

*The Eternal, the Atman—
Itself pilgrim and path of Immortality,
Self-contained—THAT is all in One.*

ĀNANDA VĀRTĀ

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Mātri Vāni

(Dictated by Sri Ma as letters in response to devotees' requests for personal advice and guidance.)

If you ask the advice of this body you will be told to first of all stay in one place like a real good *sādhika* and fill your own vessel. It will overflow of itself when it is full and thereby your treasure will be distributed spontaneously. Whereas if you start serving and teaching right from the beginning, emptiness is bound to be the result and repentance will follow in its wake. If you want to attain to Fulfilment you must not proceed in this manner for it will create obstacles.

In order to overcome restlessness it is imperative to become completely single-minded. The more one abides in divine thoughts and aspirations which are the essence of sat-sang, the more perfectly will one's cherished desire be fulfilled and restlessness be pacified.

To don the robe does not make a *sannyāsi* - so long as

more will it be attacked by fear and similar emotions. The remembrance of God has to be sustained whether one feels inclined towards it or not. Very often the gravity of the situation is thereby lessened.

God is of so many shapes and forms. Whichever of His forms anyone loves and adores, God is with him in that very form. Become immersed in It through self-dedication and contemplation. At every moment be filled with faith, devotion, love and affection for this very Bhagavān.

Those who have dedicated their lives to the Supreme Quest (*Paramārtha*) must remain absorbed, nay intoxicated with this and this alone. No association with anyone. Mixing as little as possible with worldly people. Ever wedded to activity, to actions helpful to your japa, meditation, sādhana. The more constantly mind and heart cling to God's lotus feet, the greater the hope of the awakening of inner power (*śakti*). To the limit of your power stay pledged to practices aiming at God (*Bhagavat Kriyā*). Fix a spiritual programme for before and after the day's work and keep strictly bound to it.

Mātri Upadeshāmrita

I am only a child and do not know how to lecture or give discourses. Just as a child, when it finds something sweet and good takes it to its mother and father, so do I place before you what is sweet and good. You take whatever pleases you. Mine is only a child's prattle. In fact, it is you alone who question and you alone who answer. You beat the drum and you hear the sound.

—Mataji

(*Mātri Upadeshāmrita*, "the Nectar of Mother's Teaching", comprises excerpts from various sources of Sri Ma's spiritual instruction on selected subjects—Compiled by Sister Uma).

Who is Ma ?

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

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

Question : Then why are you in this world ?

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

Question : What is your work ?

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

*

*

*

Here in this body lie all things in the universe – father, mother, son and daughter – all created beings. From this One, all have come into being. In the One all exist, persist and finally merge.

* * *

Question : Who are you ?

Mataji : *Pūrṇa Brahma Nārāyaṇa !*

* * *

Bhaiji : Mother, pray tell me what are you in reality !

Mataji : How could such childish queries arise in your heart ? The vision of gods and goddesses appears in accordance with one's *saṁskāras*. I am what I was and what I shall be; I am whatever you conceive, think or say, but it is a supreme fact that this body has not come into being to reap the fruits of past karma. Why don't you take it that this body is the material embodiment of all your aspirations and ideas. You all have wanted it and you have it now. So, play with this doll for some time. Further questions will be fruitless.

* * *

Happenings appear natural or unnatural, normal or supernatural according to your angle of vision. Here, of course karma and *vāsanā* (desire) do not even exist. Here all that can be said is : Whatever happens is equally welcome.

* * *

Bhaiji : When your body is physically asleep in *saṁādhi* do you find any divine presence appearing before your vision ?

Mataji : As I have no fixed aim, there is no need for it; this body does not act with any purpose. Your strong desire

to see this body in states of *samādhi*, causes its symptoms to manifest at times.

I don't do anything of my own will; you laugh and weep according to your impulses and your desires are fulfilled. For your life's work you have brought down this body.

I have no need of doing or saying anything; there never was any need, neither is there now, nor will there ever be in future. What you found manifested in me in the past, what you see now and what will be observed in the future is only for the good of you all. If you think that there is something peculiarly my own, I must tell you that the whole world is my own.

The *ātmā* of this body is indeed everyone's *ātmā*. It cannot be that anybody, anywhere, is not Ma's very own.

I know nothing. I say what you pour into my ears.

This body is but a toy doll; just as you desire to play with it, so it goes on playing.

Solely for you all is indeed everything that this body says or does—its actions, movements, its going hither and thither. Whatever is done for your sake through this body at any time, it is you who cause it to happen.

Your sorrow, your pain, your agony is indeed my sorrow. This body understands everything.

* * *

This body is always with you.

* * *

You may want to banish this body from your mind. But this body won't leave for a single day - it does not and never will leave your thought. Whoever has once been drawn to love this body will never succeed in wiping out its impression even despite hundreds of attempts. This body rests and shall remain in his memory for all times.

* * *

Just as at a flash of torch-light your faces gleam forth in their bold outlines, all your facial expressions appear in my mind when you meditate on me or talk about me or sit down to pray to me.

* * *

Although owing to the illusory attractions of the world, you often forget this little daughter of yours, you may rest assured that your worries and tribulations are ever before my eyes.

* * *

I am ever with each one of you, wherever you happen to be. But your vision is tied down to worldly matters and you have little time to direct your eyes to this body in all your thoughts and actions. What can I do? But know it for certain that whatever you do in thought and deed, whether you are near or in distant lands, never escapes my attention.

* * *

Even after so many years very few people realize what I wish. If they did, such thoughtless questions as: "What do you want? What is your wish?" would never be asked. One must sincerely try to understand me as much as lies within the range of one's capacity. And in order to grasp what I want, one must shake one's mind free from pride, from desire for fame and glory, from anger and sorrow, from self-conceit and finally from self-will which lead a man to feel that he is a free agent in all his actions.

* * *

My food is dedicated lives.

* * *

Have faith in this body. Your whole-hearted faith will open your eyes.

If your perception were subtle enough, you would be able to see that the Guru lives within you in the form of the mantra. If you confuse the Guru with his physical body, and think that if you are away from the physical body, you are away from the Guru you will not get very much from the Guru no matter how much love or affection you may show for the Guru. Whatever devotion you profess for the Guru, you fail as a disciple. The only disciple who is a true disciple is one who believes that the Guru is present within him, that he is very close, very intimate with him, that he is within him in the form of the mantra; and he worships him with devotion with this understanding.

Baba Muktananda

There was a striking resemblance between the two in many respects. Both came of an unknown family of a humble village of undivided Bengal. Thakur lacked formal education but had the last word in wisdom. It is similar with Ma. Again, like Thakur, Ma has received homage from all sections of people and recognition from eminent contemporaries, including spiritual leaders. The sayings of both are simple and conclusive, illustrated by parables and emanate from the depths of an invisible source and directly appeal to one's heart.

Two Celebrities Meet Ma

A great son of Bengal, Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose, is known all the world over as the valiant fighter who rocked the very foundation of the mighty British Empire. Few know that he had also a genuine spiritual hunger. The following extracts from his letter dated August 8, 1927, written to the author from Dalhousie, reflect his impelling urge for communion with the Supreme and his struggle to "know our mind, a subtle thing which often deceives itself."

"My dear Anil,

I believe in God. I also believe in prayer though I do not do much of it myself. The mental (or you may say spiritual) exercise that I have been doing is of two kinds depending on my need at the time. One of these is practice of self-assertion, I sit down peacefully and think hard that I have overcome the passions, viz. lust, anger, greed fear. This practice gives me a lot of strength-and through it I overcome many weaknesses. The other practice is self-surrender. I sit down and think of a mighty stream of Divine Energy-some-

literally mobbed Ma. Principal Ganga Charan Dasgupta, an eye witness, felt that the pressure must have been suffocating for Ma. He asked Her why She allowed those people to crowd round Her and enquired whether She did not find it highly oppressive and disgusting. "Perhaps this body", replied Ma, "draws them so close to it. It is a great pleasure to me to find them pressing close to me." Principal Dasgupta frankly confessed that if he were so pestered by such a crowd with so many tales of personal troubles and worries to relate he would have felt awfully bored. Wonderful though disconcerting was Ma's reply : "That's because you feel that your own body and theirs are distinctly separate. You do not feel the weight of your head, of hands and feet, of so many fingers and toes, of legs and thighs, to be a burden nor a heavy load upon yourself because you feel they are but vital parts of your own body; similarly, do I feel that these persons are all organic members of this body; so I don't feel their pressure nor find their worries weighing upon me. Their joys and sorrows, problems and their solutions, I feel to be vitally mine. I have no ego-sense nor conception of separateness.*

These words of Ma state the highest philosophy in the simplest language: *There is only ONE, and nothing but the ONE.* Ma explains how She is different from us - She realises that She *is* the ONE, and thus one with us whereas we do not. Ma confirms that She has no ego and proclaims that She is identified with us. She shares our joys and sorrows.

* *Mother as Seen by Her Devotees*-published by Sri Sri Anandamayi Sangha(2nd Ed.) p. 94

Principal Dasgupta was a profound thinker with a deeply religious background. A distinguished disciple of Swami Bholananda Giri, he was, for years Secretary of the Bholananda Board of Trustees. "Mother," he says, "works quietly and almost unnoticed among all classes of people. Like the life-forces of Nature, Her influence penetrates the supra-physical plane of existence, in the region of man's motives, purposes and principles. It transforms his being, all invisible like the cosmic radiations from above. She possesses the Supreme Power of healing all wounds, sorrows and bereavements; so She is called the 'Great Healer' of men's woes"*.

Another educationist, Dr. Nalini Kanta Brahma, Professor of philosophy of all-India repute, a disciple of Balananda Brahmachariji Maharaj, observes: "Wonderful solutions of difficult philosophical problems by an almost illiterate woman show that there is in Her the great Light that illumines everything. The motherly affection that is bestowed on all who come to Her and captivates the hearts of them all bears out that it must be Absolute Love that is working"**.

Again, according to Girija Sankar Bhattacharya, Professor, Presidency College, "Mother's identity with the Supreme is whole and complete, and yet the human element in Her is not extinguished. She is thus Divinity encased in a human body'>(*).

* *Mother as Seen by Her Devotees*—published by Sri Sri Anandamayi Sangha (2nd Ed.) p. 83, 93

** *Mother as Seen by Her Devotees* (2nd Ed.) p. 41

(*) *Mother as Seen by Her Devotees* (2nd Ed.) p. 107

Why Ma Had an Appeal for the People of Calcutta

Probably the intellectual approach of the learned scholars was not comprehensible to the vast majority of Ma's devotees in Calcutta and evidently the experience of the *sādhaka* scientist was not widely known. But whoever had Her darśana found in Her an embodiment of his conception of divine beauty. Her radiant complexion in those days was comparable to that of Lord Gouranga as described in the *Chaitanya Charitamrita* and Her figure and features were unparalleled in grace and beauty. Her beaming eyes radiated love and light and Her gracious smile carried a special message: Worldly pleasures are fleeting compared to the joy of communion with God.

The stories of Dacca about Her supernatural powers were current, but the people of Calcutta do not seem to have witnessed any miracle like the Siddheswari episode mentioned earlier. All the same, Ma was a standing miracle. She had certain marvellous qualities such as compassion, catholicity and patience not to be found in ordinary human beings. Naturally, there grew a genuine curiosity to know details about this mysterious Ma and Her message.

In many cases Ma's pull was irresistible and inevitable. To mention one instance, the family of Pran Kumar Bose, District Judge, one of the pioneer devotees in Calcutta, surrendered himself at the feet of Ma. Mrs. Bose became, in later life, a part and parcel of Sri Sri Anandamayi Ashram. Her daughter's daughter, Juthika Guha (also known as Buni), then aged 17 or 18, felt so much attracted to Ma that she renounced the world, surrendered herself at the feet of Ma and led the life of a

nun under Ma's direct guidance till she died in Sri Sri Anandamayī Ashram at Vrindaban in 1964.

Ma's inspiring appeal to Buni was, it seems, through the heart and not the brain. Dr. Debendra Nath Mukherjee, an eminent physician of Calcutta, combined in his character a scientific outlook with the emotion alearnestness of a *sādhaka*. He was at first a favourite and one of the foremost disciples of Swami Bholananda Giri, and in later life he himself became a Saṁnyāsi known as Swami Satchidananda Giri. Dr. Mukherjee's first visit to Ma was on a professional call for Her treatment. He found Her pulse beat abnormally rapid. A few minutes afterwards Ma asked him to feel this pulse again and "Just see, you will now find the pulse normal." Her statement was checked by the Doctor and found correct. Thereafter, Ma said in the same sitting, "Feel the pulse again, you will now find a condition of the pulse which is very serious according to you people." Dr. Mukherjee was puzzled by the erratic appearance and disappearance of certain disquieting symptoms in quick succession. Naturally he was struck by the perfect equanimity of his patient who seemed to have complete mastery over Her body. He realized that it was not a case of illness but the Mother's *lilā*. Ma's special *kriṣṇa* was bestowed on this *Sādhak-Doctor* who was enrolled into Her confidential circle with some secret not known even to Ma's close associates. "The fact of the matter", She said, "is that this body does not follow the usual rules of good health or bad health. Sometimes it happens that its activities slow down due to lack of *kheyāla*; at such times the intake of food merely acts as an impediment; this is why, at times, you see 'symp-

toms' of liver or stomach 'troubles'. The reason why these 'symptoms' disappear suddenly is that the body, in its own time, returns to its normal rhythm. This body does not suffer from 'diseases' which can be 'diagnosed' or 'cured' by the usual methods',* The *sādhaka* in this scientist at once saw the Divine Mother in Anandamayi Ma and paid reverential homage to Her. He became one of Her sincere admirers whose number was steadily on the increase.

The example set by the Professors, the members of the learned professions and the Government officials – all respectable men, some being disciples of one or other great contemporary saints—was emulated by some of their respective friends and admirers. Thus, through various sources people were drawn towards Ma by the thousand and the reason for this was not known even to themselves in most cases.

It is neither possible nor necessary to know why Ma had an appeal for the people of Calcutta. Apart from the inexplicable attractiveness inherent in Her, there were certain exterior factors—additional attractions—for which people flocked to this mysterious Mother. Thus, as in Dacca and Simla, *satsanga* was inspired by Ma in Calcutta and was conducted by Her local followers with earnestness. It proved a grand success. Ma's party, including some talented musicians with emotional fervour, used to sing songs which touched the hearts of the audience. Famous contemporaneous musicians of Calcutta such as Dinesh Thakur, Manmathanath Nath, Nibaran Samajpati and Brojen Ganguli, used to participate in

* Ananda Varta, XXIV/3/176; *Sri Sri Ma Anandamayi* by Sri Sri Gurupriya Devi, VII 351

the *satsangas* which became the forum for demonstration of the best musical talent in the line of *kirtan* and *bhajan* in Calcutta. Eminent artistes considered it a great privilege to have a chance of singing before Ma. They kept the audience spell-bound and added to the popularity of the *satsanga*.

A specially important feature of the *satsanga* consisted of discourses by eminent and erudite scholars on religious and philosophical subjects which enhanced its prestige and importance as a medium of spreading culture and education.

Ma never gave any discourse but by rare comments She would invariably shed a flood of light on the subjects discussed, to the amazement of the admiring scholars present. Though almost unlettered, She knew the last word on the special subject of each expert. Again, Ma's songs had a magic effect. She had no schooling in music but She was a born musician with a sweet voice commanding mastery over tune and rhythmic timing at which even the master artistes were amazed. Besides, the sound emanating from Her used to stir one's soul, as it does even now. Above all, Ma's very presence purified the atmosphere and turned people's mind God-ward, as usual.

As an embodiment of divine beauty, as a standing miracle, as an artist *par excellence*, as a brilliant talker and as a spiritual guide, Ma became the object of wonder and admiration. She revealed Herself to Calcuttans, first and foremost, as the Mother.

The *lilā* of Ma Anandamayi in this world commencing from 1896, reminded the people of Calcutta of Thakur Sri Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa whose *lilā* terminated in 1886.

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hing like Bergson's '*elan vital*' and try to merge my existence in it. I try to feel that as a result of this merging (or self-surrender) the Divine Energy flows through me and that I am but an instrument in the hands of the Divine. I never consciously pray for anything material. It is mean and sordid. On the contrary, I try to repeat to my mind—"Thy Will be done"—in a spirit of self-surrender.

Life is an eternal conflict—there is no peace until you overcome all the passions. But gradually one gets pleasure in fighting and when some desire (or passion) is overcome—there is a great satisfaction and a sense of self-confidence.

Very affly, yours,

P. S.

Subhas

There is one thing I forgot to tell you. I have also received much benefit from one kind of mental exercise viz. self-analysis. Whenever I have time, I sit down calmly and try to look into my mind and find out what weaknesses, if any, are there. In this way, I have detected many unworthy elements and nipped them in the bud. Detection always means half the victory. When I have detected something wrong or unworthy, then self-assertion becomes easier and you can crush the passions more easily. Most of the trouble that we have is due to the fact that we do not know our minds. The mind is such a subtle thing that it often deceives itself. Therefore, continued self-analysis is necessary as a daily mental exercise. The study of abnormal psychology and of psychopathology has helped me to analyse myself."

Having heard about Ma Anandamayi, Subhas Chandra

Bose expressed his desire for Her *darśana* and an interview was arranged at Dakshineswar on October 20, 1938.

In answer to a question put by Ma, he said that the reason why he had dedicated his life to the service of the country was that it made him happy. He was not in a position to answer Ma's further question as to whether such happiness was lasting and unqualified. Then Ma requested him to keep in mind "another kind of service along with what he had been already engaged in", and asked him to give a talk. "But I have not come here to talk", pleaded he, "I am here to listen". "In that case, will you listen to what this little girl of yours may say?" enquired Ma. "I shall try", promised the determined spiritual aspirant.

Ma : "Do not preoccupy yourself with the outside world only. You have so much capacity.

Keep in mind the inner life too."

Bose : "How shall I do that ? By what method ?"*

These two questions seeking Ma's guidance regarding the process to be followed by him show earnestness on the part of Subhas Chandra Bose to act according to his promise, "I shall try" to listen to what Ma would say. They are characteristic of this great man who simultaneously believed in *self-assertion*, *self-surrender* and *self-analysis* as stated with remarkable force and clarity in his letter quoted above.

Unfortunately, however, before any answer could come from Ma, there was a sudden influx of visitors which completely changed the atmosphere. Subhas Chandra Bose did

* Ananda Vārtā XXIII/2/95

pranāma to Ma and took leave of Her. This was his first and last *darśana*. Political circumstances prevented him from keeping in touch with Ma thereafter. Perhaps it was not Ma's *kheyāla* that Her answer, meant for a spiritual stalwart like Subhas Chandra Bose, should be heard, or overheard, by anybody else. Perhaps a genuine seeker of Truth like him need not wait for oral communication of any method the secret of which is destined to unfold itself in his mind in course of time automatically. "You have so much capacity"—a reminder like this from Ma may, perhaps, have been enough to awaken Subhas Chandra Bose's dormant spiritual Self.

The fact that Subhas Chandra Bose, the idol of the nation, had sought Ma's *darśana* and advice for achieving his spiritual aspiration was a source of inspiration to many. In the *Gita* Lord Krishna has said : "Whatsoever a great man does, the same is done by others as well. Whatever standard he sets, the world follows."

A glimpse of Ma's Inner Being was once revealed to a great Yogi—Paramahansa Yoganandaji, founder of the Self-Realization Fellowship, U. S. A. Yogada Satsang Society of India who observed in his Autobiography : "I had instantly seen that the saint (Ma) was in a high state of *samādhi*. Oblivious to her outward garb as woman, she knew herself as the changeless soul."*

Once the Paramahansa asked Ma to tell him something of Her life. Ma's answer was : a Father knows all about it, why repeat it ?" ' She evidently felt', continued the Yogi, "that the

* Autobiography of a Yogi by Paramahansa Yogananda (Jaico Publishing House, Bombay—1975 Ed, P. 443, 450.

factual history of one short incarnation was beneath notice. I laughed, gently repeating my request". Ma sometimes says about Her person : "This body is like a musical instrument; what you hear depends on how you play." This time the "Musical Instrument" was being "played" by a Master. His query, gently repeated and accompanied by a meaningful laughter, worked wonders; he heard priceless "music"—utterances welling up from Ma with the great message that She was a Self-realized Being. "My consciousness", She said, "has never associated itself with this temporary body. Before I came on this earth, Father, 'I was the same'. As a little girl 'I was the same'. I grew into womanhood, but still 'I was the same'. When the family in which I had been born made arrangements to have this body married, 'I was the same'. And, Father, in front of you now, 'I am the same'. Even afterwards, though the dance of creation change around me in the hall of eternity, 'I shall be the same'.*

Anandamayi Ma does not refer to Herself as "I". She uses humble circumlocutions like "this body" or "this little girl" or "your daughter". Nor does She refer to anyone as Her 'disciple'. With impersonal wisdom She bestows equally on all human beings the divine love of the Universal Mother".*

The *Autobiography* of the Paramahansa, translated into several languages, has a wide circulation in India and overseas. It has played a great part in drawing many a thirsty soul to the Universal Mother who has been a solace to them.

* *Autobiography of a Yogi* by Paramahansa Yogananda (Jaico Publishing House, Bombay—1975 ED.) P. 448, 450. Reprinted with permission of the copyright owner. Self Realization Fellowship.

Govinda's Tiffin Carrier and the Sophisticated Society of Ballygunge

As years rolled by, Ma's devotees keenly felt the need of an Ashram in Calcutta and in 1945 they succeeded in founding one at No. 4/4, Ekdalia Road, Ballygunge. It was a modest beginning with an unpretentious house in a narrow lane. A disproportionately tall building on a small covered area, it was aptly called by Ma "Govinda's tiffin carrier". It did resemble a tiffin carrier not only in its structure of height without length and breadth but also in its function of storing and distributing food—*prasāda* ministering to the needs of body and mind. This *Ashram* was built with the humble contribution of a few earnest devotees, led by Manoranjan Sarkar, out of money earned by the sweat of their brow. These devotees sincerely believed that it was more blessed to give than to receive. They gave Govinda their cherished "dish of herbs" through the medium of this sacred "tiffin carrier". Their most valued reward was the opportunity for occasional *Matrisanga*, daily *Pūjā* in a temple, meditation in seclusion in a tiny room and congregational worship in a small hall.

To start with, this new organisation did not come floating on the wave of popular enthusiasm in Ballygunge and, for some time, it remained more or less confined to a group already devoted to Ma. Outsiders mostly maintained a neutral attitude. Generally speaking, the Ashram seemed to be a thing apart in the social and cultural life of the locality.

Let us have a picture of Ballygunge, until recently a wilderness haunted by poisonous snakes and prowling jackals, used by free-hooters as a hide-out and by pleasure-seekers as a

placae for picnic. It has since developed into a prosperous modern town, an ideal residential locality, with the *Rabindra Sarobar*, its lungs, in the south. The residents of Ballygunge of today represent a cross-section of undivided Bengal, including a portion of the cream of the Bengali society. Educated and cultured, they have a sense of ethical values. Few of them bother themselves about metaphysics—the absolute *Brahman* or the inscrutable *māyā*. And fewer still those that are votaries of ritualism. As regards theology, they generally have an open mind. Believing, disbelieving or non-believing in God is, according to them, purely their personal affair with which neither *Guru* nor *Ashram* should have anything to do. Almost every house is furnished with an official *Thakur Ghar* (domestic shrine room), mostly monopolised by the women folk. Congregational worship is popular on solitary occasions such as *Durga Pūjā* and *Saraswati Pūjā*, the spiritual aspect thereof is more often than not overshadowed by display of lights and loud speakers.

In their private lives the people belonging to this sophisticated society have a modern and scientific outlook, leaning towards agnosticism, bordering on atheism. The modern age, intoxicated by the triumphs of science, is obsessed with a mad race for material prosperity. There is a tendency all the world over to repudiate the existence of God since God cannot be proved by a verified method, to condemn religion as escapism and to ridicule ritualism as superstition.

'Govinda's Tiffin Carrier', an avowedly religious institution located in the heart of Ballygunge, came with an elaborate programme of ritualism and congregational worship of Ma

