

CONTENTS

English Section

1.	Matri-Vani	...	...	...	161
2.	Conversations with Sri Sri Anandamayi Ma—				
	Prof. B. Ganguli	...	...	...	163
3.	Mother as seen by a Westerner—				
	Arnaud Desjardins	...	...	...	176
4.	Power of Thought—				
	Swami Sivananda Saraswati	...	...	...	181
5.	New Diary Leaves—Atmananda	...	...	...	185
6.	Highlights of Pilani—Krishnanath			...	191
7.	Matri Lila	...	...	...	202



Mataji at Kankhal, 1961.

*The ONE who is the Eternal, the Ātman,
He Himself is the traveller on the path of Immortality,
He is all in all; He alone is.*

MATRI VANI

If the Immortal is to be found, to remember THAT in everything is always helpful. The search after Truth alone is man's duty so that he may move into the path of Immortality.

* * *

No matter in what way the One may manifest Himself, man must endeavour to draw close to Him. The rare boon of human birth has to be made fruitful. Truly, God's beneficent hand is ever at work.

* * *

All are indeed your own, your very Self. The path to the Supreme is the only real Path, all other tracks lead astray. God and God alone is Truth, He alone is eternal.

* * *

If, at some stage, inner agitation is aroused, there is always the possibility that in the course of its development the road to peace may unfold itself. When one is anchored in patience the path to peace opens out.

* * *

That in which there is no question of form or formlessness, of beyond form and attributes, of transcending even the beyond—That alone is worthy of human aspiration.

* * *

Man must go out in search of that which is concealed behind the world. He should choose an abode that will make it easy for him to proceed to his true home.

* * *

The Self, Self-contained, calling to Itself for its own Revelation—this is happiness.

of the self. All these are the same. The self is the only reality. The self is the only reality. The self is the only reality.

Conversations with Sri Sri Anandamayi Ma

PROFESSOR B. GANGULI

(Translated by Atmananda)

Ranchi Ashram,

26-5-1958.

Questions : Where is the heart situated ?

Mataji : As regards the contemplation of the various parts of the body, it is said that one should concentrate from foot to head and again in the opposite direction from head to foot. Further, the body as a whole should be contemplated. In this, heart, mind, everything is contained. When viewed separately, the heart will be found in the cave of the heart in the centre of the body. Yet, the heart has to be contemplated in any spot that the Guru may indicate, since different aspirants experience the heart in different places—many in the brain, for instance. In the cave of the heart God resides. According to the disposition (*samskāra*) and the particular path of a seeker, he may become aware of the cave of the heart in any one of the *cakras*,¹ for the simple reason that everything is contained in everything. Just as in the outer world the sight of a dark cloud may arouse *bhakti* in a worshipper of Krishna, so much so as to induce a state of *bhāva samādhi*,² similarly in the inner world the

1. *Cakras* = Psychic Zones in the human system which represent the fields of activities of different psychic forces and which have to be conquered, purified and sublimated by the Yogi in his upward journey to the sphere of Divine Consciousness and Power.

2. *Bhāva samādhi* Spiritual ecstasy, generally emotional in nature.

yogi may become conscious of the cave of the heart in either of the two *cakras* or in any of the three *granthis* (*Brahmagranthi*, *Viṣṇugranthi*, *Rudragranthi*),† and God, the One who is all pervading, may be realized. Just as for the sake of convenience in man's work, indivisible time is divided into morning, midday, evening and night, so also, among the infinite variety of objects, the human body being the nearest, or any of its centres may be used as a focus in meditation in order to make the mind one-pointed. Any centre of the body in which the aspirant's mind can find rest as in a cave, becomes for the time being the aspirant's cave of the heart. There is only one Brahman, everything is contained in everything. Depending on the disciple's particularity, the Guru will instruct him on which point to concentrate in meditation.

Question : Why has the Guru to be contemplated on the crown of the head ? What harm is there in thinking of Him in the heart or in the centre between the eyebrows ?

Mataji : It is right to meditate as indicated in the *Sāstras*. He, at whose feet one is enjoined to surrender one's head, where should His place be if not on top of the head ? Nevertheless, the Guru who is Knowledge Itself is everywhere, and therefore may be visualized in any place of the world or in any part of the human body. When transmission of the Guru's power has taken effect, everything becomes permeated by the Guru. All the same, at the level of spiritual practice, the place for the contemplation of the Guru has, as an aid in meditation, been fixed at the centre on top of the head, or on Mount Kailash for the Guru who is Śiva and for Śiva who is the Guru.

Question : When one's chosen Deity becomes displeased, the Guru delivers one. Why cannot one's chosen Deity save one when the Guru becomes displeased ?

Mataji : Because it is the Guru who reveals your *Ista* (chosen Deity) to you.

Ranchi, Ramakrishna Mission,
27/5/1958.

Question : How can the ordinary person acquire faith in the existence of God ?

Mataji : By seeking the company of saints and seekers after Truth, by listening to religious teaching, reading Scriptures and carrying out the injunctions of the Lord. Are you not the offspring of the Immortal ? The Immortal is Self-effulgent and lets Himself be contacted through the company of saints. Any kind of work that anyone does is based on faith. By associating with pilgrims on the path to God, the fire of faith will be kindled into a bright flame. Children study with the faith that, like everyone else, they will pass their examinations. Likewise, by watching other seekers, devotees or *yogis*, one gains the faith that enables one to tread the path. In reality you are Supreme Knowledge, Supreme Bliss. In order to discover your true nature, it is necessary to remove the veil of ignorance; and for the purpose of removing the veil one has to resort to the Path, to spiritual exercises, and so forth. By following with perseverance the method pointed out by the Guru, one finally discovers God; one comes to understand that all are His images, that actually there is no 'you' or 'I'.

You manifest as peace and also as error. You are eternal, pure, enlightened, free. In order that this truth may be

revealed, the veil has to be rent asunder. One has to obey the Guru, practise *sādhana* and so forth, so that one may know that only He alone exists. Indeed, God is not far away, *Bābā*. He seems far because of your idea of distance, which is wrong knowledge. He is within, without, everywhere, of infinite shapes. Again, in very truth, He is your Self. To find Him means to find your own Self, to know your Self. Inquiry arises in you because He who is Knowledge Itself is within you and has to be revealed. Just as by studying, the knowledge that is latent in you comes to light, so by spiritual practice God or your Self—which is one and the same—is found. For the sake of God-realization or Self-realization, the instructions of the *Sadguru* have to be carried out with single-minded devotion. This path is extremely easy and yet may be extremely difficult. In the measure that desirelessness grows, it becomes easy. If you want to tread the Path, He will hold your hand and guide you. In fact, He is holding your hand; with this conviction forge ahead—that's all ! At present you know yourself in ignorance; on reaching the end of the journey you will know yourself as endowed with Knowledge Supreme. For you are indeed both, ignorance and Knowledge. Remove the veil, and Knowledge will stand revealed.

This body speaks in such an incoherent way. Now it is for you, *Bābā* to grasp what has been said.

Question : What are the signs by which a competent Guru can be recognised ? How shall I know Him ?

Maṭaṅgi : When the time is ripe, He Himself will make

characterize a competent Guru are laid down. According to those signs you may also try to find Him.

At the end of the meeting, the head of the Ramakrishna Math of Ranchi (Moravadi) said : "Ma, I profoundly enjoyed this !"

Mataji replied: "You yourself are *ānandamaya* (permeated with joy), this is why, Bābā !"

"Feel convinced that, no matter what the State or condition you may be in, out of that very State Enlightenment may come."

—Sri Anandamayee Ma

Mother as Seen by a Westerner

ARNAUD DESJARDINS (PARIS)*

Flow on, Ganga, holy river, from the mountains to the gigantic plains, from Rishikesh to Benares, called Kashi or Varanasi by its children. I now intend to return to the sacred city.

At last I shall see face to face the sage whose two pictures, at an interval of several years, stirred me so profoundly that I could never forget them. When I had only just completed my studies, lost among the various problems that confront a young man hardly prepared for life, I one day, at a library, glanced casually through the pages of "*Autobiography of a Yogi* by *Paramahansa Yogananda*, the founder of the well known *Self-Realization Fellowship*. Among all the photos of austere sages and venerable old men that illustrate the work, the

* The following is not an article written for *Ananda Vārtā*. Short extracts from *Arnaud Desjardins'* book in French "*Ashrams, Les Yogis et les Sages*" published by *La Palatine*, Paris-Geneva, have been translated into English and in this way made available to our readers. The book describes the writer's journey in India and his impressions and experiences in four well-known Ashrams. We have obtained permission to publish in the pages of this magazine some portions of the two chapters devoted to Mataji. The book also deals with Yoga, Vedanta and Hinduism at large. It is interesting to note how powerfully Mataji has influenced the life of a Westerner, who is a Christian, does not understand either Hindi or Bengali, and has been with Mataji only three times, for several weeks on each occasion. Our readers will be interested to learn that Mr. and Mrs. Desjardins and their little daughter have come to India for the fourth time and are with Mataji at the moment.

— The Managing Editor

picture of a very young woman with closed eyes struck me like a shock. She seemed extraordinarily beautiful and I thought: this is the Woman, the Mother, the Virgin.

Eight years later someone presented to me the beautiful book "*India*" by the English photographer and writer *Richard Lannoy*. As I turn its pages, the face of an elderly woman with a look unlike any other, touches me to the quick. I am reminded of the meaning of the name *Krishna*: "he who steals the hearts." I do not even skim through the rest of the book: it has remained open on that page and never been closed again.

And a few months ago, when in my own car I started on my first trip to India, I made my first halt in a small Swiss village, at a distance of several thousand miles from my destination. Two courageous women spend every summer in that village. They both have lived a number of eventful years in the country that I am about to explore. To my question: "If I were to meet only one person in India, who should it be?" one of them replied very softly: "Ma Anandamayi."

When I mentioned her to Swami Sivananda, he said: "She is the most perfect flower the Indian soil has produced."

Today I only think: "It can hardly be that I am not deceived." And I am not even sure that I wish to meet her.

* * * *

Benares is the touchstone for the love or the horror of India for Europeans. I have perhaps never been so perfectly happy as during the weeks that I spent in that city, and thanks to my friends *Bhattacharya* who made me discover

the heart of their city, I lived like in the Kingdom of Heaven. But I know a number of travellers for whom it remains the memory of a veritable night-mare. I am sure that one could spend one's whole life in Benares, without exhausting its riches. But one of the spiritual seekers whom I esteem highly, was actually obliged to flee after a few hours.

At the very end of one of the narrow lanes that all resemble one another, and where it is easy to lose one's way, right at the bank of the Ganges, in the mohulla of Bhadaini is situated the main Ashram of the great Bengali saint and sage Sri Sri Ma Anandamayi. I arrived there for the first time one evening during the Durga Puja festival. I shall always remember it.

Having started at sunrise and succeeded in reaching Varanasi by nightfall, I am fairly exhausted. To locate Bhadaini is yet an event. At last I park my car in a road broad enough for carriages and, led by a few children, proceed on foot through the lane that seems even more mysterious and unreal in the dark of night.

What I see at the end of the lane is fantastic.

*

*

*

*

A swarming multitude enters, emerges and watches those who enter and emerge. One might think the bustle on the footpath due to a special performance at the Opera-house or to a ball in some large hotel, of which the guests have been miraculously undressed and deprived of their shoes.

The narrow entrance, giving way under the streamers, is blocked by flower and garland-sellers and by a heap of shoes and sandals scattered all over the pavement.

Inside, the crush is indescribable : tanned backs, *dhotis* shining white in the night, a rainbow of *saris*. A guide whose dark features I am unable to distinguish catches hold of me, and not without difficulty tracing out a passage for us, walks ahead of me up a narrow staircase.

The noise, the chanting, the music are deafening. But as we enter a terrace where the crowd becomes, if possible, even more dense, the threefold rhythm beaten on gongs, bells and cymbals bursts forth abruptly. Those who know it, will guess at once. Those who have never heard it, cannot imagine it. Thundering, sublime, piercing, overwhelming, shaking the whole body with its ever repeated three beats, capturing emotion, imposing silence on the mind, it raises in that wonderful autumn night the cry of the planet towards the sparkling sky. Across the white of a portico, amidst the black infinity of the plain far below, I distinguish the broad band of the eternal Ganga. In that frame, which opens out from a small outer staircase rising from the river, I see the most beautiful face of a man I have ever seen. Some wandering *sādhu* for whom this evening is but a halt on the road without end. The serene and silent peace that emanates from him, his ineffable smile and the light in his eyes give their meaning to the clangour of the brass under the blows of the clappers. Then he vanishes.

Instantaneously, abruptly there is silence, total, absolute, nourished by thousand individual silences.

I do not know for how long.

And suddenly I am pushed through the once again moving and noisy crowd, towards Her whom I had almost forgotten. "Mother, Mother," says a voice close to my ear. A woman who seems at the most forty years old, with long black hair falling loosely over her shoulders, dressed in a spotlessly white sari, more beautiful than I ever dreamt, smiles at me.

There is no question of my prostrating and putting my forehead on the ground : I cannot tear away my gaze from hers. I place one knee on the floor. I do not know how long this lasts. Then she turns round and walks away. I have had my first *darśana* of Mataji.

•

•

•

With the exception of two disciples of long standing, namely a French doctor of medicine and an Austrian musician who have settled in India, but like many other disciples of Mataji pursue their individual *sādhana*s in two of her Ashrams, rather than travelling much with Mataji, and two others who after long years of spiritual practice have returned to their countries, Ma Anandamayi receives even to this day few European visitors who remain with her for longer periods. Many stay for a few weeks, days or hours only.

This is no doubt due to the fact that her fame has in the west not yet spread like that of Sri Ramana Maharshi. However, I must also say that her incessant and unpredictable changes of residence do not make her easy of access. One must really be determined to have her *darśana* in order to succeed in meeting her. Moreover she does not speak English, and the difficulty of rare conversations with the

help of interpreters who are more or less acquainted with our way of thinking and putting questions, will never satisfy those who cannot search after Truth without resorting to questions and answers.

In short, after the enchantment of the first days is over, in which one is aware only of her extraordinary countenance and the beauty of her songs, to stay in close proximity to her (and Ma Anandamayi herself admits this quite frequently) is extremely difficult from every point of view. She also wields the sword more often than she bestows contentment.

Among those difficulties, a particular one may no doubt seem less easily acceptable to Europeans than to sleep on the floor or to be devoured by mosquitoes. For it is also true, as a matter of comfort, that Mataji's children know how to receive you as brothers and sisters who have come to the same Mother from a great distance, and they open to you their homes and their hearts. The difficulty I have in mind is the observance of caste rules in all the Ashrams, in which Ma Anandamayi herself considers herself but a guest.

The division into castes of Indian society has always seemed revolting to the west and to Christians. The recognition of that division in the surroundings of a Master who is regarded as the Mother of all and who teaches the absolute unity of the universe seems even more incomprehensible and unacceptable. For among the casteless are the foreigners. Those rules apply particularly to food. If I had entered the kitchen where the rice for the Ashramites was being prepared, that enormous quantity of food would have been lost for the orthodox Hindus, as if my impurity had positively defiled it.