

Ananda Vārtā

A quarterly journal dealing mainly with the divine life and teaching of Mata Anandamayi and with other religio-philosophical topics

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Mātri Vāni

No attempt is futile, everything serves a purpose. Suppose you are travelling somewhere by railway. In order to catch the train, you will first go by boat from your village to Dacca, then descend from the boat with the help of a stick, and get into a horse-carriage that will reach you at the station. Although your aim is a journey by train, you cannot say that the boat, stick, horse-carriage and so forth are of no use. Similarly, you should understand that everything you do in order to realize God is helpful. Nothing at all is wasted. By whatever name you may invoke God, your effort will be crowned with success. The main thing is to cling to the Name with constancy.

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Just try to keep the kite of your mind tied to the string of God's name. If it is fixed in this manner your

thinking will some day or other get under your control. Although restlessness is the nature of the mind, yet to become still is its *dhārma*. In order to make it calm, you will have to be centred in something. In order to find a job you look to some person or other for support, you go to a particular place. Similarly, in order to be liberated have recourse to the Name.

* * *

Children of tender age do not want to learn to read and write because they prefer to play. If little boys and girls are to be taught reading and writing, they will have to be persuaded to learn; so also, to begin with one has to repeat the Name forcibly. Constant practice is needed. Look, when dirt accumulates on a vessel, it has to be scrubbed and polished to become shiny. Rubbing it just once will not make it clean. In order to light a match, friction is necessary, one cannot be sure at what instant fire will blaze forth. With the repetition of the Name it is also similar. By sustained practice success will be accomplished. Become wedded to the yoga of practice.

* * *

One should never tell a lie. God is Truth. By speaking the truth under all circumstances a state of integrity comes about naturally. No untruth should ever come from one's lips. If truth is the fulcrum of one's life all virtues will develop spontaneously.

* * *

In order to find a *Sadguru* genuine endeavour is needed. When your aspiration becomes pure, you are bound to find a *Sadguru*. Look, when a child keeps on crying, "Ma, Ma !" writhing with pain, can the Mother remain unmoved? She will hasten to him with great alacrity. Pine for a Guru with equal intensity and he will most certainly come to you.

From the Life of Mataji

Bithika Mukerji

(Continued from the July 1972 issue.)

(1936.)

As mentioned earlier, Mataji, accompanied by Viraj-mohini and Kamal, left Serampore for an unknown destination on August 3rd, 1936. Bholanath was in Calcutta, Bhaji in Solon, Didi in Vindhyachal and Swami Akhandananda in Kishenpur. Letters expressing anxiety, bewilderment and concern were exchanged hurriedly but the incredible news was confirmed again and again. Mataji had left without taking with her even one change of clothes. Her sole possessions were a *lota** and a narrow strip of a blanket.

What puzzled everyone most was, why Mataji should travel around in the manner of a mendicant *sādhu* when there were hundreds of people eager to do her slightest behest. What purpose could this incognito journey serve? Gradually the devotees were led to deeper understanding of Mataji's personality because they were compelled now to contemplate the meaning of her actions. The significance of her statements about herself began to emerge with greater clarity. "I am a bird on the wing," she says very often, implying that she has no permanent home and is free like a bird to choose temporary halting places. She also says, "Just learn to accept whatever comes to pass according to the scheme of things. God's way alone is operative

* *Lota* Vessel for keeping water.

in the world, so whatever happens, happens according to His Will."

A close examination of Mataji's actions reveals the fact that there is an underlying motivation to go forward to meet the basic need of people. The men and women with whom she thus casually comes in contact may appear to be strangers. They may not perceptively add to the bulk of devotees, yet they are not less important to her than the closest companion of many years' standing. Many volumes may be filled with the accounts of incidents of such casual meetings, due to which the lives of men and women have undergone radical transformations. Many people suffer from a haunting sense of the meaninglessness of life. They do not consciously seek a religious solution for their inarticulate problem. When such lives are irradiated by the compassionate understanding of Mataji, nothing may be visible on the surface. People do not talk of such experiences. It is more than likely that Mataji would not have met the vast number of people she has, if she had not gone to them, when they were unable to come to her.

When asked the reason for her ceaseless travels, Mataji at times replies, "I do not go from one place to another. It is God's garden in which I stroll around to see how the various trees and plants are faring."

This analogy explains to some extent Mataji's way of life. The gardener is near at hand. If the plants are drooping he renders help, if they are flourishing he takes delight in their blossoms.

This picture is yet not too apt. It does not allow for Mataji's unique way of participating in the affairs around her,

She remains untouched, it is true, but she is not aloof. It may be said that she ceaselessly, untiringly seeks to awaken the higher faculties in human beings so that they may fulfil their destiny which, according to Mataji, is the Realization of Truth. The appearance of her untouched aloofness comes about because she does not exhort or make a mission out of this—in fact she does not need to do so as her very presence raises man beyond himself. To be aware of her presence is to open oneself to a new dimension of life.

These and many other facts of her personality became clearer as news of Mataji began to trickle in from various parts of the country. Someone would recognize her and write to another about her visit. Whoever heard anything about her would at once communicate the news to others in Dacca, Calcutta, Vindhya-chal, Solon, Simla and other places. Slowly a picture began to emerge of Mataji's incognito travels. The gaps were later filled in by Virajmohini.

From Serampore Mataji went to Puri. No accomodation was available at any of the inns so they took shelter on the open veranda of a *dharmasālā*. At Serampore railway station a devotee had given a costly *sāri* for Mataji to Virajmohini. This she had bundled up with her own couple of *dhotis*. Now, before going out with Mataji to see the temples in the city, she entrusted this meagre baggage to the occupants of the adjacent room, a family from Orissa. When, on returning, to the *dharmasālā*, Virajmohini went to fetch her belongings, the pilgrims asked her whether she would sell the decorative *sāri* to them and for what price. Virajmohini replied that she would not sell it and that she did not know the price as it was a gift. The pilgrims tried in vain to persuade her, arguing that Mataji would not wear the

sari as she was dressed in white. When Mataji heard about this, she asked the pilgrims to accept the *sāri* as a gift. They at first declined but were not proof against Mataji's sweetly persuasive requests. They took the *sāri* and bought for Mataji a white *dhoti* such as she was in the habit of wearing. In this way Mataji acquired a change of apparel.

In the evening Mataji went out for a stroll on the sea-shore. A boy came up to her and asked : "Aren't you the Mother of Shahbagh ? I have seen you in Dacca." Later in the evening, on her return to the *dharmasālā*, Mataji remarked, "I see Makhan Babu looking around with a lantern in his hand." After some time Makhan Babu actually appeared at the *dharmasālā* carrying a lantern and was not a little surprised to hear that Mataji had been expecting him. The boy who had met her on the sea-shore had informed him of Mataji's presence at Puri.

The next day, Makhan Babu took her to visit Sri Shyamdasji. Now this incident in a most remarkable manner came to the knowledge of Didi at Vindhyachal, where she met a nephew of Sri Mahesh Chandra Bhattacharya.* This gentleman lived in Puri and was a close associate of Sri Shyamdasji. He related to Didi : "I was in Puri when Mataji visited the venerable Vaisnava *sādhu* Sri Shyamdasji but unfortunately could not have her *darśana*. Shyamdasji is an old man of about eighty, and rheumatism has made him almost a cripple. About three months ago he had heard someone talk of Anandamayi Ma. Since then

* A very devout and venerated person of Vindhyachal. His house is just adjacent to the grounds of Mataji's Ashram at Vindhyachal. This house is called "Bhajanālaya" and used only for devotional purposes by the family and is available to Mataji's guests whenever she visits Vindhyachal.

he had an overwhelming desire to meet her. He would constantly talk about this and even expressed the wish to go to Dehradun to see Mataji. I used to visit him quite often. I have known him for the last eighteen or twenty years and never before heard him express strong likes or dislikes of anything. I was surprised to see him in the grip of this burning desire. I said to him, 'you have known great ascetics and are living in the holy city of God. Why should you become so eager to see Mataji? Besides you barely have the strength to go to the next room—how can you dream of undertaking the long journey to Dehradun?'

“Shyamji listened to all this in silence and did not argue about it anymore. About six weeks later I happened to visit him again. He greeted me with joy and said happily: ‘Do you know, I have had Mata Anandamayi’s *darśana*; she came right here to my room!’ ‘Why did you not send for me?’ I asked. He replied; ‘I was too overwhelmed to think of anything at that time. She stayed with me for a few minutes only.’ I was happy that the old man’s wish had been fulfilled. When I went to look for Mataji, I was disappointed to find that she had left Puri.”

From Puri Mataji went to Bhuvaneshwar and a day later left for Agra visiting many places on the way. From Agra she proceeded to Mathura. Neither Didi’s brother Biren Mukerji who lived at Agra nor Narsing Chatterji at Mathura knew that Mataji had come and gone.

Pilgrims are permitted to stay at *dharmasālās* for three days only. On leaving the *dharmasālā* at Mathura, Mataji persuaded Kamal to return to Calcutta. She asked him to take away with him a few utensils that Virajmohini had purchased at Puri. The three of them walked to the station. After Kamal’s

departure, Mataji and Virajmohini went and sat on the banks of the Jamuna. Since more than a year Mataji was eating on alternate days only. This was the day when she would eat. Virajmohini procured a few fruits and started feeding Mataji. It was a strange spectacle. Passersby stopped and in no time a crowd collected to see the odd sight of a lady with uncovered head and loose hair being fed like a child by another woman. A few laughed and Mataji smiled with them enjoying their amusement.

Evening closed in. There was nowhere to go. Pointing to a spot by the wayside, Mataji asked Virajmohini, "Can you spend the night here?" Just then a Kashmiri lady greeted Mataji with great excitement. She pronounced herself blessed to have found Mataji in this most unexpected manner. Mataji and her companion were taken to a temple and made comfortable. But the very next day they left for Vrindaban and put up at the *dharmasālā* of the Raja of Burdwan. The manager Sri Yogendra Babu, was known to Mataji. He made her welcome. In obedience to her *kheyāla*, he did not persuade Mataji to stay on but accompanied her to the station and purchased tickets for Agra. At Agra Mataji asked Virajmohini to buy tickets for Etawah. While they were changing trains at Tundla Junction, a young man greeted Mataji, saying that he had seen her at Sultanpur and begged her to come with him to Sultanpur. Mataji said they were going to Etawah, but the young man insisted on getting their tickets changed for Sultanpur. Strangely the young man was not to be seen at Allahabad Junction where they had to change trains. Mataji and Virajmohini entered a ladies' compartment. At Pratapgarh a Muslim lady got in. In India people are expected to exchange information

about each other. A barrier of silence is considered discourteous. So people do not hesitate to greet strangers or talk to them. After settling in, the Muslim lady asked Mataji, "How many children have you?" Mataji smiled: "I am myself your small child. How can I have children of my own?" The Muslim woman took this seriously and started a friendly conversation. Virajmohini had purchased a toy from a vendor at a station. Mataji had been holding it in her hand for some time. At the parting she gave it to the lady, saying: "Children give their toys to their parents for safe keeping—please keep this for me!" The woman had become so attached to Mataji during this short while that she wept at the parting. She left her address with Virajmohini and requested Mataji to visit that part of the country again. At Sultanpur Virajmohini, with Mataji's permission, went to inform Dr. Rama Sharma, the sister of Dr. Sharda Sharma (Sevaji) of Dehradun.

In this and similar ways Mataji visited various places. She went up to Nainital, as far west as Amritsar and Lahore, she visited Garhmukteshwar near Meerut, the holy forest of Naimisharanya near Lucknow, Barabanki, Bareilly, Fyzabad¹ and also Deoghar which is not very far from Calcutta. In some towns the local devotees were to their great joy apprised of Mataji's presence by Virajmohini, as for example Maharattanji in Bareilly and Dr. Pitamber Pant at Etawah. At other places like Fyzabad people came to know about Mataji's arrival accidentally. But mostly Mataji was able to move about freely at her own *kheyāla*. Virajmohini narrated later that, although most of the time she did not know from where the next meal would come, they were never inconvenienced for the lack of food, shelter or money.

1. Not in this order. Many places she visited twice.

From Deoghar they went to Tarapith and Mataji sent word to her people to come and join her. Within a few days Tarapith was teeming with devotees from Dacca, Calcutta and Jamshedpur. Accompanied by a host of people, Mataji left for Dibrugarh. At Naihati the men and women from Calcutta and Jamshedpur boarded a south bound train, while Mataji with her depleted party went on to Amingaon where they crossed the river by steamer-ferry and arrived at Pandughat.

While Mataji and her companions were sitting in the train they saw a small boy with books under his arm walking along the railway track. Mataji leaned out and asked the boy to come in. He entered the compartment and readily answered Mataji's questions. His name was Mukul Datta. His father was employed in the Railway department. Mukul was going to school in Gauhati. A few more school-children climbed up into the compartment. Mataji became great friends with them. The next station was Gauhati, so they could stay for a short while only. Mataji said to them, "Would you not like to think of God a little every day? Tell me, which of His many Names do you like best?"

Some answered, "Hari", some "Lakshmi", a few said "Siva" and others "Saraswati." Two boys said, "Allah", Mataji then spoke to all of them: "As soon as you get up in the morning you must wash and clean yourselves. Then write in a new copy-book God's name of your choice seven, ten or twelve times (according to age) and then take your breakfast. After that sit down to your studies. When the copy-book is full, put it in the river saying a prayer to God. Then start a fresh copy-book. What do you say? Will you be able to do it?"

The children enthusiastically agreed to do as she had told them. Mataji gave them whatever fruits and sweets she had with her. They painstakingly took down her address in their exercise-books. At Gauhati they had to leave the train. Three or four of them walked back from a little distance and told Mataji that they would see her on her return journey from Dibrugarh. They said they lived near the railway station and if anyone shouted their names they would hear.

Mataji arrived at Dibrugarh. Bholanath, Swami Akhandananda, Didi and few others were with her. Mataji visited Shillong and many other places in Assam. Before his retirement from Government service Akhandananda had been posted in some towns of Assam as Civil Surgeon. Many of the officers were known to him. Some of his younger colleagues were amazed to see him in the garb of a *sannyāsi*. After seven days Mataji returned to Pandughat to catch the steamer ferry. Virajmohini, who had gone to see her daughter and son-in-law, was waiting for them at Pandughat. She said, "When I arrived here, a dozen children came running up to me thinking Mataji had come. When I told them that Mataji was expected from Shillong by the motor route, they assembled near the bus stand. They would run to scrutinize passengers as they descended from cars and buses. They were there most of the day." On hearing this, Bholanath and Akhandananda went to look for the children. But it was dark now and the steamer was about to leave so they could not go very far away from the river bank. When it was time to board to boat, Mataji beckoned to a young man standing at a little distance. When he came near, she asked; "Do you know Mukul Datta?" Surprised he said, yes, he did. Mataji then said: "Will you tell him and the other

little boys and girls that we looked for them but could not wait to see them as we have to leave now." The young man promised to deliver the message.

Mataji came to Rajshahi for one day. From there she went to Jamshedpur and then to Nawadwip on December 20th, 1936. From there Bholanath, escorting Mataji's parents, went on a pilgrimage to Dwarka. Mataji had been constantly on the move from the day she left Serampore nearly five months earlier. Now at Navadwip she settled down for a comparatively long stay. Many devotees from Culcutta, Dacca, Jamshedpur, Serampore, Rajshahi and other places came to spend the Xmas vacation with her. Mataji would visit temples and various renowned ascetics with her retinue of men, women and children. Sometimes they would all go out in a fleet of boats on the Ganges. The local people in their turn came to pay their respects to her and listen to her replies to their questions. One day a *sannyāsi* asked her: "The different statements of the Scriptures are not readily reconcilable. How should we know which to follow for spiritual progress?"

Mataji : All statements made in the Scriptures are correct. *Sādhakas* have tried to express the truth which they realized through their *sādhana*. But how much, after all, can be told or recorded? The Scriptures are like a railway time-table. The time-table enumerates the names of the stations through which you have to pass in order to arrive at your destination. But we get no idea of the places by reading their names in the time-table. Moreover not all the places through which the train must pass can be mentioned. Similarly the Scriptures do not exhaustively describe the world of *sādhana*. They refer to important landmarks only. Reading the time table cannot sub-

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stitute for travelling through the places mentioned therein. Similarly one must engage in spiritual practices to find out about what is written in the Scriptures. What you see as irreconcilable contradictions are different perspectives only. This is why I say, what is written in the Scriptures is right, and what is left unwritten is also right."

"What exactly is one to do?"

Mataji : In order to attain to Liberation it is man's duty to follow the path indicated by the guru. When a beginning has been made, all that is necessary for him comes about naturally and spontaneously. For example, you want to go to the Ganges. You do not know the way and ask someone who does. He will give you the directions. If you forget them or begin to go astray, other wayfarers will put you right. The person who first instructed you need not come with you the whole way. You will get help from others proceeding by the same route. The important thing is to make a beginning. Help comes automatically.

Nawadwip is a holy city where Lord Gouranga * was born in the year 1486. The city is full of temples and replete with memories of the *līlā* of Sri Gouranga. *Kirtana* is the life-breath of Navadwip. When walking in the main streets one can almost incessantly hear the melodiously sung names of the Lord, rising and falling in waves as one passes or approaches the vari-

* Lord Gouranga, also known as Sri Chaitanya Deva or Mahaprabhu, the great apostle of Vaiṣṇavism, taught the path of divine love for the realization of God. He spent much of his life in a state of God-intoxication and experienced many transcendental *bhāvas* (moods) that also caused certain transformations in the body.

ous temples. Many Vaisnava ascetics of renown live in Nawadwip. One of them, Lalita Sakhi, was held in great respect by the local people. Mataji visited him one day. He made Mataji and her large crowd of devotees welcome and answered questions put to him by some of the men in Mataji's party. Everyone was greatly impressed by his utter devotion and the quality of his living experience of Vaisnava ideals. He said to Mataji : "Ma, I heard a rumour that you had left Navadwip. I confess to a feeling of hurt that you should have gone away without meeting me."

Mataji smilingly rejoined : "How can a daughter go away without paying respects to her parent !"

Many of the professors from Dacca, Rajshahi and Serampore had collected round Mataji. Among them were Amulya Kumar Datta Gupta, Atal Behari Bhattacharya, Girija Shanker Bhattacharya, Triguna Banerji. Every day they would have discussions with Mataji. Somebody one day raised the question whether *Krishna Līlā* was to be considered an actual event or of divine and transcendental nature (*prakrita* or *aprakrita*).

Mataji : If you say *līlā* you have to concede that it is divine. It is said that only those who have attained to a state of liberation have the capacity to listen and to understand accounts of the divine *līlā* of Sri Krishna. But this is not so. Those who are liberated were once under bondage. Thus *līlā* is for those who have never known bondage. In *līlā* there is One Actor only. He alone is the entire cast, comprising the *gopikas* (milk maids), the *gopālas* (cowherds) and also the accessories, such as music and so forth. *Līlā* can be truly understood by Him alone who is established in the One. Radha and Krishna are not two but one. Therefore it can be nothing but *Līlā*.

Question : Does liberation come about through active *sādhana* or is it due to Grace ?

Mataji : Action is required at first; endeavour calls forth Grace.

Question : But I fail to understand the exact relation between effort and Grace. We are required to make an earnest effort to come closer to God. Then where does Grace come in ?

Mataji : The aspirant finally reaches a state where he realizes that there is nothing else except Grace. This cannot happen while man thinks of himself as the 'doer'. Therefore one must make an effort. Since one engages in all sorts of efforts for worldly things, should one not engage in *sādhana* for God ? It is true that Grace comes of itself. But this has to be realized.

One day, while walking down a street, Mataji suddenly entered the City Police Station. The Officer-in-Charge, Naresh C. Banerji, hurriedly came out and greeted her. He made arrangements for her to sit on a platform built under a tree. After some conversation Sri Banerji said to Mataji : "I heard that you had visited Lalita Sakhi because he wanted to have your *darśana*. I said to myself : 'I shall also pray silently and see whether Ma answers my prayer.' I am blessed indeed that you have come here !"

A passerby, seeing Mataji and her party in the Police Station, exclaimed, "Look, Anandamayi Ma and her people have been arrested by the police." Mataji smiled and remarked, "I had stolen the attention of the Officer-in-Charge for a few minutes, this is why he has brought me here."

(To be continued)

The Portable Paradise*

Kamakhya Prasad Roy

I see a flower. It does not see me obviously as I myself do. But it transmits of its joy and fragrance. And within the shortest time I can conceive of, it has already communicated its message to me. I feel a wonderful happiness to be a partaker of the abundance of life with which the flower seems to be overflowing.

What a mysterious rapport my heart feels for this dumb little being! Is there anything else in this world of living creatures, which in an instant can give me so much through the medium of words, gestures or signs? I doubt.

My life rolls on in my daily round of work. I have intense feelings of pain and pleasure, hunger and satisfaction, in fact of the varying sensations of the pairs of opposites my flesh is exposed to.

My effort through this 'work' does not proceed by a very easy path, rather it has to negotiate—I daily realise—around uneven and winding treks.

At times, as I am passing through the positive aspect of a particular pair of sensations, I naturally feel elated, and the moment it is otherwise, my heart sinks in despair.

* The title of this essay has been borrowed from Paramahansa Yoganandaji's reference to Mā in chapter 45 of "Autobiography of a Yogi."

“What a gathering of tragic events this life is,” I start meditating, “as compared to the one of complete repose in the case of the flower !” This meditation keeps my heart swinging like a pendulum, between my two fits of passion—one of my heart’s craving and the other, of the body’s demands.

The result of this meditation in me is the ultimate release of human potential through various arts and literature of the individual and of the race, the community, in the projection of a stalwart who appears to be the fulfilment of the collective thinking and longing of the age.

The process of individual meditation belongs to the realm of creative activities, by which he generally attempts to discover, what he would have loved to see and achieve. Yet there is a subliminal current of such sentiments working through him, that aspires to share with the whole community of men the treasures of his own find. The individual then ceases to be an isolated being and begins to feel his kinship with the entire mankind, and all corners of the globe become his own habitat. ‘Foreign’ and ‘distant’ then are two words that no longer convey their worn-out meaning to him. He is then prepared :

“To be a sailor of the world bound for all parts,”* and, no more content with the little things around him, he speaks out such gracious words that well up from within himself,

“It is not enough to have this globe or a certain time,

I will have thousands of globes and all time.”*

Analyzing the subtle difference between this passive joy experienced though the medium of Nature—as we have tried to

* From “A Song of Joy”—W. Whitman.

describe in the instance of the flower—and that of our individual personality, a deeper and more sustaining joy of our own creation, Tagore holds to the following very interesting thesis in the course of his lectures delivered in America.*

“The revelation of unity in its passive perfection which we find in nature is beauty; the revelation of unity in its active perfection which we find in the spiritual world is Love.”**

Tagore, we know, is a legendary figure—though almost of the contemporary world—in whom one finds a complete fusing of the rationale with emotional temperament. The following passage quoted from the same source, we believe, will amply justify our claim to that effect :

“Beauty is the harmony realized in things which are bound by law. Love is the harmony realized in wills which are free.”
(Page—101)

Freedom of will then, is the guiding principle that determines or at least aids in the determination of the spiritual fulfilment of man in and through his ‘love’.

Further tracing the course of this interdependence of ‘freedom’ and ‘love’, the poet presents an immensely interesting point in his enlightened discourse :

“In man,” he says, “these centres of freedom have been created,” and obviously by man’s personal efforts. And finally we find him pronounce such bold words as these, “The creation of

* Published in a book under the title “Personality” by Messrs Macmillan & Co. Ltd., London.

** From chapter “the second birth”—Page-101/2

the natural world is God's creation, we can only receive and by receiving it make it our own. But in the creation of the spiritual world we are God's partners." (P. 101/2)

Yet, for the unfoldment of the best creative faculty in man, one's "consciousness," he holds, "has to be made clear of all mists of delusion, will has to be made free from all contrary forces of passions and desires and then we meet God where He creates.....He gives us from his own fulness and we also give him from our abundance." (Page-102)

And thus the stage is prepared for the climax of the human drama to be reached in man's willing surrender to the infinite," which according to the poet is the precondition for the 'union' quoting his inimitable words—for "Gods love (to) fully act upon man's soul through the medium of freedom." (P.-105)

Blessed is the age that evolves stalwarts of the stature of a Vergil, Dante, Goethe, Whitman, Tagore or a Tolstoi and their like—who serve the purpose of keeping the flame of human aspiration burning by repeatedly presenting the near-ideal archetype in and through their own life and work. And, immensely blessed is the age of a Socrates, a Buddha, a Christ, a Chaitanya Deva or a Rāmakrishna—who by their mere presence help removing the accumulated dross of the age that thwarts and stays the march of human progress to his much coveted goal of life. In fact, what Swami Vivekānanda once spoke at Los Angeles about Jesus Christ, in one of his inspiring lectures "Christ, the Messenger" in these words : "Little men like you and me are simply the recipients of just a little energy. A few minutes, a few hours, a few years at best, are enough to spend it all, to stretch it out as it were, to its fullest strength, and

then we are gone for ever. But mark this giant that came; centuries and ages pass, yet the energy that he left upon the world is not yet stretched, not yet expanded to its full. It goes on adding new vigour as the ages roll on"—the same holds good in respect of the other giants we have just mentioned.

We shall now make a modest attempt to outstretch what little we can, of the eternal theme of human aspiration that in this very age of ours is once again represented in the unbelievably rare personality of Sri Sri Mā Anandamayi of Bengal. Needless to say, she does no more belong to one particular place or people. We shall presently see that no one nation or race has any exclusive claim on her, for, being truly the fulfilment of the highest and noblest ideal of mankind, as conceived and adored through the ages, she can but belong to the entire mankind as such—guiding and inspiring them universally by the glorious example of all that she stands for.

What the Chinese erudite scholar Dr. Chou Hsiang Kuang, Ph. D. (Delhi), a professor of the Allahabad University at that time (in 1960) wrote about Mother in an interesting article "Mother Anandamayi : A Votary of Divine Love,"* is very significant. "The present age, in which scientific invention is becoming a menace to culture and civilization, needs the healing influence of a religion of unalloyed love and devotion," thus begins Dr. Kuang in his well-written article depicting a faithful, loving portrait of Mother, as he had come to know her during his considerably long contact (he had his first darśana of Mother at the Raipur Ashram, Dehra Dun in Januray 1946.) Then giving illustrations and descriptions of various occasions he had

* Ananda Vārtā, May, '60—Vol, VIII/1, Page; 31/32

the privilege of watching Mother closely and having first-hand knowledge about her profound ways of ministration and her spiritual influence on the enormously large number of admirers and devotees drawn from diverse nationalities, races and religions that are found to gather around her at every place all the time, he observes, "I felt that she is a mother, full of love and tenderness. Yes, Mother is the embodiment of *bhakti*, is intense love for God. When a person attains to it, he or she loves all, hates none; he or she becomes fulfilled for ever. This love has no motive and seeks no reward; because so long as worldly desires endure, that great all-embracing love does not come." Dr. Kuang lastly sums up his observations thus : "Today the power-intoxicated, war-thirsty spirit of the devil is roaring aloud, shouting its battle-cry, menacing not only to destroy the civilization of the world but also to lay axe to the root of the entire human race. We do want a teacher who can give us Faith, who can show us the straight way to the new Heaven and the new Earth of our fervent hopes."

He finally concludes, "Mother Anandamayī is the Mother of Supernature and the pilgrim of Eternity, *the great power and personality that the time and spirit has evolved out of the labour of the ages.*"

Another gentleman, Mr. K. G. Ambegaokar, I. C. S. (Retd.) writing about Mother in the same year for Ānanda Vārtā observes : "Sri Sri Anandamayī Mā, who is generally referred to lovingly as 'Mā' or 'Mātāji' sometimes employs the following simile, when asked what it means to realize God, "To a person who has never eaten a *rasagulla* (a Bengali sweet); it is impossible to convey by words an exact idea of its taste'. I find

a similar difficulty in expressing what I feel about Mā in a way that would give a clear picture of her to those who have never met her." He is also of the opinion that, "there is such an aura of love, light and laughter about her, she moves in such a rarified atmosphere, surcharged with goodness and godliness that one instinctively and involuntarily feels that one is in the presence of Divinity."*

Again, speaking about this spiritual aura around Mother, which irresistibly influenced all her companions and visitors, even during her stay at the Shahbag Gardens, Dacca (1924-26), Dr. (Miss) Bithika Mukerji of the Department of Philosophy, B.H.U., writes : "In Her presence the adventure of the spiritual life acquired new dimensions and a unique significance. For many it became the most worth-while pursuit of human existence."†

As we go deeper and deeper into the fathomless beatitude and felicity which is experienced in the immediate presence of Mother, we shall come to realize that the remarks of Dr. Kuang, that such a powerful and supernatural personality must have been evolved by the "Time and Spirit out of the labour of the ages," has not been exaggerated in the very least.

Richard Lannoy, an artist of scholarly disposition, gifted with a noble soul, we know, came to Mother in the early fifties. This English gentleman of quick understanding as well as fine intellect devoted himself to the laudable venture of portraying profiles of Mother not in any pastel or other painting materials,

* Ananda Varta, Nov. 1960-Vol. VIII/3, Page : 116/17.

† "From the life of Sri Anandamayi Ma," Page : 64.

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but simply with the help of his commendable pen in the pages of "Ānanda Vārtā."

Writing on Mother in one of these articles 'Reflections from Europe,' † against the background of the crisis of religion in the west, while tracing the sources of this malady, R. Lannoy meaningfully refers to Mataji's wonder-working influence on the lives of people seeking guidance from her. We have here on record the result of his serious study, as quoted from the same source (page 91-92) :

"There is a terrible crisis of religion in the west, because we have failed to maintain its vitality in the face of modern civilization. As a result we feel impoverished and empty within, for the signs, symbols and wonders that inspired our forefathers have mysteriously lost their potency and we must plot new maps for new territory conquered by the mind. We have lost the power to abide in the solitude of the soul and to find contentment at the source of life, for this instinct has been smothered or disturbed by the stress of life today. There is no meditation now in the west such as could create Chartres Cathedral in the 13th century. Through tragedy, heroic struggle and 'quiet desperation' western man may indeed still grow to his full stature, and by a miracle many do achieve serenity. Sheer effort has led western man away from the profound riches of the soul and from the noblest in his traditions to a condition of separateness, of individual isolation. Significantly enough the most universal sign of a need for religion and an attempt at least to supply a substitute is maintained by the much increased aware-

† Ananda Vārtā, May 1956-Vol. IV/1.

