

ABOUT THE BOOK

The first English biography of Sri Ma Anandamayi entitled **From The Life of Sri Ma Anandamayi** was published in 1964. It was written by Bithika Mukerji at the request of Atmanandaji (Miss Blanca Schlamm), the first editor of the quarterly magazine *Ananda Varta*, begun in 1952.

Atmanandaji was very concerned about devotees who did not speak Bengali. She herself acquired Hindi and Bengali very quickly and undertook the task of rendering Sri Ma's words into English. She always worked in close collaboration with Bithika Mukerji because it was her considered opinion that Bithikaji had a feel and flair for the nuances of meanings of Sri Ma's words.

Due to unavoidable circumstances Bithikaji could not continue with the biography. The two early volumes have been out of print for many years. Now the author has undertaken to complete her earlier work. The original two volumes are combined, revised as well as enlarged to form the first volume of a set of three. The second volume brings Sri Ma's *lila-katha* up to 1959. The third volume completes the biography and includes some incidents depicting the ever abiding presence of Sri Ma.

Many books are now available about Sri Ma Anandamayi, written in English as well as regional languages, such as Bengali, Gujarati and Hindi. Some literature is also available in French, German and Spanish. Even so a complete biography by the pen of an author who is acknowledged to be a competent raconteur of the enigmatic ways of Sri Ma is very welcome. The author personally knew

involved in writing about Sri Ma in different ways. I was required to write for magazines, brochures, commemorative volumes, seminars and one Encyclopaedia. I had always intended to finish this book. Now in my old age I have the freedom and leisure to complete the book started more than half a century ago.

I write just because I like to write about Sri Ma. I do not think that I know more about her than others or that I make clear what is essentially unfathomable. In this context I always remember Bhaiji's words, "In my enthusiasm to explain about Ma I place her on a high pedestal, but no matter how high I think her to be, I am soon brought to realize that she is ever beyond my highest conceptions."

I do not think that I can succeed where Bhaiji failed but to talk about Sri Ma Anandamayi is to live in the memory of her joyous and most gracious presence amongst us. May her *kheyala* be with us forever.

Jai Ma.

31 George Town
Allahabad
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Bithika Mukerji

FOREWORD

My first contact with Anandamayi Ma was more than a quarter of a century ago when she paid a visit to the School at Rajghat, Varanasi. There was a large crowd of devotees that had gathered in the large hall of the Children's School. When she was leaving I asked her if she had any message for us. The answer was characteristically swift and spontaneous: "Pitaji, you have chosen a very fine place for your work. Many saints have lived here in the past. But you know how Mother Earth produces sweet fruits as well as poisonous ones. You must be like that, Pitaji."

This cryptic remark left a deep and unforgettable impression on my mind. In any organizational work, is it possible not to judge, not to evaluate? Right appraisal of performance is essential for efficiency. But it has to be completely free from praise or blame of the individual. To judge is to condemn those whom we judge.

Is it possible to transcend good and evil? What is the state of mind that makes it possible to rise above this duality? The apparently common saying, "There is nothing good or evil but thinking makes it so," has far deeper implications than we realize. The function of the mind is to evaluate, to judge what is beneficial and what is destructive to the individual or to the group. It is an indispensable factor in the evolutionary process; there is, however, a stage reached by a few rare individuals where action is no longer dictated by thought or individual feeling. Ma calls this "*Kheyal*". When the individual self or ego is silent, then the "Universal" acts. The state of mind that is completely silent is the state of Love. It is in this condition that Ma continually and effortlessly lives.

Light is invisible, but makes all things visible. Its function is to reveal the structure and beauty of things. We do not know what Light is; we can know its existence by its effects.

Likewise Love is invisible. It can be known only by what it reveals to us—the beauty hidden in the heart of man.

People are amazed and ask, "How is it possible for Ma to love and understand thousands of her devotees?" The Truth is simple. Normally we do not see each other as we really are; the barrier of the separate self obscures our vision, and we create a world of our own darkened by the shadow that the self casts upon every thought and feeling. Ma lives in a world where there is no darkness at all. One has only to stand in the radiance of her Love to realize that, though it is a mystery that baffles the mind of man, it is an intense reality. To be within her presence is to know that one is understood and forgiven. Love is everlasting forgiveness.

This seems to me to be the secret of her marvellous, but often unintelligible, endeavours to repond to the needs of her numerous devotees. She undertakes apparently purposeless journeys, but when closely examined they are an answer to the call of some devotee who needs her presence. She lives only for the world; she has few needs of her own, if any. In that state of mind she becomes the pure channel for the descent of grace. The process may be conscious or unconscious.

The study of such a life is fascinating, of absorbing interest not only to the devotee, but to the student of the psychology of spiritual genius. Mystics have often the products of apparently unfavourable environments. What is the nature of the soil, the climate that produces goodness and love and the subtle wisdom that sweetly ordereth all things? Formal education, the development of the conceptual mind, does not seem to be a necessary factor in the efflorescence of spiritual genius. There is an intelligence that has no relation to the logical intellectual mind, but which is able to pierce through error and falsehood, and directly perceive Truth.

To relate any individual to our personal well-being is false

love. Such personal love is the basis of all social and family traditions. True love comes into being the moment we become aware of the falseness in our "loving".

The perception of Truth is not a function of the conceptual mind. Error creeps in when we view a fact or an event from a personal point of view. Party loyalty is the normal discipline of political life. But the moment we subordinate the welfare of the larger group to party interests, it introduces conflict and error in our life. Every happening or event has a place in the scheme of things. We can perceive its significance when we do not relate it to our personal benefit. The moment we are aware of this falseness in our thinking there is the perception of Truth.

The intelligence that is behind Love and Truth is essentially the same. It is the capacity to see things in the context of the whole. It is the wisdom of the spirit.

Ma has met many of the most subtle and learned intellects of the world. She tackles all problems with an effortless ease that is amazing and people ask, "What are you? Who are you?" The answer is simple: "I am whatever you think me to be", a perfectly correct statement.

Dr. Bithika Mukerji's book is a record of Sri Anandamayi Ma's early life which was spent mostly in Bengal. The narrative of events is largely derived from the diaries of her devotees. They are authentic descriptions of happenings. The interpretation of their significance demands extraordinary spiritual and psychological equipment. In fact Ma herself is the only person competent to evaluate such experiences.

The book is a valuable document recording the authentic experiences of devotees at different levels of intelligence, leaving the interpretations to psychologists of the future.

201, Habibullah Road
Madras

B. Sanjiva Rao