

# MA ANANDAMAYEE AMRIT VARTA

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

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## CONTENTS

1.	Matri Vani	...	1
2.	Contribution of Ma to the Cultural & Spiritual heritage of India —Amiya Kumar Majumdar	...	3
3.	Conversation with Western devotees —Vijayananda	...	6
4.	From the diary of a European —Melita Maschmann	...	11
5.	Matri Satsang —Swami Bhagavatananda	...	16
6.	The Lila of being a Woman —Dr. Bithika Mukerji	...	20
7.	Old Diary Leaves —Atmananda	...	24
8.	With Mataji in Dehradun —'Krishnanath'	...	28
9.	From notes taken in Ma's presence —'Kirpal'	...	31
10.	Purna Kumbha Mela at Hardwar, 1998	...	34
11.	Dr. Padma Mishra—A tribute	...	40
12.	In Memoriam—CDR. Laxmi Devi of Gondal	...	42



## MATRI-VANI

The Infinite is contained in the finite, and the finite in the Infinite, the whole in the part and the part in the whole. This is so, when one has entered the great stream. He who attains and that which is attained are one and the same.

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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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On the journey through life in this world nobody remains happy. The pilgrimage to the Goal of human existence is the only path to Supreme happiness.

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One who serves God can never be helpless. The more ardently one seeks communion by engaging in Japa, His service and contemplation, the fuller will be His revelation.

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Do not feel distressed because you are deprived of his physical presence. It is the duty of the nearest and dearest of the departed to pray that he may progress on his upward path. However, if tears rush into your eyes because he has left his body, then cry invoking God. To weep for God is everybody's one and only hope. Also perform as perfectly as possible the duties prescribed by the Sastras for the wife and son of the deceased,

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What can be expected from this world, whose very nature is constant flux: times are ever changing. To live in time is to be bound by it — by death. If you do not rise above time, how can you escape the clutches of death? Had time not borne away the moment that brought you such acute distress and agony, would any life be left in your body? This is the way of the world.

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Abandon yourself to God in all matters without exception. "May he do as He pleases with me; who am I but a creature in His hands" — this should be your attitude of mind.

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It is the pure, undefiled flower that finds a place at the feet of the Lord and nowhere else.

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Take great care to spend your life in spotless purity, worthy to be dedicated in worship to the Lord. Speak about Him, meditate on His glory, try to see Him in everyone, Him who is the salt, the breath in life, the heart of hearts.

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You feel lonely? In very truth you are not alone. Does the Supreme Friend ever forsake His friends?

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The beauty of it is that man's very nature is to long for Reality, Supreme Wisdom, Divine Joy; as it is his nature to return home when the play is over. The stage of the play is His, the play is His as well, and so are those who take part in it, friends and fellow-beings — everything is He alone.

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# CONTRIBUTION OF MA TO THE CULTURAL & SPIRITUAL HERITAGE OF INDIA

## II

—Amiya Kumar Majumdar

Before we proceed to consider the nature of spirituality, we will do well to settle another problem, viz. the problem of truth. Do we mean the same thing when we use such expressions as truth of history, truth of science, truth of poetry and truth of religion? Certainly we do not use the same paradigm when such expressions are used. It is widely believed that religious truths belong to an order different from that of scientific truth. Even if one does not agree to such a view, one may consider what Cartwell-Smith has to say in this respect. Cartwell Smith, an eminent scholar devoted to Islamic theology, observes. "Religious statements are not truth claims in the ordinary sense of the expression, they only indicate how truly a religious man lives his life according to religious tradition which he has accepted." As he puts it, "religious statements at their best have been expressions of personal or corporate involvements, tentative but joyous, inadequate but exuberant, human but transcendence-oriented. To approach them with sympathy is to hear them not as claims but as echoes, to see them not as the moon but as fingers pointing to the moon."

We have seen that in his commentary on Brahma Sutras (IV. I. 15) Sankara asserts that whether a person has unerring *anubhava* or not is to be judged from the person's own conviction.

कथं हि एकस्य सहृदय प्रत्ययं ब्रह्मवेदनं देहधारणं च अपरेण प्रतिक्षेप्तुं शक्यते ?

Before assessing Sri Ma's contribution to the cultural and spiritual heritage of India, it is imperative that we explain the terms 'Culture' and 'Spirituality'. The word 'culture' is derived from the latin root 'Cult', which means filling, care, refinement and worship. In course of time the original meaning has been extended and it signifies the quality in a person or society that arises from an interest in and acquaintance with what is generally regarded as excellence in arts, letters, manners, scholarly pursuits etc. In regard to an individual, 'culture' means refinement of taste. While the same term signifies a system of ideas and ideals embodying an entire theory of life, when one speaks of a nation's culture. The most important cultural trait of India is "unity in diversity." Despite diverse languages which people

of different parts of India speak and the different religious sects they belong to. India is one and indivisible. This unity, is not geographical, but spiritual.

The term 'spirituality' is a much abused term. At the outset, this is to be borne in mind that spirituality does not mean clairvoyance, nor does it signify the art of communicating through a medium heavenly messages. Spirituality is not anything supernatural or mysterious. The term has been used by thinkers in diverse ways, of which the following may be noted:

- (a) Spirituality means that spirit (Soul, Self or *Caitanya*) should rule matter and not viceversa;
- (b) Man is not a mere physico-chemical organism, but spirit or *Caitanya* is his essential nature.
- (c) Man is not an isolated entity living apart from Nature. Rather, man is organic to Nature. In one sense, man is a part of Nature, in another sense man has the capacity to transcend Nature.
- (d) Spirituality signifies reverence for Life. A person is said to be spiritual in outlook when he engages himself in doing good to all sentient beings.
- (e) A person who has developed a spiritual outlook does not look upon the universe as a mechanical aggregate of parts, but as a harmonious whole of parts, where parts contribute significantly to the growth and well-being of the whole.
- (f) A person is said to have developed a spiritual outlook when he feels that his life is not to be considered as ego-centred, but his life will have meaning and purpose in the lives of others.
- (g) One can realize the meaning and significance of spirituality when one attunes one's life to the twin principle of renunciation and service. Renunciation does not mean world-renunciation but ego-renunciation. As it appears in Vivek Chudamani.

सन्त्यन्ये प्रतिबन्धाः पुंसः संसार हेतवो दृष्टाः  
तेषामेव मूलं प्रथमो विकारो भवत्यहंकारः

There are many causes leading to the bondage of the *purusha* or *jiva* to the phenomenal world. The foremost of them is egoism. Unless one succeeds in shaking off the sense of 'I' and 'mine' one cannot have a passport to the realm of *sadhana* (spiritual enlightenment). Sri Ma never recommends the same path of realization to all the aspirants. She recommends different paths to different devotees, according to their capacity, temperament and liking. She may lead some even along the path of enjoyment until they reach the saturation point, while for others she recommends the path of renunciation. In the perception of Sri Ma, peace

and satisfaction arising out of renunciation is also a kind of enjoyment and that is why she urges that one must go beyond enjoyment and renunciation.

Saints down the ages, belonging to different orders, have urged unequivocally that all paths of spiritual discipline lead to the same goal, viz. God - realization. What, however, is of utmost importance in Sri Ma's teaching is that *sampradaya* (sect) means *sampradāna* (giving away). Which ever order or sect one may belong to, he must give away one and all in order to realize one's true self. To know oneself is to know God.

It has already been stated that Sri Ma has been eagerly looking forward to those who have none to guide them in their religious pursuits, who are helpless, frustrated and have lost their moorings of life. Thus is indeed the ideal of a realized person. A *dharmika* is one who is constantly engaged in doing good to all creatures (*Sarva Bhuta hite ratah*).

Dharma has been likened to a bridge (*setu*) which takes man to God. We have it in the Sukla Yajurveda : अन्ताद्याद्यै संविभागो भूम्यतश्च यथार्हतः— You have to equitably distribute to all people of the country according to their need, whatever is produced in the country. There is, however, a qualifying clause मित्रस्य चक्षुषा समीक्षामहे— You must look upon every being of the world with the eye of a friend. For the Indian thinkers detachment is the end of life, but it is affirmed, at the same time, that detachment does not presuppose an inactive, indifferent and asocial life. Detachment can be achieved only through living an active life taking care to see that activities of a person are not carried with an eye to one's own advantage. It is not enough that a detached person rises above self-interest, he should, at the same time, give up the notion that he is the doer. As the Mahabharata (Santiparva) affirms : We should first renounce all selfishness and then renounce that by which we do so.

त्यज धर्मम् अधर्मञ्च उभे सत्यानृते त्यज  
उभे सत्यानृते त्यक्त्वा येन त्यजसि तत् त्यज ।

Sri Ma has always been fully alive to the significance of this saying of the Mahabharata and translated this ideal into action; in consonance with the spirit of the Indian ideal. The salient features of Sri Ma's contribution to the cultural and spiritual heritage of India may be described thus : instead of looking upon religion as a doctrinaire belief, She made religion coeval with life itself; she removed all barriers between the sacred and the secular and the secular. She urged that the main purpose of human life is to live for other, she harmonised contemplation with action and recommended *japa* of the holy name of God as the most practical religious discipline, and advised an aspirant to go beyond both enjoyment and renunciation.

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N. B. : The sayings of Sri Ma quoted in this paper are taken from "Matrilila Darshan" by Debaprasad Mukhopadhyaya, Calcutta, 1989.



# CONVERSATIONS WITH WESTERN DEVOTEES

[ONE]

—Vijayananda

## MA AND SPIRITUAL TRANSMISSION

Q.- It is usually said that a spiritual teacher should wait for the awakening of a real spiritual need in the disciple. But does a sage not have the power to induce this awakening?

V - True, a teacher should wait for the real questions to arise in the disciple. Preaching or teaching to those who are not receptive equals to sowing on a rocky soil; but the sage is able to transform this rocky soil in a fertile one. For some, he can do it all of a sudden, for others he will go progressively; but he usually does not do that with words or oral teachings. A single look from a sage is sufficient to change an atheist into a religious man, a libertine into a yogi. That was the daily miracle that Ma was able to do, but this transformation was by the awakening of the divine power which is latent in everyone. Once this awakening is realised, there will be a fertile soil for verbal teaching, if this is still needed.

Q : Does the awakening of the inner energy given in some cases by the guru lead sometimes to an increase of ordinary desires?

V : When inner energy, that is the power of Kundalini, is awakened by the power of the guru or by yoga exercises, or even spontaneously, the first effect is indeed an intensification of desires and even of the basic desires. Ma one day told me : *Kama* (sexual desire), *Krodha* (anger) and *Bhagavan ki Shakti* (Divine energy, the term by which Ma used to designate the power of Kundalini) move side by side. And with both fingers, she showed me how both movements were intimately intertwined, but going in different directions. What we are looking for in reality is the satisfaction of our desires, is the bliss of the Self; but by trying to obtain this bliss in the sense objects, we are going in the wrong direction, because these objects are only a reflection of this bliss. This is similar to a child who is ready to embrace his own image which he is seeing in a mirror. Then, what is necessary is to reverse the dynamic of the process and to bring it back to its source which is within ourselves.

When the guru awakens the inner energy, he gives intensity to this double movement. It is up to the disciple to choose its own direction. Towards the top or towards the bottom. But the guru will only awaken Kundalini when he has tested

many times the disciple to be sure that he will be able to master the violent passions that this awakening might produce in the beginning. There is a whole process of preparation towards that goal. Apart from the moral discipline, the effort for self-control, etc..., There is whole technique for the purification of the psychic channels (*nadis*). Only then will it be possible for the disciple not to be taken away by the tidal wave that the awakened Kundalini may produce.

Q : Why are the teachings related to Kundalini traditionally kept secret ?

V : Kundalini is a primordial power which goes beyond spoken words. When she awakens, the sadhaka dresses her up, in some ways, with the thoughts stored in his unconscious. For example, for a Hindu, she will take the form of his chosen deity (Krishna, Durga, etc...) for a Christian, it will be Jesus or Mary, etc....It depends of course if the person is a true sadhaka and has already attained a degree of mental purification: because an accidental or forced awakening of Kundalini without the help of a Guru can lead to catastrophe. You are asking why the teaching of Kundalini is kept secret : to be honest, there cannot be a teaching of Kundalini, because we cannot express with words what is beyond words. And if we try to do so, the disciple would interpret the words according to his own mental frame. It would be similar to the story of Ramakrishna, where a man was born blind wanted to be explained the meaning of the words 'white as milk' : a friend explains to him that milk has the colour of the swan, and to explain to him what a swan is, he shows by gesture the shape of a swan's neck; the blind man touches his friend's arm and happily goes around telling others: 'I know the meaning of 'white as milk', and he starts showing the gesture made by his friend... 'It is the shape of a bent arm'

Q : On a meditation path, be it devotional or non-dualistic, you have mentioned the existence of 'Kriyas', that is to say meditation exercises that are spontaneous and found by oneself and practiced for a period of time. Can you be more specific about this notion?

V: Kriyas are exercises (which are most often *pranayamas* which can be associated or not with mantras) designed to facilitate the meditative state when we cannot obtain it right away. They are very useful for most sadhakas, but they are not necessary for those to whom a meditative state comes spontaneously or without much effort.

One day, in a private interview with Ma, she gave me a few Kriyas. I do not know why, I said in a low voice as if talking to myself : 'to want to do something, that is precisely the obstacle'. Immediately, Ma said : 'Kriyas are useful to fight sleepiness' However, when the guru has given you Kriyas, they must be practised,

whether or not you deem them to be useful, out of veneration for the guru, out of love for him.

As far as spontaneous Kriyas are concerned, they have been mentioned by Ma during what she used to call her '*sadhana ka khel*', the play of her sadhana. They were mainly meditation postures, either asanas or mudras, which came spontaneously. They at times take place with the ordinary sadhaka also during the awakening of Kundalini. But in this case, they have little interest and may produce pathological deviations if we get too attached to them.

Q : Ma used to give yoga or meditation exercises to some of her disciples or visitors. When she was alive, she asked them to be kept secret, but now she has left her body, why we do not write them, like for example, one has written the 'Six Yogas of Naropa' after his death?

V : Ma used to give Kriyas to some of her devotees and she asked this teaching to be kept secret and not to be communicated to anyone. It is difficult to know if she asked for secrecy from all the people who had received these instructions, because probably there are certain people who have received them and will not even speak about it. That is why I can only speak with certainty of my own case. When she was teaching me a Kriya, she was always telling me at the end : '*kisi ko mat bolna*' 'You should not tell anyone'. One time, she even added : 'this is a secret Kriya.'

You asked me if now that Ma left her body, these secret instructions could be written down and published. I do not think that it could be possible. The recommendations of a guru does not lose its authority when the guru leaves his body. Anyhow, the guru is ever present even if he has left his body. If one of his disciple has attained realization himself, and himself has disciples, he could then communicate these instructions to them, but that would probably be done also under a vow of secrecy.

Q : Is it possible to say that a guru seduces his disciples to bring them to God?

V : In a way, I think that we can answer : yes, inspite of the fact that the word 'seduce' can bring about some confusion. We should rather talk of 'emotional transference', a method which is well known by psychoanalysts. The ordinary man is bound by all sorts of attachments and worldly affections. He loves his wife, his children, his worldly possessions without even mentioning his own body and his own comforts, and all this because he finds a few moments of temporary happiness in all that. All these attachments attract the mind towards the outside. To discover the Divine which is within each one of us, we must change the direction of the mind and bring it back inside. But it is extremely difficult. That is the moment when the grace of the guru comes up. It awakens in the heart of the disciple an

attachment so intense that all other attachments lose their power of attraction. At the beginning, it is love for the physical aspect of the guru; but it is also love for a being which is a symbol of omnipresent Divine; and the disciple, by the grace of his guru, soon will discover the Divine which is in his own heart and will understand that sensual pleasures drive us only because they are temporarily enlightened by a reflection of the Divine.

Q : Why does the body of a sage, which is *sattvic*, fall prey to illness and death?

V : Just as an ordinary man is identified to the physical body, the perfect sage is identified to *tattva*, that imperishable substance made of *satchidananda*. That is his actual body. As far as his physical body is concerned, it is part of *prakriti*, which is nature, and it is subject to the laws of nature, which means birth, growth, maturity, decay and death. For the sage, the physical body is an instrument which allows him to come into contact with individuals who are bound by the laws of nature and help them to free themselves from them. The sage is no more identified with his physical body than a rider to his horse or a driver to his car.

Regarding the diseases which appear in the physical body of the sage, they are according to the nature of things. Whatever is part of the perishable must by the law of things degenerate and eventually die; but as far as great sages are concerned, some of the diseases are also due to the fact that they absorb the bad karma of their disciples. However, there are also yogis who have not yet attained to perfection but whose aim is to perfect the physical body and to protect it from diseases.

Q : You say that when we concentrate on Ma, we will be able to see her in front of us. This concentration probably requires a certain practice; is it not the result of our own mental projections?

V : The concentration on Ma (as the concentration on an *Ishta-devata*, an image of the deity) is one of the methods which are advised to calm the mind. The mind naturally runs towards what it likes ; pleasure, food, sex, etc....and disperses itself in various directions. When we direct it towards a divine object, we can keep it away from its worldly endeavour. In fact, when devotion for the guru, for Ma is deep, concentration is easy, and we can bring back the mind to a state of happy peace without much effort. But, in addition to that, in the case of a great sage, like Ma, who has left her residual presence, we can get in contact with this presence. And this contact can become a considerable aid in our spiritual pursuit. The guru can transmit the power and he can do so even after he has left his physical form. There is also another benefit which can be obtained by this concentration. When you think about Ma, you automatically invoke her qualities, her virtues, her compassion, etc...Then a sort of transference takes place and we absorb some of her qualities, even if we do not feel it consciously.

To see the image of Ma actually facing us requires a lot of practice, as you say, and only those who have a strong capacity of visualisation are successful in it. But it is not necessary to see her really in front of us. *To simply think about her with devotion is sufficient. What matters is our mental reaction of love and devotion; the image is only a means to produce this reaction.*

Even if we can see her, it is only a form of thought as you suggest it. But this form of thought is a support for the all-pervading Divine, whose centre, for us, resides in our subtle heart. When we have succeeded in fixing our attention straight away on the Omnipresent Divine, on the universal Consciousness, then the support is not necessary anymore.

**"MAN'S TRUE NATURE FLOWS TOWARDS GOD ALONE".**

**- Sri Anandamayi Ma**

## FROM THE DIARY OF A EUROPEAN

—Melita Maschmann

*(Translated from German)*

*(V)*

**Varanasi, November, 1963**

For the last six weeks I have been watching Mataji very carefully. I do not know how many thousands of people I have seen her greet one by one. For nearly four decades, day after day, men and women have crowded round her, in need of consolation, in search of knowledge, in adoration and out of curiosity. Invariably she receives them with a smile of irresistible charm. This smile has many nuances, only its loving-kindness is unchangeable.

The other day I realized that now and again I am observing Mataji with the unconscious motive to discover at last a smile which is but a mask, not the expression of heartfelt loving-kindness. To this day I have not succeeded and I am happy about it, although it would give me a questionable satisfaction to see her, at least once, smile like a prime minister, or a filmstar, or a nuclear scientist, or a bishop. It might perhaps give me some kind of satisfaction because what I see here in Mataji is—according to human understanding—hardly possible. And because it 'disturbs' the experience something that according to reason cannot be: the expression of a kind-heartedness that by the 'wear and tear' of 35 long years has lost nothing of its freshness, spontaneity, genuineness and strength.

To day, after Mataji had vanished into her room, she asked one of the girls whether many people were waiting for her. When this was confirmed she at once got up and went to meet them. She walked as I had never seen her walk before: with difficulty. Probably she is quite ill. When she sat in silence in her place—10 minutes later she left again—her smile was indescribably touching and expressive. "Look at me, my dear one", it seemed to say. "At times the flesh feels rather miserable. But God is full of infinite glory and strength. Gaze at Him through this sick body."

One of the women who has travelled with Mataji for some time told yesterday that Mataji's illnesses are quite different from our own. One day she may appear to be seriously ill and the next day again perfectly well. It all depends on herself. When she is ill, we pray to her to make herself well again for our sake.

To day she really is well again. At any rate she appears as fresh as ever, although deep shadows can be detected under her eyes. The crowd pressing for private interviews increases daily. This morning the old, nearly blind *sannyāsini* came again for Mataji's darśana. She seemed in a specially deplorable condition. While fumbling about at Mataji's feet she cried and wailed. Obviously she is losing the last remainder of her eyesight.

Mataji spoke to her with unclouded serenity, laughing several times in between. She said : "It is time for your inner eyes to open. God assists you in this by making your outer eyes blind. You know it yourself : that which is really worth while, you have never seen with your outer eyes. What you could still perceive with them would only distract you. That which you are going to behold with the eyes of wisdom is infinitely more beautiful than what the ordinary eyes can see. But as long as you are not willing to close them, the eyes of wisdom will not open."

For a moment the *sannyāsini* remains still, then she starts lamenting once more. For a second, surprise passes over Mataji's face. How can you rebel against God's will so persistently, it seems to say. Mataji silently looks at the *sannyāsini*. A short flicker of sympathy in her eyes quickly again gives place to crystal clear cheerfulness. "You will not be the first of my friends to acquire real sight by becoming blind."

Often I have noticed that Mataji responds to lamenting and wailing by laughter. Of course, not in all cases when people weep at her feet. Sometimes she caresses the desperate person in silence, sometimes she very gently says something, but most of all she replies to tears by laughter. Manytimes she has said, "You should cry only for God; for the realization of Him alone should your tears flow."

What was the significance of the short flicker of sympathy in Mataji's face to-day ? As far as I know I have never before noticed this expression with her. At first I felt nonplussed at her laughing at the sight of tears. Was the sympathy to-day an ascent to Christian compassion or rather a touch of human weakness, similar to the emotional pity with which most of us react to this kind of situation ?

She sees what we cannot perceive: the imperishable behind the earthly processes of decay, and the Light in which our human darkneses are only like the shadows of a fly on a white wall. In order to wail with us, she would have to deny her wisdom and descend to our ignorance. But does not comforting assurance lie just in her laughter ? I have seen how quickly people dry their tears. Perhaps those who still weep when they go away, afterwards come to understand why Mataji laughed.

I notice that it has already become a matter of course to me that Mataji can read in our heads and hearts as we read in books. How does such a conviction develop? I have heard it stated a few times, but that by itself would not persuade me at all. Again and again I have the impression that Mataji "catches me red-handed" at some thought. To-day I was just reflecting about the Lemurian landscape she may sometimes have before her inner eye, when the souls of a hundred people are spread out in front of her like open books. I was sitting in a corner. Suddenly she turned her head in my direction and, looking at me, called my name and laughed loudly.

A young doctor told me, "When Mataji is sick, this has two causes. Either she takes the illnesses of others on herself, or our wickedness makes her suffer, which manifests in her body."

A few days ago, someone brought some sweets to the Ashram and all who partook of them fell ill. Fortunately only twenty or thirty people were affected, but they were in a rather pitiable condition. A child, an old woman and a delicate sannyasi got seriously ill. This morning at darśana time, Mataji discussed this incident. Already for quite a while I had been observing a strange lightning in Mataji's face. For a long time she did not say anything, suddenly she laughed loudly. After calming down a little, she asked: "Do you know why I am laughing?. I have just been reminded of how I saw you lie that morning when you had caught food poisoning. On entering the room, you can't imagine how difficult it was not to laugh. But I did not want to hurt you, so I suppressed it. But now - now it is coming again, now it may be allowed its free course." And it comes over her in a veritable storm. It is shaking her for several minutes. She is unable to utter a single word. Tears are running down her cheeks. Her whole body is one mighty laughter.

By and by the laughing fit decreases and at last subsides. Mataji dries her tears with the lappet of her dhoti and then tries to speak, but it is still vibrating in her throat and the abating earthquake is still visible in her shoulders. "How miserable you were, my friends. How you prayed : 'Hey Bhagavan, hey Bhagavan !' Still laughing, she imitates the whining of the sick. "Then you remembered God, because you were afraid you would die : 'Hey Bhagavan, hey Bhagavan !' Do you see how beneficial it was for you ? It will help you to get over your lukewarmness." Mataji once more laughs a little, while looking with affection from face to face. Gradually the people also join in her laughter. Most of them had so far looked rather puzzled. I often notice that they find it difficult to understand why Mataji is laughing. In one or the other face some faint resentment can be detected on occasions. That I am always irresistibly forced to laugh with her and able to give in



to this compulsion, may be due to the fact that I only rarely understand what it is all about (to-day I have by way of exception a good interpreter.) Usually it does not puzzle me : Why on earth is she laughing?

In the meanwhile Mataji continues : "When the doctor came that morning I at once said to him : Don't feel anxious, all will be well.' After examining you, he again came to me. I asked him three times : 'How does it look ?' At first he said with hesitation : 'Hopeful'. The second time his voice became somewhat more reassuring : 'Yes, hopeful'. Only to my third question he replied with conviction : 'It is hopeful, Mataji.' In the evening, after the worst was over, he told me that three of you had been dangerously sick. But I was sure that nothing would happen."

Mataji looks round with friendly derision. All at once she starts laughing again. Or rather : she does not laugh herself, it laughs in her. It passes through her body like a tempest and she gives in without resistance. Again the gradual subsiding of the outbursts. "I am now laughing about something that happened thirty years ago", she says. "I have just been reminded of it. I got a terrible fit of laughter, although it was out of place. We spent the night in a temple at Dehradun. Early morning in the dark, Bhaiji sat and meditated. Suddenly we heard the priest approaching. Bhaiji did not speak at that time and this body\* was also keeping *mauna*. He got up and wanted to go near the priest so that he should not enter the pitch dark temple and perhaps stumble over us and take us for thieves. But Bhaiji was not quick enough. The *pūjārī* really thought burglars had broken into the temple and wanted to arrest Bhaiji. The two men struggled with each other in the dark and I stood there, laughing and laughing....."

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Yesterday morning a gentleman from Calcutta came to the Ashram with his ten years old nephew. The boy had a large malignant looking abscess on his forehead. His uncle felt so worried about the child that he cried. At midday I saw them again. Radiant. The gentleman told me : 'When I came to Mataji with the boy, she said : 'Ah, here he is. I thought he would come.' She then put her hand into the air over his head, saying : 'Don't feel anxious, he will soon be all right.'" The same afternoon the boy was playing with the other children. The pain had subsided. This morning the inflammation had decreased considerably. The gentleman (a Government official) is convinced that Mataji has saved the child.

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\*. Mataji.

Last night an old one-eyed sādhu in ochre robes with a *brahmachāri* dressed in white, who was also quite an old man, came for Mataji's darśana. Mataji offered her own āsana to the sādhu and pressed him to sit on it. She first stood up to greet him. Mataji spoke to the bearded sadhu as if he were her father.

This morning the two men returned, the brahmachāri walking behind his master at a respectful distance. Mataji stood up and offered to the sādhu a place by her side on the couch. When he refused to accept it, as he obviously thought it too great an honour for him, Mataji was about to sit down on the floor next to him. Thereupon he gave in. Strange to see the two sitting side by side. The one-eyed old man, erect and motionless, with fixed expression; a perfect yogi. Mataji relaxed, leaning against the wall, chattering, sometimes laughing, graceful and expressive in the gestures of her hands. Suddenly one can again see and feel distinctly the girlishness in her. One forgets her age completely on such occasions. She addresses the sādhu as 'Pitaji' and about herself she speaks as his little daughter.

But she does not play the role of a young girl, she becomes that. To the very sound and pitch of her voice. A little later she is again the mother who comforts, or the sage who interprets a difficult passage of a scripture, or the judge of peace who settles a dispute, or the physician who gives advice as to the treatment of a patient, or the seer whose eyes reflect super worldly light : *Mātri Līlā* !

## MĀTRI SATSANG

—Swami Bhagavatananda

(Translated from Hindi)

9th December, 1947.

*Question* :— Sri Uddhavaji was Lord Krishna's constant companion, his childhood friend. In spite of this, why did Lord Krishna when He left the world and went to His own abode, say to Uddhava: "Go to Badrinath and practise *sādhana* there!" Why should He have separated His eternal companion from Himself? Why did He not take him to His supreme dwelling-place?

*Mataji* : What has one to do to please God?

*Question* : God alone knows everything.

*Mataji* : If God knows everything, then He does according to His knowledge. Are not all His companions equal in His *Līlā*? When the Lord sent Uddhavaji to Badrinath, who is Badrinath? God is there also of course. God Himself is indeed everywhere. By sending Uddhava to Badrinath, He sent Him but to Himself. Whatever you may behold, it is all God's own form. Bow down to everyone. To go to Badrinath and do *tapasyā* there, all this happens according to God's will. The entire world is His form. Get into the habit of seeing Him in everything. *Tapasyā* is also nothing but God. Do whatever He prompts you to do. You see yourself as separate from God, but God tells you to see Him in all forms. All shapes, all movements, and all rest are contained within Him. In the field of His play, He and none but He is present in every form.

The Guru's words are mantras. According to the Guru's instructions practise *sādhana* with deep religious feeling and God will *have* to respond. Just as the parents know what will make their children thrive, so also God knows exactly what is wholesome for you and what harmful. To ask: "why has God done such and such a thing" is out of place. From your point of view it is of course right. God and His gifts are one. Don't think of yourself as far away from Him. Everywhere God and God alone is present. The father's wealth belongs to his son. Try to see God in every shape and in every mode of being. Man receives according to his desire. Separation is one of God's ways of manifesting. In the separation of Radha from Krishna there also lies a certain charm. Does it not?

*Question*: Some people go into a state of *samādhi* when listening to kirtan or other religious music. What actually is this *samādhi*?

*Mataji* : Who goes into *samādhi* ? He who goes into *samādhi* becomes one with God. To remain absorbed in meditation for an hour or two is not called *samādhi*.

*Question* : Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa also went into *bhāva samādhi*.

*Mataji* : Ordinarily when *bhāva* occurs to someone during kirtan, yet afterwards he again becomes engrossed in worldly affairs, one has to understand that this was just a momentary glimpse of Light, nothing more than that. What is achieved by repeating God's name is all right. As to Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa's state, this is quite a different matter. This body is not going to say anything about his *bhāva samādhi*. Just as an M. A. can teach small children the alphabets, but thereby he does not lose the status of an M. A., precisely in a similar manner, once real *samādhi* has occurred one does not divert from this state anymore. For you small and great exist, but *There*, there is no question at all of small and great. Even while moving about, *samādhi* may supervene. For one who has reached the ultimate state, for him all conditions are equal. Some people have the capacity to recognise such a superman.

*Question* : How can by time-bound knowledge the essence of things be attained?

*Mataji* : When you attain to real knowledge, you will have found the essence of things.

*Question* : Truth is one. When we adhere to one particular doctrine, why do all the others seem false to us ?

*Mataji* : There are many paths to Truth. But Truth itself is One, it knows no distinctions. Depending on his predilections and temperament man adopts the path most congenial to him. It is said : "There are as many doctrines as there are Munis" (sages).

*Question* : Momentary glimpses of Light are experienced, but they vanish. Why should this happen again and again ?

*Mataji* : Even though they vanish time after time, they will appear again.

*Question* : What is the simplest method to make them permanent ?

*Mataji* : If you cannot do anything else, atleast seek *satsang* ; or if you are unable to secure the company of real saints and sages, read scriptures, meditate, worship, contemplate on God. In the measure as you exert yourself you will make progress on the spiritual path.

*Question* : God is all-pervading. How can this be proved ?

*Mataji* : A teacher or professor tests his pupils. Why ? The tests are meant for the benefit of the students, not for the examiner; the teacher knows how much his

pupils have learnt. The purpose of examinations is to make the students aware of their shortcomings. Before putting God to the test, you must first scrutinize yourself; you have to adhere to your practices and it is God who is the examiner. The examiner is beyond examination. The test is taken for your sake, so that you may know yourself. Many people do in fact practise *sādhana* with a view to God-realization, but they do not pay attention to their short-comings, such as anger, greed and so forth. This is why they become diverted from their goal. Thus tests and trials are not for the professor but for the students.

*Question* : Again and again doubt assails the mind. Is this a good sign or a bad one ?

*Mataji* : It is natural that doubts should arise to those who are on the path to find God. Until you reach the state in which doubts are impossible, doubts are bound to come. When problems arise, they also call for a solution. In the course of one's practice, doubts will awaken. Those who have not started learning and those who have completed their course successfully, for them there are no questions. When queries spring up in your heart, put them before your Guru again and again. Whatever your Guru says, accept and follow without criticizing. At the same time proceed also with your spiritual practices. Just as you eat, drink, sleep, and do your professional work regularly, exactly with the same regularity pray to God to make you free from doubts. By sustained effort fire will be generated and its heat felt as well. Once the fire of real knowledge is kindled, everything will be burnt to ashes. By giving a little one receives a little; obtaining a fragment is worth nothing. When you pray for any particular thing, it will be granted to you, but you will not get the whole. Burn up everything by the fire of Knowledge or else melt everything by intense devotion.

*Question* : Mataji, every day I listen to your words— I also pay attention to what you say. How much I have heard you speak about God! And yet, when I get engrossed in my work, why do I not remember Him ?

*Mataji* : Fickleness is one of the characteristics of the mind. For lives and lives you have formed the habit of letting the mind turn outward. The mind is so used to it that now you will have to reverse its movement and make it turn inwards. So long as the mind's movement does not tend within, it is impossible to find God, therefore, try your utmost to make your mind face inwards. By becoming inward turned, God who is enthroned in the lotus of your heart will be revealed. If the mind roams about outside, it is turned away from God. By practising *sādhana* consistently, a condition ensues when worldly conversation seems distasteful. One is unable to enjoy it. Therefore, so long as you do not enter the current that drives

you inwards, you must continue your efforts to make the mind face within. The mind cannot simultaneously move in two directions. Aiming at the two is detrimental; try to realize the ONE. Worship God, but not for the sake of showing off. Become steady in your practice. What will be the result of this ? There will be no more interruption of your practice. Later you will transcend both practice and non-practice and realize oneness.

*Question* : Some people are of the opinion that the visions, etc. that come through spiritual practice are due to an unbalanced mind. Is this true?

*Mataji* : An unbalanced mind is the cause of vision ? How lovely! God is manifested every where and you have to attain to the vision of Him. How can this vision be due to an unsound mind ? To go beyond the pairs of opposites is the characteristic of Enlightenment. How can this be achieved by a deranged mind ? By the vision of God even insanity is cured.

*Question* : Is it possible to behold God with form (*sākāra*) ?

*Mataji* : Most certainly.

*Question* : If you meet a man in the street who is in pain, won't you take pity on him, even though he be unworthy ? Won't you assist him ? Will not God help him ?

*Mataji* : When appealed to with a sincere heart, God will definitely help.

*Question* : God is all-pervading.

*Mataji* : Vasudeva is enthroned upon the lotus in everybody's heart.

*Question* : When little ants fall into water, we pick them out. Won't God have compassion on us and lift us up ?

*Mataji* : There are two ways in which God bestows His grace : by favour and also by disfavour. In the world there is both good and bad. Whatever path is right and proper for anyone, that God will choose. In the shape of disease, of *kriyā*, of work, in every shape God's grace can be perceived. At the end of sorrow it comes to light. There is yet another way of looking at it : by sending adversity God destroys adversity. By making you ill He purifies you. God alone is the true doctor who purifies you within and without. Now look at it from yet another angle of vision. Who hits whom ? Who is ill ? That you see sickness is an error. Only God alone is present everywhere. He and He and none but He !

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## THE LILA OF BEING A WOMAN\*

—Dr. Bithika Mukerji

The *lilā* of Sri Ma as a 'woman' was especially enjoyed by the multitude of housewives surrounding her most of the time. Women always felt really understood and appreciated by Sri Ma. Men, on the other hand, were always impatient with what they considered were trivialities when they were excluded from all-women sessions, sometimes jealous also!

When Sri Ma had the *kheyāla* for Didi and Maroni to acquire the privilege of the sacred thread, it was an innovation of considerable moment. Subsequently many more young women joined them in acquiring the rights as well as the rather strict regimentation of the twice born, such as Purnananda (Kumari Shanta Pathak); Brahmacharini Chandan Bhattacharya, Kumari Geeta Banerjee and Kumari Jaya Bhattacharya of the Kanyapeeth were also given the sacred thread.

Sri Ma brought about major changes in unobtrusive ways. Once it so happened that a girl from the Kanyapeeth was asked to read a sacred book in Sri Ma's presence. While she was reading this book Sri Ma put a garland round her neck. At a sign from her a small *chowki* (lectern which can be used while sitting on the ground) was placed in front of the reader on which she could place the book. A sandal-paste mark was put on her forehead. She now looked like a pathak (reader) who has been chosen for the role. The girl shyly read a page or two of the book. These simple beginnings have lead to amazing results. Many girls of the Kanyapeeth are now scholars, well able to speak in public on religious subjects. In September, 1995 Kumari Geeta Banerjee was anointed the speaker on Srimad Bhagavatam for one week at Varanasi. She occupied the *vyāsāsana* with confidence and for seven days gave entrancing discourses on the sacred book. A worthy offering for the year of celebration of Sri Ma's Centenary. (1995-1996)

In June, 1982, the Jagadguru Samkaracarya, the Head of the Sringeri Peetham, Sri Abhinava Bharati Tirtha and his chief companion Chhote Maharaj came to Kankhal to visit Sri Ma. The entire Ashram turned out in force to accord him the welcome suited to his exalted position in the hierarchy of our *sādhu-samāj*. Flower decorations and the sound of *kirtan* announced an imminent festivity. All the rituals pertaining to the reception of a great Mahatma were observed.

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\* Reprinted from the book *Life & Teachings of Shri Ma Anandamayee* with the kind permission of the author.

Jagadguru Sri Samkarācārya seemed very happy. When he sat with Sri Ma in the Hall, she introduced many of the girls standing at her side. First it was the turn of Kumari Jaya Bhattacharya, the Principal of the Kanyapeeth. Listening to her academic qualifications he asked a question in Sanskrit from the abstruse treatise *Khandanakhandakhadya*. Jaya made a very polite rejoinder also in Sanskrit, 'With Sri Ma's and Maharajji's blessings, it is true that I have read this treatise but I have not had time to meditate on its intricacies.' Jaya added, 'We are happy that you have visited us. Please come again.' Maharajji seemed pleased with this answer. Sri Ma then presented other academically qualified girls, dressed in their sober yellow robes looking like *brahmacārinis* of Upaniṣadic Age. Dr Padma Mishra, the President of the Kanyapeeth came in last. Sri Ma said, 'Pitaji, all credit for this school rests with Padma.'

The Jagadguru was visibly impressed. He turned round to his companion and said in Sanskrit, 'All things are possible with Sri Ma !' One of the onlookers seeing Sri Ma's glowing countenance thought, 'Truly Sri Ma's girls are persons to be proud of!' His wonderment was shared by many because for well-educated girls to be following the words of Sri Ma's oft-repeated vāni, 'To talk of God alone is worthwhile, all else is in vain and pain,' is an amazing and uplifting example.

As with all other teachings, it is not quite easy to construe Sri Ma's *kheyāla* regarding the position of women in our society. It was obvious that Sri Ma made no distinction between men and women, as regards rights and obligations, although she was heard to say that to demand an equal share in the sphere of possessions was an unworthy aim of life. She encouraged all women to bring an independent spirit to the business of finding their places in the world; but she advocated a way of life which was guided by a spirit of service as distinguished from subservience. Sri Ma always cited her own mother whenever she wanted to demonstrate an ideal behaviour. She would say, 'My mother used to say', or 'My mother would not allow us to do such and such', or 'My mother did not do this.' The life of Didima however was an orchestration of fortitude, dispassion, spirit of service, self-confidence under difficult conditions and a total identification with God's will in life. Her sense of humour fortified her against any attempts at trivializing her position or dignity. She could not be pitied for her poor circumstances or shown sympathy for her hardships. She was taken at her own valuation and that was the dignity of complete self-sufficiency.

Sri Ma appreciated all this and spoke about it to many housewives. She wanted a woman to understand that she was the fulcrum of a well-knit family. The brunt of various outer forces are withstood by a family if the centre is strong and has enough



