



Sri Sri Ma Anandamayee

VOLUME I

GURUPRIYA ANANDA GIRI

(Sri Gurupriya Devi)

Translated by Tara Kini

With an introduction by Mahamahopadhyaya

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SHREE SHREE ANANDAMAYEE CHARITABLE SOCIETY

CALCUTTA

1984

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Published by

Shree Shree Anandamayee Charitable Society
57/1, Ballygunge Circular Road,
Calcutta-700 019

First Edition
1984

Price : Rs. 18/- or \$ 3.00 or £ 2.00

Printed at

The Bureka Printing Works Private Limited
76, Bepin Behari Ganguly Street,
Calcutta-700 012

OFFERING

To the One who is beyond the grasp of the human intellect and who, though residing in Her own abode of complete bliss, for the sake of conveying the message of the effulgent and ever peaceful abode, through Her compassion has appeared in a human form in this world, and who has shown by Her own conduct how one can enter the *Mahābhāva* through the action, devotion and knowledge pervaded *khaṇḍa-bhāvā*, and how, after the ceaseless dancing of the waves of *bhāva*, eternal rest is attainable in the end in the ever peaceful consciousness of one's own true nature which is beyond *bhāva*, to that Mother of all who seek refuge, who is most worthy of worship, Sri Sri 108 Mukteshwari Mata Anandamayee's lotus feet which promote the welfare of the universe, I offer with profound veneration this small floral garland of Her own holy life story, in the form of an oblation of devotion and love, which is like performing Ganga puja with Ganga water.

The humble authoress.

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DEDICATION

It was about twelve or thirteen years ago, when I first had Ma's darshan and was enthralled; at that time I once had the desire to write about these happenings, so that I could read them and derive bliss. Driven by this desire, I did write something, though most of my time was spent with Ma and not much leisure was available for writing. And when I sat down to write, I felt that it was not possible to communicate these incidents and divine lila through language; yet I wrote a bit. After a few days my writing stopped due to unavoidable circumstances. When my father and I came away permanently from our home on Ma's instructions, all the note books remained behind. Later, when Ma left us at Siddheshwari my heart started pining for Ma. One day, I thought that if I read the stories of Ma's past, I would find relief, but though the whole house was searched, the note-books could not be found. I felt very sad. Some years later, the respected late Jyotish Rai (Bhaiji) requested everyone to write incidents from Ma's life (in whichever form each one saw and experienced them). I then decided not to write anything. But I do not know why and by whose inspiration, the desire to write awoke little by little. Jyotish Dada also said, "It is appropriate for you to write, because you have spent much time with Ma and witnessed many happenings, big and small." By his encouragement, the eagerness to write increased. At that time, the facility for this was also created by Ma — she left me almost alone at the Vindhyachal Ashram. In that solitary

place, during my spare time, I started writing again. By Ma's grace, earlier incidents began to awaken in my memory more and more. Just as a definite time was allotted for the repetition of God's name (*japa*), similarly, I set apart a definite time for writing about Ma's life. I considered it a part of my spiritual practice (*sādhana*). Though for a person like myself to write about Ma's life was like a dwarf's desire to touch the moon, still I wrote and felt it was good to do so. I knew that in learned circles this book would be considered worthless because I do not at all possess the necessary knowledge and intelligence needed to produce a book. But I thought that those who came in contact with Ma would read these anecdotes and experience bliss, and that the shortcomings in the language of the writer would not come in the way. Because I have experienced that when many of us get together and start talking about Ma, then taking one incident only of the past and thinking it over again and again, we have spent so many nights without anyone feeling the slightest boredom or fatigue. It was as if every detail about Ma were perpetually novel. And it is also very true that it is totally beyond our power to understand Ma's nature. I have only written that which I have understood, seen, or heard. I have tried very hard that there should not be a word of exaggeration. Yet, those of my kind brothers and sisters, who have come in contact with Ma, will notice any number of examples of my incompetency. I ask forgiveness for that. To those who have not seen Ma and who are coming to know her only through this book, I make an entreaty that if they misunderstand Ma's nature or character at any place, the failing is

mine. There is no imperfection or shortcoming in Ma's conduct anywhere. Those who have met Ma will understand the truth of this statement. It is a pity that several incidents of Ma's life are kept concealed because those special sayings which Ma has uttered privately to certain people, or some special activities of Ma which have been revealed only to certain individuals, remain secret, and may probably always remain secret, because no one may be prepared to reveal them.

I shall say one thing before ending my discourse. I wrote all this haphazardly and handed it over to revered Mahamahopadhyaya Pandit Sri Gopinath Kaviraj, D.Litt. (Ex-Principal, Government Sanskrit College, Benares) who worked hard to put this book into shape and who has also written an introduction to it. For this I am eternally grateful to him. Ma's old devotee Bala Brahmachari Sri Nepalchandra Chakravartiji* helped Kaviraj in this work to the best of his ability. He has toiled over it day and night. He delights in doing Ma's work. I express my gratitude to him.

Jyotish Dada is not in this world anymore. It was only by his encouragement that I got involved in this work. How happy he would have been, had he been here to see Ma's life story being published. If anyone experiences the slightest bliss by reading this life story of Ma, I shall consider my effort to be successful.

Varanasi, May, 1942

—Gurupriya Devi

* Late Shri Nepal Chakravarti known as Swami Nārāyanānanda Tirtha after taking *sannyāsa*.

INTRODUCTION

(1)

The authoress of this book and some of my respected friends who are devotees of Ma have requested me to write an introduction to this book. They desire that I present before the readers a brief account of my individual understanding and opinion of Ma. It seems they believe that this is an opportunity to place before the world Ma's true identity to at least a small degree in the course of these thoughts on the subject of Ma's nature.

The truth of the matter however is, that though I am writing my discourse in the form of a concise introduction in order to comply with their request, their desire will not be fulfilled. It is totally impossible for an incompetent person like myself with my kind of nature to achieve this, and I feel that even with a different nature and with more capability this job is not easy. My individual opinion and belief in connection with Ma is something pertaining to my heart. People are not bound to accept it without pondering over it. That which cannot be argued with anyone, which one does not feel inclined to argue about, which is worthy of being nurtured secretly in the innermost hidden recesses of the heart — the heart just does not want to scoop that out from within and make it the subject of open discussion. So is it not ungivable presumptuousness for a person of my limited capacity to even attempt to place before others Ma's true identity?

The authoress has delineated Ma's outward behaviour as skillfully as possible in this book, and has also noted the delightful teachings uttered by Ma Herself. The authors of "Matri Darshan" and "Sri Sri Ma Anandamayi Prasanga", have also made similar attempts in a beautiful way. A description of Ma's divine Ilā as performed by Her body will surely be obtained by reading all these books. Those who have had the good fortune of actually meeting Ma and hearing her speak, will derive a clearer picture.

But these external descriptions of Ma are of various kinds. Each one views and will view Ma with an attitude that varies according to his or her *sanskāras* (tendencies and impressions), because it is the external acquaintance. It is extremely difficult to obtain an insight into Ma's true identity. Even if someone were fortunate enough to get a glimpse of it, it is only wishful thinking that he may be able to reveal it to others. Actually, being children it seems to be dire foolishness to try to assess our Mother's identity. "Who is Ma?", and "What is Ma's real nature?"—such profound matters can never be discussed by children with meagre understanding. When the child was unborn, Ma existed. When the child ceases to live, Ma will still exist. Ma is eternal—what power does the child have by which he can succeed in understanding this Ma's real nature? How will a child have the capacity to understand One whose strength alone gives him the strength to take birth, Whose existence alone can cause his existence and without Whose support he cannot live even for a moment? A man who has become very strong by spiritual practices may yet perform evil actions, but at the base of the spiritual

practice is an iota of Her power. Without at least a trace of the Grace of *Mahāśakti*, man is powerless like an inanimate object — why man, even Lord Śiva lies motionless like a corpse without *śakti*. Who can recognise or understand that *śakti* who is the very life of all gods and creatures ? The living power in each kind of spiritual practice, whether it be the path of knowledge, devotion or action, is Her Grace ; therefore who possesses such power of his own by which he can understand Her ? If She reveals Her nature Himself, then perhaps some insight may be gained, but even this is not easy for everyone — each one gains only as much as She reveals of Himself and nothing more.

Just as for a blind man the existence of the brilliant, effulgent and ever bright Sun-God is as good as nil, similarly, though Primal *śakti* is illumining the universe, She remains unveiled to the ordinary person. If She does not reveal Her nature Himself no one can recognise it. It is said, that Narada once went to Śvetadveepa with the desire of having Lord Nārāyaṇa's darshan. Śvetadveepa is an extremely inaccessible place where normally even gods and *ṛsis* are unable to go. Narada not only went there, he also had darshan of Nārāyaṇa smeared with ash. Having by virtue of the power of his penances obtained a darshan of this form which is difficult even for gods, Narada felt happy and proud. Simultaneously a celestial voice proclaimed, "Narada, you are unnecessarily feeling conceited. Having seen this form of mine, clothed by the elements, you think you have had darshan of God's ultimate Nature. But your conclusion is wrong, because this form of mine is illusory. You have not yet had darshan of my real nature."

Without His special grace no one can have darshan of His true nature. A yogi with his yogic powers can gain knowledge of all that is beyond all created worlds, of the future and of all possible things of the present all at once and as vividly as the present, with as much ease as holding gooseberries in one's palm. But knowledge about *Mahāśakti* is not gained even from this. In *samādhi* which is based on intelligence, an understanding of worldly matters is awakened, but *Prakṛti* or *Puruṣa* which are the basis of the universe are not its subjects. So the most magnificent *śakti* which is beyond *Puruṣa* or *Prakṛti* is even further away from its grasp. The power of knowledge of the learned and the power of devotion of the devotee are not capable of touching Ma's feet. In reality the powers of yoga, knowledge, devotion and all powers are but a reflection of an atom of that most powerful Mother. If these puny reflecting powers are used to understand that base, they are robbed of their very existence and are unable to accomplish any job. Just as the attempt of a lamp to illumine the sun is ridiculous, so also it is ridiculous for man with his reflecting powers to attempt to understand the nature of *Mahāśakti* Ma.

Normally, the Mother does not reveal Her identity to Her child, nor does the child feel the need of such knowledge ; the Mother keeps fulfilling his needs and makes him forget everything else by giving him whatever he wants. She gives sense pleasures to those who want to enjoy them, She gives liberation to those who desire freedom. She removes the sorrow of the miserable and She gives food to the hungry, water to the thirsty and knowledge to one who desires learning.

She appears to each one in whichever form he worships Her. Each aspirant obtains knowledge of Her nature according to what is due to him depending on his attitude (*bhāva*), but that is not knowledge of Her true identity. Ma's nature is beyond *bhāva*. Mother, who is the personification of *mahā-bhāva* is actually beyond all *bhāvas*, though She is the confluence and the origin of infinite *bhāvas* in infinite ways. Who will be able to grasp the true nature of Ma, which is beyond *Turyā*? It is impossible to contemplate the *Mahābhava* when one is governed by a limited *bhāva* (*khaṇḍa bhāva*). To contemplate something which is beyond *bhāva* is nothing but a distant dream. And what can a trifling man understand when even the *khaṇḍa* (partial) *bhāva* has not awakened in his heart? If one is to understand Ma, one has to dedicate one's self wholly to Her and realise oneness with Her — it is not possible to remain apart from Ma and recognise Her identity. The cessation of the sense of separate I-ness which gives complete self-surrender and achieves union is possible only by Ma's complete grace. On reaching that condition, the child is not separate from Ma and at that moment Ma alone is present in Her *Ānanda Svārūpa*: She Herself knows Herself. That Self-knowledge has always been Hers. But what is the use of that for the *jīva*? For the *jīva*, the attempt to understand Ma always remains ridiculous.

When Ma's nature cannot be understood by the power of action, yoga and devotion, then it is needless to mention that it is not possible to understand it by reading Her life and by listening to Her teaching. Outward behaviour can only indicate the *bhāva* that is present within. What can we understand

of the behaviour of One who is not bound by any *bhāva* and yet can use all the *bhāvas* for Her play and in fact does so for Her divine *līlā*? She may and does abide by scriptural injunctions and social norms for the sake of setting an example for those around Her; and again, for educating people or for some other inconceivable reason, She may also break these rules. But how is Her greatness enhanced or lowered by this? She is not bound by the rule of causal action at all — action or sin and merit cannot touch Her. It is senseless to think that Her behaviour is always imitable for ordinary beings. Lord Śiva swallowed *halāhala* (a deadly poison which emerged when the ocean was churned) and conquered death, but for ordinary men, drinking poison spells sure death. She behaves to suit Her role at each place and occasion, yet Her conduct is incomprehensible at times. Ordinary men tread the path of action because of the desire for immediate and individual gain, the effects of actions performed in previous lives, and the promptings of the discriminating intellect, since their entire lives are based on the sense of I-ness. But for One Who in spite of assuming a human form, is devoid of identification with the body, Whose wealth of knowledge remained unmitigated since birth, Whose heart is untouched by pride or selfish desire, whose action is not animated by individual *rasniskāras* or ideals — all Her transactions are performed by the inspiration of Her Nature alone. Therefore the greatness of Her life cannot be ascertained by using the measuring rod of an ordinary man's thoughts. Neither the science of ethics, nor the code of laws, nor the science of conduct, nor any other science can explain Her — Her behaviour is beyond the

sacred precepts of the Vedas. One can estimate the nature of a person by his behaviour, but it is impossible even to hope to be able to understand One who has stepped beyond the limits of being, and who, though unattached and without any sense of ego Herself is play-acting, using various moods and emotions. This has already been stated earlier.

Though verbal instruction be very sweet and may do a lot of good to people, it cannot give knowledge about the true nature of the instructor. If a small child tries to judge the scholarship of his teacher from the lesson he has been taught, he will not succeed. Even otherwise a discourse in spoken language is incomplete by nature, and cannot cause the awakening of pure knowledge; it particularly depends on the capacity and competence of the listener. Subtle communication, instead of spoken language is also dependent on the mental capacity of the listener and is received with some amount of distortion; when it is revealed to others there is further distortion. This is but natural. In these circumstances, it is not possible to gain a proper understanding of Ma even through Her teaching or instructions.

It is useless to try to understand Ma through this book, or through other books or even through teaching uttered by Ma Herself. Therefore to obtain a proper knowledge of Ma's identity — to understand Ma — is not possible. Several methods like yoga, sacrifices, penance, tantra and mantra are available, but none of these make Her accessible. Complete understanding is beyond our reach, but how many have even partial understanding? She is not attainable by the aspirant who has desires, nor by the aspirant who is desireless. He who

has desires, wants the objects of his desires. He is greedy for enjoyment and does not want Ma at all. He is attracted towards Ma's supernatural power and glory. Ma also gives him that and reveals Herself to him in that very aspect. On the other hand, the aspirant who is desireless, who is unattached, desires liberation (is a *mumukṣu*) — though he does not have a longing for sense enjoyment, he still desires liberation (*mokṣa*), and *mokṣa* is one of Ma's powers, like sense enjoyment. Ma grants this kind of aspirant liberation from the bonds of *saṁsāra*. The Mother who is the embodiment of the supreme Śakti, and from Whose feet enjoyment and liberation emerge of their own accord, that *Cidānandamayī* Ma is the Mother of both Śiva and *īśa*. She is perfect, most excellent, eternal, mysterious, full of delight, She is an incarnation of the deepest Love. How many people really long for Her? And how many understand Her? The glamour of the path of sense enjoyment and the beatitude of the path of liberation, both lie at Her feet. The desire for either of these is an obstruction on the path of obtaining Ma. For those who have not experienced Love, the glamour of enjoyment (of this world, of the next world) and permanent beatitude (*Puruṣa Karṇāya* and *Brahma Karṇāya*) seem to be goals worth attaining. *Mahāmāyā*, the Mother of the universe, remains hidden to such people, and She keeps them satisfied by fulfilling their aspirations. Therefore Her nature remains a secret for people who desire enjoyment or beatitude, because why should She reveal Herself to those who do not desire Her at all?

(2)

So, does Ma never reveal Her true identity? This certainly cannot be stated. Though it be most difficult to approach and equally difficult to grasp, yet She does reveal Herself sometimes, because She is overflowing with motherly love. She cannot remain without answering the heartfelt cry of 'Ma, Ma' of a child. Even if there be no penance, no yoga, knowledge or devotion, if one can call out 'Ma, Ma', from a restless heart like that of a simple child that has been separated from its mother, the nectar of love is bound to be secreted in Ma's breasts. She drenches with ambrosial affection the heart of the child begging for motherly love. The child on obtaining Ma, cries out "Ma—Ma", and receives Her fondling affection and feels blessed. What does he lose even if he does not understand Her true nature? For he can recognise Ma as his own loving and bliss permeated Mother. This is sufficient for him and he does not try to understand more than this—because there is no consistency between childlike emotions and this kind of attempt at understanding. If he tries to understand Ma he loses Her and plunges into the hollow of artificiality and is bereft of Ma's darshan. Therefore, though a childlike mentality is not successful in understanding Ma, yet only a childlike nature is helpful in making one experience the motherliness of Ma. This is the truth, for without accepting the role of a child within oneself, one cannot experience the magnanimity of Ma's *Bhāva*. The infinite greatness of Ma's power is revealed to some extent in response to such childlike emotions. Therefore, though to understand Ma's true identity is practically impossible, yet when Ma reveals

Herself to some extent to each one because of Her overflowing love for the child, that person believes that much to be the truth. It is fitting to see the play of motherly love and divine sport in Ma's life and teaching rather than attempt to discover Her true identity. It is not right to drag something so full of love into the arena of dry arguments and destroy its sweetness.

But such childlike natures are not easily available everywhere. The ignorance or the lack of discrimination of a child is easy to find, but a child's simplicity and purity are extremely rare. And for Ma's darshan these qualities alone are most necessary.

(3)

I have already mentioned that material and external knowledge will vary from person to person according to the *samīkārās* of each individual. It is not necessary to repeat that such knowledge is not true knowledge. Those who are familiar with the history of Ma's physical body, know that at different times different people have viewed Her variously. It is also not as if many have not changed their views with the progress of time. There is diversity everywhere in creation and here also there is diversity—this cannot be denied.

When people first saw and heard about the extraordinariness in Ma's life at Bajitpur, some thoughtless and ordinary people ignorantly concluded that Ma was under the spell of a ghost, spirit or wicked god. Suitable measures were also taken to exorcise the spirits. But everybody realised soon enough that this spirit could not be driven out by exorcists. At that time some people also believed that Ma was suffering from hysteria, flauence or some disease of that kind. Whatever changes

occurred in Ma's body as Her *bhāva* blossomed, were interpreted as symptoms of ill-health. But these people also rapidly realised their mistake. Ordinary people do not understand what *bhāva* is, nor do they know the bodily changes brought about by the manifestation of *bhāva*. Therefore their misinterpretation of outward symptoms is not baseless. Such public opinions were propagated for a while also in the case of Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu and other great beings during some part of their lives.

However, these two opinions are no longer prevalent. Yet other opinions exist and it seems as if they will always remain.* Some of these opinions are extremely strange. Yet, though they be strange they cannot be waved aside, for whoever believes in a particular doctrine, his faith and reasoning conform to that doctrine. Even if the thoughts do not suit another doctrine they cannot be called baseless and be expelled.

*Those who have a knowledge of the Hindu, Buddhist and Christian religions will know these opinions quite well. Sri Krishna was called an Incarnation by some, and others described Him as God Himself. Some believed Him to be an Incarnation of Nārāyaṇa Rājī, while some understood Him to be an ordinary man. 'Aṅgāntarī nān māḍīa mārasim *tanuṃasīrīrī*'. "The foolish disregard me, when clad in human semblance" (Gītā) — we understand from this statement of God, that He was even disrespected by some. In traditional Buddhist literature also we find such varied opinions about Buddha. The basic differences between the *Śhāvravādī* and *Mahāsāṃdhiḱa* traditions are well known. Other than this, from the discussion over the epithets *Dharmakāya*, *Śvabhāvakāya*, *Sambhokakāya* or *Nirvṇānakāya*, it appears as if Śhūdhudana's son Gautama, was believed to be *Nirvṇānakāya* by many. The connection between these three *kāyas* regarding a historic character named Gautama, had led to much difference of opinion. It is the same story with regard to Christ. This difference of opinion has been growing through centuries in Christian society. An attentive observation of the history of various doctrines like Docetism, Adoptionism, Modalism, Arianism etc., will make this very clear.

According to one opinion, Ma is a spiritual aspirant par excellence. She has obtained a high position as a result of elevated spiritual practices in Her previous birth. But not having attained complete knowledge, She has been compelled to assume a human body again. Those who hold this opinion feel that Ma has obtained complete knowledge in this body, and is in the state of a *jīvanmukta* (one who has attained Liberation while living in the physical world) or a *śhīraprajñā* (established in Knowledge of Reality). She has not felt the need of an external Guru in this birth — the Guru who resides within is inspiring Her whenever necessary. This is Her last birth.

But all do not accept this opinion. They think that some parts of the supernatural splendour and activities that can be observed in Ma's life, may be established as *śiddhi* (superhuman power) and the actions of a *jīvanmukta*, but there have been many activities in the course of Her life which are difficult to understand. These activities may be a result of the expansion of *saṃskārās*, born of spiritual practices in previous births. In this opinion, Ma is neither a spiritual aspirant nor a *jīvanmukta*. If She is called a *jīvanmukta* then She should be called this from birth. Like a privileged person, She has taken birth to exhaust Her privilege. This privilege is also a kind of *prārabha* (Karma).

Some people protest against this explanation. Because there is no evidence of any 'privilege-*saṃskāra*' in Ma's life. So much so that even the *saṃskāra* to bequeath knowledge and devotion on a *jīva* and uplift him is not present in Her. She has not allowed Herself to be accepted in the role of a Guru

uptil now. Although Her life and teaching are for the spiritual welfare of the world, She has no *sanskāra* to perform such welfare. In this opinion, Ma is an eternal *siddha* and of the nature of God's retinue. She has come into the world for some time for some particular work, by God's will. When the work is accomplished, She will return to where She has come from, of Herself.

But this opinion is also not universally acceptable. Some believe that Ma is *Mahādevī* Herself. She has assumed a human form for the welfare of the world in answer to the call of Her devotees. These people say that Ma's grandmother had prayed to the Kali at the Kasava temple saying, 'Let there be a daughter' instead of 'Let there be a son' for her son. Ma took birth as a result of this. They believe that a part of Goddess Kali Herself took birth as Ma.*

Yet others declare that rather than look upon Ma as Kali or Durga it is befitting to regard Her as the Primordial *Śakti*, *Mahāmūṛṭ* Herself. Some (like Lavanya) have seen Her as Durga with ten arms. Then again some (like Nirmal Babu) have seen Her in the form of Saraswati, some (like Pramatha Nath) as *Chinnasta* (the headless goddess), or some (like Pramatha Nath's peon) as *Dasa Mahāvīṛyā*. Further, so many other people have seen Ma in so many different forms.

*The Kali who appeared in the sky while Ma was staying at Dacca Shabbagh, and who was about to jump into Ma's lap, and because of whom the Kali image was installed at Dacca, can be understood to some extent by this opinion. Many people have seen the manifestation of Kali's form in Ma's body. For a long time, people called Ma, '*Mamasa Kali*'. Her identification with the Kali image has also been observed sometimes. While Ma was staying at Cozbarat, She realised that the jewels adorning the Kali image at Dacca had been stolen and She experienced suffering in Her own body.

Some people regard Her as a form of *Mahābhāvanayī* Rādhā. Some others believe Her to be the inspired form of Lord Krishna Himself.

(A)

In this way, so many different people have seen Ma in so many different ways. Amongst these, who sees the truth and who sees false? Because of difference in attitudes, one cannot rule out any of these as totally false. For Ma appears before each one in the very manner in which he sees Her or understands Her. Yet in our understanding, probably none of those is Her true identity. Once Sri Swami Dayananda, a propagator of the Bharati Dharma-Mahamandala asked Ma, "Ma, who are you? Some say you are an Incarnation, some say you are possessed by God, others say you are a spiritual aspirant or a *siddha jīva* (perfected human being). I desire to know who you are in very truth." Ma replied, "Babaji, what do you understand me to be? Whatever you understand, I am just that." It appears as if a hint of Ma's true identity is hidden mysteriously in this reply given by Ma. In the Gita God has declared, "*Ye yathā mānī prapadyante tanustathāviva bhajantyaḥ*" ("However men approach me, even so do I welcome them"). Ma's statement quoted above is also similar to this. There is no barrier of individuality or self-conceit within Ma by which She is limited. She is pure, immaculate, self-Illumined, and of the nature of immense existence, self-resplendent in Her own Greatness — but everyone cannot see this Reality of Her, because of their *sanskāras*, for the mind cannot have darshan of Truth, without being freed from the

web of *samskāras*. Each person will see Her according to the way his mind is painted with his *samskāras*, and until he is freed from *samskāras* it is natural that he will see only thus.

Therefore, though it may not be the absolute truth, it is not right to totally disregard any opinion. For a follower of any particular belief, that view-point is worthy of respect, because his intellectual understanding sees only the greatness of that opinion.

But what does one gain by knowing all these opinions? As soon as an ordinary devoted person with a childlike, simple heart presents himself before Ma, he obtains the cool shade of Ma's motherly love, compassion and affection. Then gradually, by the influence of Ma's company, Ma's ultimate nature is revealed to him little by little. What is Ma? He will not feel the need of racking his brain over this question anymore.

(5)

Whatever Ma may be, we can experience many truths as we think over the divine *līlā* performed by Her human body, which, from a human point of view, is indeed educative and worthy of remembrance for us all. How to attain to God, what kind of restraint, steadiness, detachment, asceticism and sacrifice are necessary; what is the nature and the result of spiritual practices by the paths of action, devotion, yoga and knowledge; what is penance, what is the meaning of complete self-surrender or the attitude of utter reliance; what is the effect of God-realisation on individual and social life—we can find deep reflections on all these and other

similar questions in Ma's outward behaviour. These are not small matters. Though several subjects are discussed in the Scriptures, everyone cannot repose staunch, unquestioning faith in them equally without direct examples. But when these truths are evident in an animated form in someone's life, then unshakable faith in the words of the scriptures is aroused and our lives become pervaded by their import. Whatever Ma's true identity may be, the ordinary man cannot really understand even a trace of it without Her special grace, and even if he were to receive an indication of it he will not be able to realize it. But seeing the sequence of events in Ma's external life, and pondering over them, he can gain a lot on various matters. He may not understand the essence of Ma from Her life and teaching but he can find out the path of evolution towards his Self from Her life and can learn lessons about spiritual practices and behaviour from Her teaching.

Ma's life is not imitable in all its aspects—this is true. Because She is established in the knowledge of the Self, She is beyond existence and non-existence, free from duality and beyond the confines of scriptural injunctions. She is HERSELF and not imitable by anyone. Though in that condition She has no duties, because there is nothing unobtained for which She has to perform action, yet for the sake of tutoring the people and by the inspiration of Her nature, Her body does perform some actions which can be imitated by worldly people. All these actions are spontaneous and not prompted by Her own separate desires, while all the actions in the world of ignorance are performed because of the desires of the one.

who performs them. Yet these particular actions of Ma are all imitable for beings in the world, Ma has Herself performed them to show ignorant beings how these actions are to be executed. Ma's objective is, that seeing Her conduct, human beings would be able to engage in these kinds of activities to some extent at least. In this situation, Her behaviour then is only play-acting, and this is strange play-acting, because it goes on of its own accord in Her body. Indeed, it is also true, that often many other actions as well emanate from Ma's body, which are difficult to comprehend, and which are clearly not imitable by anyone. But such actions are also for the welfare of all creatures and the world.*

Therefore, even if we say Ma is human Her greatness is not impaired and even if we glorify Her as an Incarnation or an eternal *Siddhā*, Her eminence is not increased. Her existence and consciousness are based on equanimity. Small and big, praise and blame are both alike to Her. She cannot be elevated or lowered. The entire universe is Her home, all created beings are dear to Her. Established in Her own Nature, She sees Her Nature's play everywhere. Though an ordinary man becomes a doer and because of his pride, thinks he is independent, actually, whatever happens everywhere is only because of Her Nature. This is not understandable

* Ma often says, "Everything goes on in this body of itself, according to your needs." It appears from this that whenever any kind of activity occurs by Ma's body, it is not prompted by Her desire—it is natural. It is in accordance with the needs of someone or the other. It is true that man is not farsighted, therefore he cannot always observe the need, but the need is indeed there. Vyāsadeva in the *Yoga Bhāṣya* has written in connection with God assuming a body—"*Tasva Atma-
nugrahabhavespi bhūtanugraha eva prajānam.*" This is also similar.

because of the veil of ignorance and therefore a sheath of the power of desire covers the play of *Mahākṛti* and the experience of its inevitable fruits, joys and sorrows, becomes unavoidable.

The consciousness in which Ma was established when She was engaged in household chores as a housewife, even now, after detachment from this, She is established in the same consciousness. Her condition is unshakable. Her body has assumed various roles on different occasions alright—whenever it has been steeped in any *bhāva*, that acting has been achieved in the required manner—but She knows that She is where She is, and remaining thus She observes as a witness with unperturbed attitude the actions of Her body and the world which depends on the body.

It is difficult for an ordinary person to understand the condition of being a non-performing witness in the midst of action. Though established in the nature of consciousness, the play of *Śakti* goes on naturally, wherever and whenever it is to occur in whichever way, and will always continue—by this the non-attachment and detachment of the true *bhāva* is not reduced even infinitesimally. This is a mystery which is beyond the grasp of ordinary intelligence.

At the root of all human action lies the endeavour of acquiring the desired object or the sense of duty. That is, man indulges only in that action by which he believes he will gain happiness or be released from sorrow. Or at some stage he engages in action prompted by a sense of its propriety. The second aim is verily superior to the first one; and there are such examples to be found in the world. But One who

has gained all that can be coveted, Who delights in the Self, Who is totally contented, and Who is not lacking in anything, such an One is not shaken by desire for happiness or by the trials of pain because of being equanimous in joy and sorrow, and he has no duty either. And yet She performs action. That action is the action of True Nature. It is not inspired by desire or by the ego sense. In the heart which is not defiled by the pride of being the performer of action, where is the possibility of the arising of the sense of duty or the desire for the fruit of action? That action alone is the action of the non-performer, it is spontaneous action, faultless action. Such action, even though performed, amounts to non-action. This is self-sprung action which flows of its own accord and pervades the entire universe as an exhalation of *Bhagavat-Sakti*. This is in the form of divine *Itā*. It is not limited by the individual needs of the performer. The only purpose of this action is the welfare of the world. The ignorant being with his limited knowledge is unable to constantly grasp this goal which brings about welfare, but he cannot help accepting it.

We can see the following truths presented before us in the unfolding of Ma's life drama which She has acted out Herself.

(a) The intense, restless yearning of the heart alone is the main aid to God-realisation. If God is to be realized, then day by day, month by month, year by year, always, and in every condition — sleeping, dreaming, waking, rising, sitting, in the beginning and accomplishing of all work, a kind of painful longing for God has to be kept alive. So that He cannot be

forgotten in any way by worldly enjoyment, wealth, comfort or luxury.

(b) As a consequence of this the heart gets absorbed in meditating on Him and a feeling of indifference is aroused towards whatever comes as an obstacle to meditation. In this way, renunciation of behaviour and tendencies which are opposed to spiritual *bhāva* is developed, and gradually detachment from worldly matters becomes firmly rooted.

(c) Then one should stay in solitude, absorbed in Him for awhile. There is no reason why one should feel the absence of a spiritual teacher, because instantly the heart itself is able to perform the work of a preceptor. Whichever form, name and attitude appeal to each one in the first stage, that should be used to support the meditation. Even if initiation has not been given, this should not cause any set-back. Gradually the time, measure and intensity of meditation should be increased, or rather they increase by themselves. Whenever the need for a Guru, mantra and chosen deity arises, they appear at all times of their own accord. Whatever is needed at each moment manifests appropriately. Unbroken remembrance of God is verily meditation and worship — one should make one's mind cooperate towards bringing this under one's control. Keeping one's gaze on His compassion and abandoning the desire for the fruit of action, one should persevere in the effort to the best of one's ability. Purity in diet and self-restraint, speech control, *manana*, absence of worry, firmness in duty, good conduct, truthfulness, mercy, love, forgiveness and thoughtfulness — all these good qualities arise in the heart gradually, as they are needed. In this way purity of mind and heart is cultivated.

(d) By stages the feeling of mine and yours decreases. Even in the field of daily transactions, the feeling of mine and yours is removed. The entire universe begins to appear as an undivided family.

(e) Gradually the knots of the heart open up. Liberated Śakti begins to play with total freedom. The fetters of *satskāras* are cut.

(f) In this way, as one's spiritual practice gains strength, the brilliance of infinite and undivided Truth becomes accessible within the division (*khaṇḍa bhāva*) and then this sense of separateness (*khaṇḍa bhāva*) and actions in division cease forever. The knowledge of the indivisible truth within diversity becomes direct experience — it is no longer mere second hand knowledge arising from scriptural texts and argumentation. Therefore the heart of the person who gains this knowledge cannot harbour even a trace of sectarianism. An individual who can see the one and only great Truth pervading all the infinitely varied attitudes and opinions (*bhāvas*;) is not bound by any special *bhāva*, and can yet experience its play.

(g) Watching the play of *bhāva* in this way, and giving up the domain of *bhāva* and going beyond it, his inner vision is illumined by the light of pure Knowledge. At that moment, the aspirant is enlightened by permanent and complete Truth and his total surrender finds its consummation therein. At that very moment the final offering of the I-ness is completed. Then there is nothing left of one's own desire or aversion. Everywhere, and in all activities only nature's play is perceived.

Ma says, "If you want to attain to the Limitless, you have first to proceed confining yourself within limits, — later, by the light of the Infinite, the bondage of the limits is undone." We can see the truth of this clearly in Ma's life drama.

(6)

It may not be out of place to say a few words here about the authoress of this work, Srimati Gurupriya Devi. Gurupriya is Ma's single-minded devotee and attendant, and the daughter of the Civil Surgeon Sri Shashanka Mohan Mukhopadhyaya who later became Swami Akhandananda Giri. She had the good fortune of meeting Ma first in December 1925 — January 1926. Ever since, her close association with Ma has been continuous except for some separations by Ma's order. Though she has been constantly absorbed in Ma's service and engaged in various related activities, she has attempted to write down Ma's life and teachings sequentially and is still doing so. For this, all Ma's devotees are indebted to her. Gurupriya is a Brahmacharini, replete with asceticism and renunciation and above all is extraordinarily devoted to Ma ; moreover she is incomparably capable of subtle vision and skilful description, and has had the privilege of serving Ma and being in Her company to a very great extent. Therefore there is no doubt that she is specially suited to write this narrative. Needless to say, she has made use of this capacity and become blessed.

Sri Gopinath Kaviraj

SRI GURUPRIYA ANANDA GIRI
(1899—1980)

The author of these Volumes which are now in print in four languages was known to all devotees of the Mother as "Didi", that is "elder sister". She, in fact, held this position amongst the conclave of devotees for more than fifty years by virtue of her complete all-absorbing dedication to the Mother and her joyful acceptance of all those who were similarly oriented. Her world began and ended with Ma Anandamayī. She has left for us an ideal of one-pointed devotion, unquestioning obedience, and an unwavering attention toward the *kheyāla* of the Mother. From the moment of her first darshan to the moment in which she breathed her last, she was as if in the presence of God. She never deviated from this level of awareness by a look, word or gesture. The priest at the temple of Rameswaram was so struck by her air of constant waiting upon the *kheyāla* of the Mother that he exclaimed, "Surely, you are the Nandi for the Devi (Goddess)." This indeed, was high praise for Didi Gurupriya because since her childhood she had been very fond of the statue of Nandi, exemplifying one-pointed devotion to Siva.

Didi Gurupriya was born in February 1899 in Silchar, a town in Assam where her father Dr. Shashanka Mohan Mukherji (later Swami Akhandananda) was posted as Civil Surgeon. She was his fifth child and was affectionately named "Adarini", that is 'the well-beloved'.

She was a shy studious child. Much of her time was taken up in helping her mother to look after the large household. Her free time she devoted to the reading of religious literature and the devotional songs of the many inspired bards of Bengal. Her memory was very good and she would often recite the long narrative poems of Tagore, later in life, much to the delight of the students of the Kanyapeeth. Her pioneering qualities showed themselves early in life — She categorically refused to follow the conventional path of marriage and house-keeping. In those days, it was not considered seemly that a young woman should follow a career or live apart from her family. Didi's predilections were for an ascetic way of life which she followed at home by staying away from worldly affairs, eating the plainest food possible and dressing simply.

The supreme moment of her life came, when she visited Shabbagh for the first time and saw the Mother. To use her own words :

"I was very shy by nature. It was extremely difficult for me to talk to strangers or even to come out before visitors at home. My parents would scold me for this, but I could not get over my timidity. Yet I did not feel shy before Mother. I approached her confidently and stood near her as if I had always known her. It is beyond my power to describe the personality I saw. One look at that radiantly beautiful form, and my head, of its own accord, bowed down in adoration."

Mother on her part, spoke in welcome these significant words : "Where have you been all these days ?" Didi found a ready niche in the ever growing family of Ma Anandamayī

who at that time (1925-26) was staying at the Shahbagh Gardens in Dacca. The most onerous role of the caretaker of the Mother's divine form came spontaneously to Didi. She would be constantly in attendance when Mother lay in deep samādhi or moved in ecstatic states during kirtans or cooked enormous meals for the concourse of devotees. Didi learnt to move confidently amongst strangers, communicate with people from other provinces, undertake the management of functions, travel long distances and sometimes also to live alone to practise sādhanā.

The most precious gift left as legacy to us by Didi are her diaries. She was in the habit of maintaining a diary in which is recorded the way of life for this group of people from the year 1926 up to almost the last years of her life. Her accounts are simply stated, with no sentimentality, idealizations or inexactitudes. She has recorded Mother's words with painstaking care. Of necessity the diaries are one-sided because Didi could write only about what she herself saw or heard; since she was obliged to be busy elsewhere rather than in the vicinity of the Mother she missed many important incidents. This however is not an irreparable loss and more books need to be written to supplement the diaries, which will ever remain the main stem of the profusely flowering tree of *hīṅ-kathā* of Sri Ma Anandamayī.

The highest tribute to Didi's memory was paid by the Mother when she said, "Has she not shown to all by the manner of her passing away the culmination of the sādhanā of one-pointed concentration? Was it not apparent that she merged herself with the *Iyā* of her undeviating meditation?"

Didi had adopted unreservedly all those who came to the Mother in devotion and humility. She never tired of talking about Ma Anandamayī; she was closer to the devotees of the Mother than to her own family. Through the present translation of her diaries, the crystal-clear, pure stream of her devotion will, no doubt, touch and transform many hearts toward the quest for the only worthwhile ideal of human life: to live constantly in the thought of God.

Bhishika Mukerji

TRANSLATOR'S ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Ma's way of working has always been wonderful, more so now, when Her physical presence is no longer with us but Her spiritual power is most tangibly evident. For it is that alone which has made this translation of Didi's invaluable diary possible. The work of rendering the first volume into English has been one of my most fulfilling and inspiring experiences and I delight at the thought that this experience will continue through the remaining volumes. As Didi has often stated, immense bliss can be derived by reading and reflecting over Ma's divine *filā*.

This translation would never have been begun without the encouragement and support of my husband, who has also typed the manuscript assiduously.

When I hesitantly put forth my desire to undertake this work, I was overjoyed to receive a greatly encouraging letter from Dr. G. N. Roy Misra, the President of the Shree Shree Anandamayee Charitable Society. On his suggestion I began corresponding with respected Atmanandaji. My regard for her limitless energy and dedication to Ma's work grows with every letter that I receive from her. I express my sincere gratitude to her for her kindness in guiding me and editing the translation.

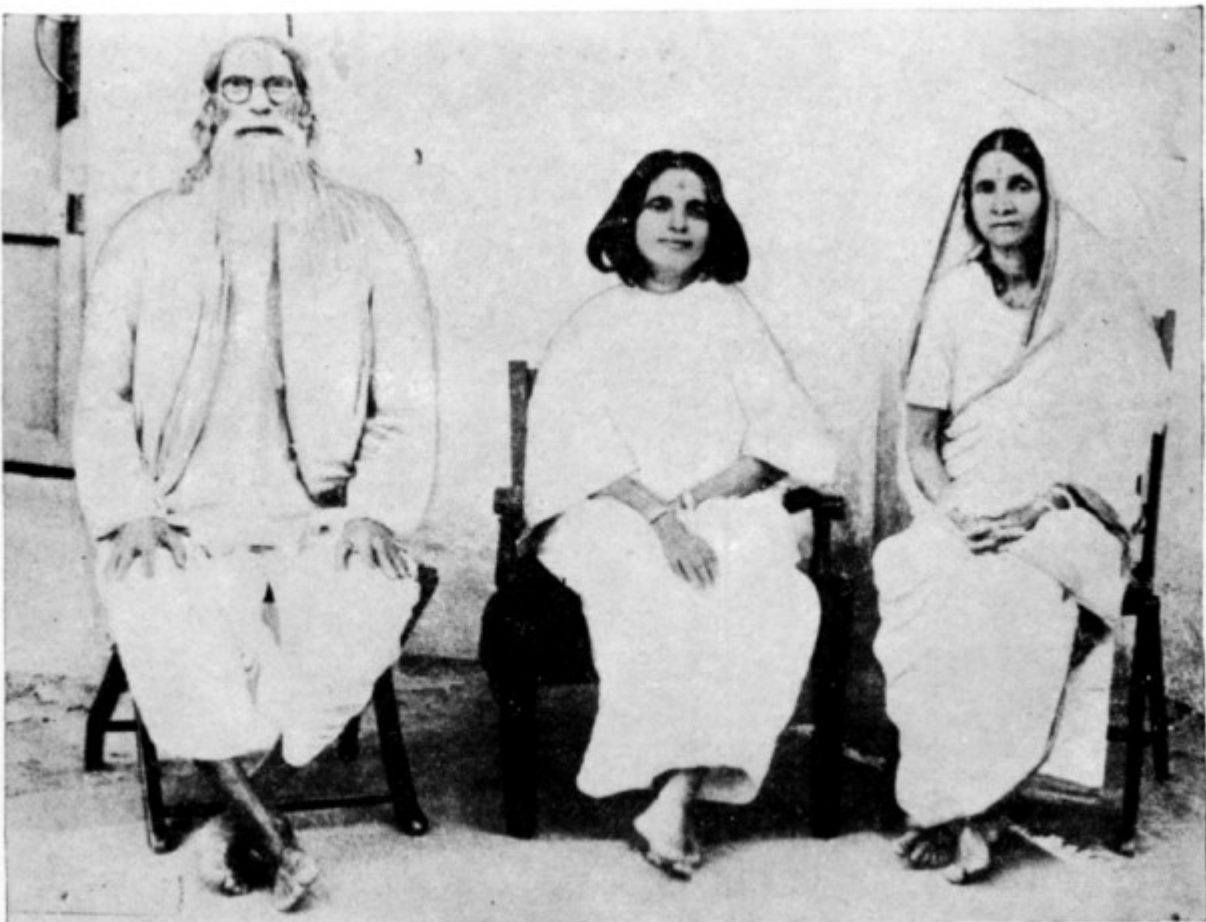
I am grateful to my parents for the help they have rendered with their knowledge of Bengali.

Over and over again I have felt deeply grateful to Didi for recording Ma's life so faithfully. If this translation makes the bliss of reading about Ma's life available to more devotees, it is due entirely to Ma's infinite grace.

Jai Ma !

Bangalore, March 1984

Tara Kini



MA with Dadamashai & Didima