who

were close to Sri Ma, became as if kith and kin, whereas people who had claims of blood-relationships, due to lack of reciprocity, gradually became strangers.

My mother's deep one-pointed allegiance to Sri Ma was like a benign aura of approval and sustenance. My father would at times express his misgivings regarding the breaking of too many conventions. Nobody went to live in Ashrams in those days. To be running after "a Mataji," was behaviour bordering on the outrageous. The orthodox ways of worship included visits to temples, the celebration of religious festivals, and the occasional observance of rules and ceremonies at home, presided over by the family-priest. But my father was himself truly devoted. He did not visit the Ashram too often, but would listen to the accounts of our visits with keen interest. His deep commitment and surrender at the feet of Sri Ma was proven up to the hilt as time went by. He was undemonstrative, but it could be seen that Sri Ma could call upon him for any service without any hesitation, just as she could ask her long-time devotees from Dhaka.

We came to know Prabhudattaji Maharaj quite well. He was very agreeable company for young people. His exuberant outgoing nature could galvanise the most stolid group of people; he had a way of landing heavy thumps on the backs of unwary young men, so everyone learnt to be very agile whenever he came by. Once he playfully landed a fist on my back between the shoulders. I think he did not know his own strength. I nearly fell to my knees. I was standing near Sri Ma's *chowki*. I held on to it and quietly crept away to the back of it kneeling behind Sri Ma, who was talking to Brahmachariji. I suddenly found Sri Ma's hand on my head. She had put back her arm inside her *chaddar* to touch me, so that nobody else noticed anything amiss. It stopped my trembling and sense of shock. Some people will remember that I used to be a very thin girl at this time. Only Sri Ma had noticed my predicament and unobtrusively taken care of it.

Before coming into contact with Brahmachariji Maharaj we, as a family, knew very little about the sadhus of our country. As a matter of fact due to our westernised education we had acquired some modern values. We had been taught that to turn away from the world was a form of escapism and cowardice. Religious beliefs should not be accepted dogmatically, but tested on the touchstone of reason. At this time, however, there was no consciousness of conflict in our joyous participation in all that happened near Sri Ma. If Sri Ma graciously accepted the hospitality of Sadhus, like Brahmachariji at Jhunsi or Udiya Babaji and Haribabaji at Vrindaban, then we were only too happy to trail behind her and also to sit quietly for many hours in *satsangs* listening to discourses. Sadhus no longer remained an unknown category but became an integral part of our growing up process, because

Sri Ma was increasingly involved with them., We were too young at the time to understand or appreciate all the implications of the events as they happened. I was myself forcibly awakened to this aspect of Sri Ma's *lila* once in Vrindaban. We were staying in Udiya babaji's ashram where Sri Ma was an honoured guest. One day, while we were preparing to accompany her to the satsang hall, she remarked to me in a rather amused voice, "Now they give this body such V.I.P.. treatment. This body has passed through the lanes of Vrindaban so many times; then nobody (the sadhus) took the slightest notice!"

I was not too articulate in her presence, otherwise, I could have responded by saying, "Unless you reveal yourself, who can recognize you ? Previously, perhaps, you came to see how it was in Vrindaban, now it is time for the sadhana of the Sadhus to bear fruit." It is not that I was even consciously thinking such thought. I merely understood her to say that the sadhus had overcome their negative attitude toward a 'woman' and had ceased to see her as a female. For Haribabaji Maharaj Sri Ma was the personification of his *Iṣṭa-devatā* , that is Gauranga Mahaprabhu. We were told that, he had seen her as such, when he was given a few of the photographs of Sri Ma taken in Dhaka while she was in a state of *samadhi* . Udiya Babaji admired her endorsement of unsullied asceticism. He knew her to be a *sthitaprajñā*.

In retrospect, I realize that these were crucial times for our country in more ways than one. The world war (1939-1945) brought about radical changes not only in Europe but in India as well. Much before the partition of India in 1947 Sri Ma had indicated that all those who were able, should leave East Bengal and come away. Many families followed her suggestion and came to Varanasi to make new beginnings. We came to know the families of Amulya Kumar Datta Gupta and Man Mohan Ghosh quite well. We were by this time quite conversant with the dialects of East Bengal and made friends easily with the girls of these families. They were unused to the heat and the narrow lanes of Varanasi. Sri Ma's visits to the sadhus were also unfamiliar environment for them. Amulya Kumar wrote in his journal, "It is so painful to sit through a satsang. We do not understand Hindi, moreover, Haribabaji's voice is so soft as to be quite inaudible, but because of Sri Ma's presence every ordeal is bearable. She gives her full attention to whatever is going on; no doubt the whole thing is an exercise in fortitude for us."

So the satsang, became increasingly a part of ashram life. I think not enough thought has been given to the coming together of the Mahatmas under Sri Ma's aegis, at this time. Also, in retrospect. I realize that Sri Ma, by commanding so naturally and so endearingly the allegiance of the ascetic orders, diverse and distinct

in themselves, created a composite platform for the guidance of our country. The sadhus are the guardians and repositories of our heritage, but were not close to the people and neither did they speak in a harmonious voice. Doctrinal differences had kept them apart in their own well defined grooves for centuries. We have no central institution of religion which has authority to direct the spiritual aspiration of congregations. The individual is free to believe to whatever degree it may suit him, or not to believe at all. He remains a Hindu by virtue of being born to Hindu parents. Hinduism is an undemanding religion in the sense that if one has no aptitude for the religious way of life, one need not suffer any tension or anxiety regarding his destiny, He will not attain salvation, but return again and again to the theatre of action, that is , the world. According to many people of the modern era, not at all a bad prospect !

The seething cauldron of changing values political, social, intellectual and religious of these decades, needed the steadying influence of an omniscient presence; our country was lucky to find itself being guided toward the future by a renewal of faith in its own ancient wisdom. I think later generation will appreciate the role Sri Ma played at this time in shoring up the Upanishadic tradition of our country, It was no doubt a turning point in the history of our nation but we living through it did not think of it as such. We were having a marvellous time as if we were on a perpetual picnic. I do not recall that we, that is , my brothers or sister, or the other contemporaries we met in the ashram, such as my friend Gini (Sujata Sen) Manidi (Snehlata Chowdhury) and her sister Didu (Chhabi Chowdhury) and later my cousins, Tara and Buba from Delhi and Sati, Gauri, Agamoni, Rama in Varanasi, any of us had any religious aspirations or that we had any ideas about leading a life of devotion away from the world. To be able to see Sri Ma, occasionally to talk with her was fulfillment itself. For hours we would stand around holding up the walls of the ashram waiting for Sri Ma to come out of her room. We came to be known as the wall-propping-up party in Varanasi. We would cluster round her as she sat in the satsang, to the disgust no doubt of such new comers who were not bold enough to make their way to Sri Ma through this barrier. I personally, was always at the back of my friends, because I was content to see Sri Ma from a distance.

Jhunsi

I have written elsewhere that the sadhu sammelan at Jhunsi was a watershed event in the way of Sri Ma's way of being in the world. Here the sadhus gave full recognition to Sri Ma as the very personification of the Upanishadic wisdom, that is, *brahmavidya*.

We were among the privileged few who saw this phenomenon take place in the satsang hall at Jhunsi. In those days Sri Ma used to sit in front of the group of women to one side of the hall. The ochre-robed sadhus occupied the slightly raised *asanas* at the back of the hall, so that the congregation faced them directly. One day there was some discussion about a festival of *nama-sāmkirtana*. Prabhudattaji opined that it was the duty of sadhus to keep in close touch with the people during those difficult times. The political leaders had been put behind bars to curb the Civil Disobedience Movement, so the sadhus should come forward to give encouragement and to keep alight the torch of hope for the masses. Everyone agreed with him. He then asked Sri Ma to choose a place where this big celebration involving thousands of people may take place., Sri Ma broke out in an *aṭṭahāsa*. We had heard this 'laughter' once before in Bareilly. It is not possible to find adequate words to describe this peal of ringing laughter. It sounded like 'hah-hah-hah' in a very high tone of voice, a petrifying experience like listening to a sudden clap of unexpected thunder. Sri Ma's whole body radiated this sound, her whole aspect was glowing and resplendant. She was not one of us any more or not anyone we could even begin to understand. In general, when anybody laughs others begin to smile, even if they do not understand the original cause of amusement. This was nothing like that. There was no question of hilarity or a sympathetic sharing of amusement. Nobody dared to smile, while the echoes of this resonant sound eddied away to all quarters. When later in life I read in the *Durgā Śapta Śati* about the divine *aṭṭahāsa* of the Devi, I immediately understood what it would have sounded like.

In the hall, there was utter silence. No one spoke or even moved for a while. The blind sadhu Shri Sharananandaji, a man of great intellectual ability and much revered by all the other mahatmas, broke the silence by saying that he now understood somewhat Sri Ma's *svarupa* of *ānanda*. He had not 'seen' Sri Ma, but now heard the *aṭṭahāsa* as the audible *svarupa* of Bliss. May be she had laughed for him to 'know' her. Who can say ?

Sri Ma now quietly answered their question by saying that whichever place met with the approval of all of them, should be considered her choice. Jhunsi itself was chosen as the venue for this large scale function which Sri Ma attended in due course.

After this sammelan in Jhunsi, Sri Ma was as if swept into the world of ochre-robed ascetics. The laity at first was rather impatient of Sri Ma's pre-occupation with the mahatmas. The young girls surrounding Sri Ma at all times, especially had cause for resentment because they had to keep their distance while the sadhus were

in satsang with her. Life became extremely difficult when Sri Krishnananda Avadhutji became an ardent devotee of Sri Ma. He was a great renunciate of exemplary reputation, but he seemed positively to dislike the sight of the girls forever surrounding Sri Ma. So whenever he came to see Sri Ma, she made it clear that we were to leave the room and wait outside.

One rather amusing incident happened because of this situation. We were in Puri at this time. It was during one vacation, because a lot of us were there. Avadhutji was seen to be coming from the open window in Sri Ma's room. We hastily removed ourselves to the next room, or on the open verandah outside Sri Ma's room. Only young men like Abhayda, Bibhuda and Bindu remained. When Swamiji was seated in Sri Ma's room, she asked Bindu to sing a bhajan because the sadhuji was very fond of devotional music. Bindu began with the well known song "*man ko rangā jogi sâche rang me*" (O ascetic, soak your garments in true colours of dispassion)

While Bindu sang in his melodious voice, we watched Sri Ma fidgeting on her chowki. She would glance at us and then quickly avert her eyes and stare out at the ocean. Avadhutji sat still and seemed to like the song. He then did his *pranāma* to Sri Ma and went away. With a sign of relief we trooped in to see Sri Ma almost helpless with laughter. She was half-scolding Bindu for his choice of song. She was saying to him, while wiping tears of laughter from her cheeks, " Bindu, Bindu, how could you ! To sit under the nose of the sadhu and sing this song ! I don't know how I kept my countenance. It is good that the girls were not here, otherwise if they had even given a whisper of a smile, I certainly would have lost control. You will see the sadhu will not come again !." Poor Bindu, scratched his head and said he had not chosen the song with anything in his mind which of course Sri Ma knew already. Needless to say the revered Swamiji had not taken it personally either.

How endearing was Sri Ma's behaviour with her retinue of young people, also how circumspect with the ascetics and all this done so gently and with all so joyously. Joyousness was the keynote of our experience of the days we spent with Sri Ma.

Sri Ma and Bunidi

Once Didu (Chhabi Chowdhuri), Bunidi and I were with Sri Ma on her visit to Bishnupur etc. We were told that it was Sri Ma's kheyala to proceed further, without her entourage, accompanied by Swamiji (Paramanandaji) and Didi only. The three of us were told to go back to Calcutta and await her return. Didu and I

were not given to protests and we sadly began to pack our things. Bunidi was not reconciled to this parting at all. she cried and cried and made everybody miserable. At Kharagpur Junction, we boarded our train, while Sri Ma and her one or two companions stood on the platform to see us off. Didu and I looked out of the window, but Bunidi was slumped in a corner still wiping her tears. As the train started, Sri Ma took a corner of her *chaddar* in her hand and started waving it in the manner of a handkerchief.

She then proceeded to move along with the train almost running, just as we always did when she was travelling and we were left on the platform. I cried out, "Bunidi , Bunidi, look at Ma!" Bunidi, then sprang to the window and leant out (there were no bars to the windows in those days) and laughed to see Sri Ma waving farewell to us while running with the train. So Sri Ma saw Bunidi's laughing face before we left. Bunidi sat back saying, "She did it just to make me laugh, but I am very angry all the same." But her mood had changed.

"An eternal relationship exists between God and man. But in His Play It is sometimes there and sometimes severed, or rather appears to be severed; it is not really so, for the relationship is eternal.

—Ma Anandamayee

MY FIRST DARSHAN OF MA

—Chitra Ghosh

It was fifteenth day of April, 1952 a very hot humid and sultry day of 2nd Baisakh (first month of Bengali calender) when I first met the Blissful and joy permeated Ma Anandamayee in Calcutta, my home town.

I had finished my final M.Sc. in 1951 from Calcutta University and was getting set for my Ph.D. work on Botany abroad. At those times very few girl students went abroad for higher studies, but I had an unique offer from the Deptt. of Genetics, Carnegie Institute of Washington, which was situated in Cold Spring Harbor Long Island. When I visited Ma in April already my plans for departure to U.S.A. had been finalised and I was supposed to join the Department Faculty on 4th September, 1952.

Mother had the *kheyal* to stay in the Homeopathic Dispensary of Dr. Gopal Dasgupta, the son of Ma's well-known devotee Ganga Charan Dasgupta. I got the news of Ma's arrival date from Gopalda's brother-in-law. During my University study days I often heard about certain Ma Anandamayee who occasionally stayed in Birla Shiva temple near our Ballygunje Circular Road University campus. But in those times this news fell on "deaf ears" and I had no inner urge or curiosity to visit Ma. Now the time was ripe and I had a strange inward push and that lead me to Gopalda's premises on 2nd Baisakh.

I went there with my mother. There were crowds of devotees scattered all over the small garden of the house. Even the foot paths were full of people. All around us there were unknown faces. I felt slightly nervous. Will we be fortunate enough to see Her- the "Mother of Dhaka ? Gopalda was guarding the door of her room. Suddenly the door opened. There was Ma Anandamayee standing near the door clad in immaculate white apparel, a dhoti and chaddar- white coloured was her dress and white band wooden slippers on her feet. I was awestruck. I looked at her demeanor and muttered or rather whispered within myself, "She is not of this world" !!

She walked towards her arranged seat under the bael tree of the garden. Gopalda put carefully a 108 pink lotus garland on her. Suddenly She stooped down bringing her long black tresses of soft glossy hair on her knee and she quickly made a huge bun (knot) on her head. To me now she looked like Devi Durga !

From a distance that is near the entrance gate a stout figure with cropped white tussel of dishevelled hair approached the scattered devotees. At first I could not make out whether this was a female or male figure ! She looked stern and ordered us to form a queue if we wish to do pranam to Ma. Later, someone told me she was Didi Gurupriya - Ma's constant faithful sevika.

When I approached Ma's seat I knelt down and offered my pranam. Pushpa and Ganga were sitting near Ma's seat. At that time I didn't know them by names. As I raised my head Ma blessed my head by putting her right palm on it. Now She asked my name. I answered the first name only, not my surname. Again She asked, Your father's name ? As I was getting up to leave, she stopped me and asked me again, "Do you perform any ritual daily puja ?" I answered, Yes, Ma, I worship Devi Saraswati (Goddess of Learning) so that with Her blessing I can pursue my academic career successfully . At this moment I saw Didi was trying to make her way through the crowds & spectators by jostling her elbows & reached Ma's seat. She shouted at me -How dare you stop the line of devotees waiting & perspiring, talking with Ma like this ! Ma smiled at me and mockingly scolded Didi saying, "She is not talking. This body has kheyal to talk to her. Didi go back and don't disturb." Didi was meek as a lamb now and who would say that she was roaring as a lion before ! Again Ma resumed her talk asking me how many brothers and sisters I have ? I answered. one elder brother and a younger sister. Now I had the foolish desire to tell her about my plans to go abroad by the end of this year. Peals of laughter rang through the air..... I have never heard before such spontaneous outburst of laughter. Ma laughed & laughed and laughed & I was stunned, rather spell bound. Then she said aloud - "You won't go this year. You can't go this year. You will have to meet me a few more times before you proceed to a foreign land." I protested stubbornly-But how can you stop my departure, Ma. I have received the final letter from the foreign university and my departure date is also fixed for 28th August, 1952 by Pan American Airways. Ma nodded her head and said smilingly anew, "You can't go this year."

I walked in a pensive mood towards the gate. I felt that my brilliant academic career will be doomed now and then a ray of hope flickered in my mind that Ma's words may not be fulfilled. I came home and there was a foreign folder in our Post Box & it came from Dr. B. P. Kaufmann, the famous U. S. Cytogeneticist, under whom I was going to pursue my Ph.D thesis work. He wrote in his letter that the Indian student who was working with him could not finish his final papers so my associateship grant will be delayed by one year. Thus Ma's verdict was fulfilled and I had the blessings of Ma a few more times on her visits to Calcutta from April, 1952—August 1953. JAI Ma.

●

ON SRI SRI MA

—Amulya Kumar Dutta Gupta

Dhaka, August 29, 1939.

I had received the news that Ma would be passing through Dhaka on Her way to Kheora* . There were a number of devotees awaiting Ma's arrival and I recalled Dr. Pant's prophetic words, " Even if Ma happened to be in the middle of an arid desert, the crowds would gather, such was the irresistible attraction of Sree Ma's presence".

The ladies had brought their loving offerings of green cocoanuts, dried mango slices, sweets and were distributing them to the devotees.

As Ma sat down on the Railway platform itself under a Krishnachura tree, the devotees gathered around, completely oblivious of their surroundings.

The small girls usually so shy, started singing bhajans for Ma alone.

Amongst the gathering were also elderly devotees. Ma disappoints no one.

For them particularly Ma said, "The path is long and deep the time available is brief, all lethargy must be shunned. As you receive a pension after years of service so too in God's realm, work for the everlasting pension, where there is no death and no rebirth."

Man Mohan Babu : We are aware of the worldly pension, but how are we to attain to the eternal pension.

Ma : By following the directions of your Guru.

An elderly man : I wanted to stay with you but you did not allow me.

Ma : By merely allowing you to stay would you have been able to stay ? At that time worries over your son, daughter, and children kept crowing into your mind.

All laugh :

Ma : For you it is best to stay at home and follow your spiritual pursuits. If your children wished to renounce the world would you not say, your duty is to serve us first. Similarly they can say, how can you leave us since you have brought us into the world.

* Sri Sri Ma's birthplace, now in Bangladesh.

Q. Now what am I to do ?

Ma : Stay at your home and follow your spiritual path. The children will see you are at the house.

Q. Living in the world how can one close the door ?

Ma : The home and the house are but temporary phases. You say, my son, my daughter, my house, but when the breath leaves the body, everything is left behind, then where is your house, who is your son and who is your daughter ? Hence one should live thus. This is but a temporary stoppage on the path. This is not my real home, these children are not mine nor am I theirs.

Q. Then how can the wordly life proceed ?

Ma : Keep yourself aloof and see what happens. The One to whom everything belongs will Himself manage.

If you depend entirely on His care, He will see to everything. By being entirely absorbed in worldly affairs you have come to such a sorry state, grey hair, sans teeth and strength.

It is not proper to remain a beggar all your life. You have one house and you want another, you have an old car and you want a new one. A constant state of unfulfilled desires. To rise from utter deprivation to supreme fulfillment, you have to practice spiritual routine. Do your japa, recitation of the Holy names, concentrating on the breath.

To turn the mind inwards away from the temporal attractions means the closing of the door of one's room.

Ma : You must have a five course meal to feel satisfied.

P. Babu : Ma, please make arrangements for us.

Ma : What is the five course meal ?

1. Japa - Recitation of the name of God.
2. Dhyana - Meditation on one's chosen deity.
3. Sadgranth Patha - Reading of the Holy Scriptures.
4. Satsang - Keeping company with the holy and the wise.
5. Other religious activities.

Q : This is very difficult.

Ma : You do not want to exert yourselves. If you do not work how will you deserve a pension ?

Pramatha Babu : Doesn't the mother cook and feed the children ?

Ma : If you can become like little children entirely dependent on the Divine Mother the Mother Herself will fulfill all your needs.

A number of devotees also went to Kheora on the occasion of the laying of the foundation of the Ashram there on 29.8.39.

After visiting a number of places, Sultanpur, Comilla, Chittagong, Vidyakut Ma returned to Dhaka on 13.9.39 for a day.

Deputy Magistrate Sri Mahendra Babu had come for Ma's darshan.

M.Babu : The country is passing through a great crisis of morality and degradation leading to the path of utter destruction. I am not talking of my personal problem, but what is the solution for the country and its people ?

Ma : This is the distinctiveness of this country. In the worldly path, the opposites of happiness and sorrow, truth and falsehood, wars and faction fighting will remain, sometimes peace and sometimes unrest like the rising of the waves and their submersion. When you say that you are not talking of your own sorrow that is not correct. You have bound yourself to your country, therefore, the misfortunes of the country affect you. So when you talk of the country you are talking of your own self. But if you can rise above the narrow confines of a single country and merge yourself in the universe, then you will realise there is no war and no discord. This is God's play (Leela). God Himself creates sorrow and then the Lord Himself brings peace. That you are so deeply concerned for the country's welfare that is also God's Grace, and that God will transform this situation; that is why this deep feeling has occurred in your inner-most being and in so many others.

MA

—'Shobha'

It has been long since thoughts have been penned down; though our only one, our *Ma*, is constantly aware of *Her* presence in the premise of our heart, mind and eyes. *Her* constant awareness brings smile in the eyes and melts the heart with *Her mystic love*. That love which blooms within and like the colors of the spring blossom, soothes each eye that catches the glance of its radiant freshness and brightness. An awareness without which there is no existence. We cling to your *Aanchal*¹ *Ma*, holding gently your *lotus feet*, lest they leave us behind wailing like an infant for the warmth of the mother's bosom.

The thought of loss brings the fear of desolation, like an orphan caught amidst the rage of *mother nature* with no fault of the child. The storm, the thunder, the hails and the lightning may be the dance of *nature*; the rising of the waves and the gust of the wind could be an inspiration of a poet, *Radha and Parvati* may rejoice in the play of their *beloved*; but *your child Ma* longs for *your assurance*, *your shelter* to marvel the beauty of *Nature's Play*.

So sings the great sage of the Ramayana... *Nija Sukh-Dukh Sab Sant Hi Sunao*²..... But for you *O'Devi Divine* where can we go! No one hears, no one consoles, only *your Name* pacifies the yearning of the heart.

From wherever came the fragrance of *your love* the journey started in search of *your presence*. Saints and Sages passed by showering blessings and flowers, so blissful was the comfort of their presence. The longing for *Eternal Love* aroused more and more.

Our beloved *Krishnamayi Ma*, the longing grows, the pain increases. *Your Celestial Touch* can only calm this restlessness. When walking under the shady sky of Ashad³ accompanied by the crisp gentle breeze, however far these eyes could see, whatever sound these ears could hear, it longed for *your soothing touch*; the passing breeze brought notes of the conches blowing and bells tolling. The long-awaited heart beats rapidly in delight; the eyes glance here and there to follow the sound of the ears. For a moment Eternity became still. The glimpse of *your aanchal* gently flying with the notes of the music swiftly floated by; in delight and joy *your children* trailed behind singing and clapping *Hari Bol, Hari Bol, Hari Hari Bol!*

1. the outer end of the sari

2. speak all your joys and sorrows to the saints only

3. month of June

WITH MATAJI ON THE BANK OF THE GOMATI RIVER

(II)

—Krishnanath

It now seems appropriate to mention some of the anecdotes from Mataji's life, which She Herself related from time to time when reminded; some of these have a miraculous quality, but Mataji told them in such a way as if they were ordinary happenings.

Once a young woman of about 20 or 22 asked for Ma's help in her devotional practices. As there was a large crowd at the time, Mataji told her to see Her in private afterwards, but did not get a chance to talk to her. After a few days the girl came and said Mataji had appeared to her in a dream and whispered a *Mantra* into her ear. She repeated it and it was in pure Sanskrit though the girl was illiterate. When she dreamt, Mataji had been thinking of her. Mataji then asked her not to eat meat in the months of वैशाख, श्रावण, कार्तिक, and माघ. The girl said she had already given up eating meat, though everyone else in her home ate it.

In another place Mataji said to a very dark girl of 12 or 13 who came to see Her, "You want the necklace, don't you?" and asked Udas to bring that. When it was brought and given to the girl, everyone was surprised to see that it was a string of valuable pearls, which had been presented to Mataji a few days previously by the Rani of Sirmur! When Mataji was wearing the pearls on Her wrist, She had seen this little girl in the crowd, whispering to her mother that she wanted that. Mataji wanted to give that to the girl at that time but she had disappeared. Mataji knew that she would come after a few days and had told Udas to keep the string with her and to bring it whenever Mataji would ask for it; that is how the pearl necklace was brought and given to the girl. Later on the girl had come again to show how nice the white pearls looked against her dark skin. Mataji said that when She was living in Ashtagram, there used to be *chamars* (low caste people who cleaned dead animals' skins) dwelling nearby and a little girl of theirs used to come and stand at a distance looking at Her. This was about 40 years ago. The little girl who got the necklace was the same low caste girl in a previous birth.

This habit of Mataji to give away whatever valuable presents She receives is well-known. I have already related in a previous article how the costly Benarasi sari and ornaments received at the end of the Bhagavata Saptah were bestowed on the

sweeper woman. As for smaller gifts like sweets, fruits, flowers or garlands, they are given away immediately. Referring to this, Mataji once humorously remarked that She noticed how the face of the donor becomes smaller and smaller as She started distributing his offering. "To placate him I ultimately leave one and say, I have kept this; but it is only for the time being." Dr. Panna Lal told us two stories in this connection. Once some students had brought an expensive garland for Her and as usual She immediately gave it away. The students said, 'We wish you had worn it at least for ten minutes to please us.' Mataji replied, 'If I am to wear it for ten minutes to please you, will you do whatever I tell you to please me?' There was dead silence--nobody dared to say, yes, for fear that She might ask them something they would not be able to fulfil. On another occasion, when Mataji was going away by train, Dr. P. had brought for Her some very costly choice oranges and told Gurupriya Didi to hide them under the berth till the train started, so that Mataji might not give them away. Mataji was not told anything about this, but just as the train began to move She put Her hand under the berth, took out the oranges and started throwing them to the people on the platform. Those who often go for Mataji's *darsan* are familiar with Her way of throwing fruit and other things into the crowd for people to catch, and they know how good She is at it.

We learnt one day from Gurupriya Didi that Mataji's munificence had earned for Her in Naimisharanya the reputation of being the Goddess of Wealth incarnate. A lady who arrived at the camp that day had heard the coolies at the station saying that a Mataji had come who was an *Avatara* of Laxmi. She gives away gold thrones and *ashrafies* (gold coins) ! Mataji laughed when She heard this and told us that for the Bhagavat Saptaha She had enquired what was prescribed in the scripture to be given as *dān*.. On hearing that it was 12 tolas of gold, She had asked one fourth of it, i. e. 3 tolas to be used to give a gold polish to a silver throne on which the sacred book was to be placed for reading. This was given away to the *pandit* at the end, and people thought it was a gold throne. I forget what Ma said about another three tolas, but the remainder was given away in the form of a gold *ashrafi* to each of the 108 readers. No wonder Mataji seemed Laxmi incarnate to poor people who had never seen so much gold being distributed.

In the course of his discourse on the Narada Bhaktisutra, Dr. P. was once talking about how महापुरुष (great saints) come to the help of their devotees and in this connection he told two stories about Mataji. She had once gone in a boat to the other bank of the Ganga and a devotee on this side wanted to join Her. He jumped into the river and started to swim across, but when he had reached half way, began to drown. There was no one to rescue him but he cried out to Ma and suddenly,

apparently from nowhere, a boat appeared and saved him. On another occasion, Ma's great devotee, Bhaiji, while drowning in Benares, was pulled out by an old woman who waded into the river. At that time Ma was actually in Dehradun and those near Her saw, to their surprise, that Her clothes were dripping wet.

Anther story was told by Mataji Herself about how one of her devotees had once made up his mind to die at Her feet and for this purpose taken a very large dose of opium and eaten sweets thereafter to make the poison more deadly. When he was quite sure he could not be saved, he came and lay clinging to Mataji's feet. Even though nobody was aware at the time that he had taken poison, Mataji somehow kept him awake through the rest of the night. In the morning there were all sorts of difficulties in transporting him to the hospital and getting medical aid, but these were all somehow surmounted and he was saved against all odds.

One morning while Dr. P. was talking about the relinquishing of the fruit of action, Mataji laughed loudly at some idea that had struck Her. She would not say what it was that made Her laugh; but quoted the saying, "प्रशंसा प्रतिष्ठा, सूकरी विष्ठा" which condemns hankering after praise and position. Dr. P. said there was nothing he did, which was not for earning praise; Ma remarked, it required courage to admit this, but somebody pointed out that what Dr. P. had said might itself be for the sake of evoking praise !

One evening Didi Gurupriya gave us a leaflet in Hindi issued in the name of Ma's devotees entitled, "The Perpetual Remembrance of God." It is a scheme for continuous round-the-clock meditation by a relay of persons, each choosing a fixed period of 15 minutes any time, night or day, for engaging in meditation wherever he or she may be. Ma explained that about 20/25 years ago when the Harijan uplift movement was started a great *yajña* was performed. At that time Ma thought that while performance of a *yajña*, as laid down in the scriptures, was all right, something more should be done for the general public. She realized that it was impossible for anyone to give all 24 hours to the contemplation of God, not even 3 hours, and for a गृहस्थ (house-holder) even one hour might be difficult. So She decided upon 15 minutes, and began asking everyone, whatever his caste, creed or religion, to give 15 minutes every day to God, observe *maun* (silence), and take God's name, wherever and whatever condition he was in. She would demand this from Her followers and from strangers ask it as charity. Some people selected a particular time and observed *maun* (silence). Later the practice started of everyone observing silence between 8-45 p. m. and 9 p. m. and this is now the rule in all Ma's Ashrams.

Dr. Gopinath Kaviraj had suggested the present idea of having people join in a regular scheme of a chain of continuous unbroken meditation. In such an arrangement the weak would also get help from what the others were doing. We were asked to join the scheme and when I expressed the fear that one might sometimes forget the time, Mataji narrated the following true story :

There was a man who himself was the disciple of a great saint but whose daughters were followers of Mataji. He did not like their talking about Ma and said, "Why do you say *Miau* like a cat ?" He had a favourite cat which used to sleep in his bed. One night this cat scratched him badly in the face. After that he also came to see Mataji and agreed to observe the 15 minutes' silence meditation at a particular time. Once when Mataji was sitting with several people round Her asking questions, this man who was present, suddenly felt disinclined to ask or say anything or even to listen to what was going on. He looked at his watch and found that it was his time for *mauna*. And so, Ma said, if you make up your mind, you will be reminded somehow.

Inspite of this assurance I must admit that I have not yet had the courage to join the scheme by taking up a fixed time, as I find that my time keeps on changing. Mataji's devotees may be interested and get a copy of the leaflet from Shri Panu Brahmachari, Sri Sri Ma Anandamayee Ashram, Bhadaini, Varanasi.

