

MOTHER
AS SEEN BY HER DEVOTEES

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By Mahamahopadhyaya Dr. Gopinath Kaviraj,

Padma Vibhusana, M.A., D. Litt.

INTRODUCTION

The present work brings together some papers from a number of writers, Indian and Non-Indian, on what each of them thinks about Mother Anandamayi and of the reaction of each to the influence of Her superb personality. All these writers claim to be among Her devout admirers, and though some of them may have known Her for a short time only, others have been privileged to be in more or less close touch with Her for several years. What they have written is naturally interesting, being a sincere expression of their views, and for some it has indeed been a frank out-pouring of the heart. It seems, however, that all of them have been deeply impressed with Mother's sanctity, wisdom and love, and greatly influenced by the extraordinary qualities of Her life and character; although none of them have anything to say, except incidentally, on the mystery of Her Being and Personality.

This is as it should have been. For it hardly becomes us, children as we are, to analyse and dissect our Mother, nor is it possible for us, crying ourselves for light in the darkness of night, to shed any light on Her. It is evident that an attempt of this kind, even if it were made, is bound to be a failure.

(2)

I have been asked by friends to write a few lines in appreciation of Mother, which might be prefixed, to the present volume as a brief introduction. I confess I could not find a way to decision so easily. Requests were insistent, but my indecision did not for a long time seem to give way. At last, however, I have had to yield and am now trying to comply with their request, though with the greatest reluctance. But what should I write in appreciation? I am simply noting my incompetence. I had already felt years ago, when writing a foreword to Mother's "Life" by Sri Gurupriya Devi (published in 1938) that it was beyond my power to delineate through words a faithful picture of Mother, showing Her not merely as She truly was in Herself, but even as She appeared to me. I feel the same difficulty and hesitancy even now, perhaps all the more strongly with the deepening of my sense of mystery about Her, consequent on closer and more immediate contact with Her personality.

(3)

I, therefore, sympathise with those to whom Mother is verily a riddle. She is so very unlike ordinary or even extraordinary persons known to us that it is extremely hard to make any positive statement about Her with any degree of confidence or accuracy. We know that similar difficulties leading to misunderstanding were experienced in the case of some of the supremely great persons of the past and that as a result many of these persons actually felt that they were not truly appreciated and were even misunderstood by those among whom they lived and for whom they worked. Sri Krsna, for instance, complained that most people - some of the gods as well - not knowing his true nature looked down upon him as an ordinary mortal. Gautama, the Buddha, too in a subsequent age spoke in the same strain saying that very few people understood him properly.

That Mother's life, even Her earliest life, should abound in extraordinary incidents is not surprising, - we are accustomed to such incidents in the lives of genuine saints, mystics and yogins.

They exist and have their place of honour in those lives.

But all these pale into insignificance before the wonderful poise and bliss of Her sweet but magnificent personality - a personality which, strong as it is, blends into the Impersonal, nay is utterly undifferentiated from it.

It is well-known that the illumination and liberation of saints and mystics presuppose an earlier stage of ignorance and bondage, followed usually by a period of aspiration, personal exertion and austerities. This stage is usually found in the present life itself, or, in exceptional cases, in a pre-natal state of existence. But in the case of Mother we are told that such a prior state of ignorance never existed at all. The possibility of an ante-natal embodied existence is ruled out on Mother's definite assurance that Her life is not subject to the laws of natural causation and that She has no prior life to account for Her present existence. And even what looked like a path of discipleship in Her pre-marital and early post-marital life was not, as we shall see presently, more than a playful representative with self-imposed discipline in which She con-descended to take part merely as a matter of sport.

It had no meaning for Her subsequent life in any way.

Among the well-known mystics of the world we seldom find any in whom we do not observe a period of gloom and subjective torture antecedent to the descent of Light. Mother had no

experience of darkness in Her life, either of the soul or of the spirit nor had She any experience of the descent of Light except as a matter of play. It is said that from Her very birth She was aware of what She had ever been and what She would always continue to be and that there was no possibility of a deviation from Her self-conscious stature for a single moment.

Her self-knowledge, we are assured, did not arise under the impact of an extrinsic element outside of Herself - it was always with Her, being a state of Her nature. It was there already in its fullness, requiring no effort on Her part, nor any ace from above, to bring it into greater perfection.

(4)

Ordinarily three sources of illumination are recognised, viz.

(a) *Daiva*, (b) *Arsa* and (c) *Paurusa*.

In the first case knowledge dawns on the soul absorbed in contemplation of some heavenly form as illustrated by the knowledge of Arjuna coming from Sri Krsna. This contemplation may or may not be accompanied by the descent of self-conscious grace from the form of the deity concerned; and in the case of descent of grace it may be gross, subtle, more subtle, or even the subtlest depending on whether it is effected through touch, speech, vision or mere thought. Apart from the difference in degree of grace there may be difference in the quality of the grace infused, according as it results in the unification or otherwise of the soul with the source of its knowledge. There are cases known to history where such knowledge is not found accompanied by conscious grace at all, e.g. the knowledge of the analysis of the five-fold sheath of the soul which was received by Bhrgu from Varuna, or the particular *Vidya* which Yama imparted to Nachiketa.

The *Arsa* variety is called *pratibha*. It is not derived from anybody's verbal instruction, but is produced from within spontaneously. Its classical example is Trisanku who was engaged in continued *upasana* identifying himself in thought with the Supreme Brahman. This gave rise in due time to the actual intuition of *Brahman*.

The third or *Paurusa* type is the normal variety in which a human Guru communicates his wisdom to a human disciple as Suka Deva did to Pariksit. This type of *Brahma Jnana* arises in one devoted to one's teacher on account of the virtuous acts of one's previous lives having come to maturity. In this case too the possibility or otherwise of conscious *Saktipata* from the human teacher as an accompaniment is to be considered. Whether there is *Saktipata* or not, the alternative of *upasana* or its absence is also there, The quantitative classification as in the other types is possible even here.

We can easily dismiss the first and the third, as both of them imply the origin of knowledge from a separate source, divine or human, and as they refer respectively to one who meditates on God or who is devoted to Guru. The second variety is also discarded as it refers here to cases of persons who having attained to some degree of perfection have subsequently experienced a fall from the height. It is not true *jnana* at all. As regards genuine *pratibha* we shall revert to it later.

(5)

Now what is the nature of the self-knowledge which was innate with Mother?

It is clear from what has been said above that though self-knowledge, on the analogy of lower knowledge, has its roots within, its exciting cause is usually outside, as it is initiated by forces working without us. But it may also be, as already pointed out, due to initiation from within, in which case the external agencies would be no more than merely propagating forces. History records instances of illumination of both these types. The Divine Grace is the most important factor, not only in the awakening of religious consciousness in man but also in its subsequent development in him till the union with the Divine is accomplished. Granting this as a necessary

pre-condition of active spiritual life, what is needed in ordinary cases is the operation of a mediating factor through which such grace may become accessible to man. For the bodily and the mental mechanism of an average individual is not capable of bearing the strain involved in the direct transmission of Divine Grace. As a rule God's Grace is said to act on a receptive vehicle free from contact with matter, i.e. on an un-embodied soul in a pre-creational state.

But if the soul in the process of creative evolution happens to take on a body of impure matter it can no longer receive grace directly from the Divine source, but receives it only through a medium. The medium would be an embodied being whose body may be of exclusively pure matter or of pure matter mixed with impure. Barring the immaculate bodies of the heavenly brotherhood entrusted with the guardianship of the world and with the task of imparting knowledge in the beginning of creation we have to consider in this context the hierarchy of Teachers consisting of three well-known groups (*Ogha*), viz. *Divya*, *Siddha* and *Manava*.

The *Divya* or celestial and *Manava* or human correspond loosely to the *Daiva* and *Pauru* mentioned above.

Between these two the *Agamas* place the *Siddha* or superhuman group.

This medium serves the purpose of an *Acarya* or Guru to the uninitiated seekers after Knowledge.

Thus Grace acts freely and immediately in the case of souls which are not clogged with material vestments. This is possible where Grace does not require any external support for its manifestation (*Niradhikarana Anugraha*) and it acts indirectly through pure bodies on recipient souls endowed with bodies of maya. This is an instance of Grace acting through a support as its medium (*Sadhikarana Anugraha*).

By the term 'Grace' we should understand here the special Grace of the Lord and not the general grace which confers benefit other than Supreme Realization.

There are thus two ways of approach to Grace in Indian cultural tradition and the two ways generally meet and seem to be really two aspects of one and the same way. Both are concerned with one's outlook on Guru as the Principle of Divine Grace, functioning in one view by itself, and in the other through its concrete expression in a manifested form available for the purpose. In fact there appears to be no substantial difference between the two trends of thought. In actual practice the object of veneration is held from both these standpoints to be above the entire creation. But one should remember an important point in this connection which is likely to be lost sight of. During Manifestation each of the different Aspects of Pure Order beyond Time, where the sequence is only logical, involves complexities in its features, but in the simple Unity of the Eternal Self-luminous all complications are conspicuous by their absence, for the Transcendent is above all categories. For instance, Guru as an abstract principle is one of the eternal verities. The Universal Being pervades All and is one with All; by virtue of its presence it occupies every position simultaneously and is identified with each and yet it retains its transcendent character and uniqueness. An individual human being on the other hand by virtue of the spiritual elevation may very well occupy the position of a Guru for the time and perform the function connected with this position. This, however, is tentative and endures so long as the merit of the incumbent is not exhausted, whereupon he retires giving place to another individual of the same kind who continues the function and keeps the chain unbroken. This shows that Guru is both human and divine, human in view of the transitional character of the medium adopted by the Divine Power for its own purpose, and divine in consideration of the Supreme Principle of Compassion which is eternal and inspires the medium concerned. The Power of God functions through a man or any other embodied being. For this reason it is enjoined that even a secondary Guru, human, super-human and even celestial, should be looked upon by the disciple as divine. Strictly speaking, the Divine Being is free from all attributes incidental to contingent existence and does not deserve to be called by any of the names associated with human activities.

Those in whom the supreme intuition does not arise from within, have naturally to depend for its origin either on illuminated persons or on revelation. But to one in whom it flashes up spontaneously revealing Truth fully and immediately, external aids are held to be unnecessary. Such a man is believed to be a master of every phase of spiritual life and possesses the ability to impart it successfully to the needy. It is said that the process of his so called self-initiation is in reality a process of introversion of senses and their subsequent unification with the true Self which awakens the latent divine consciousness. This is the secret of his self-acquired authority. He never feels any urge for resorting to an external teacher for interpreting the sacred word, for his inner sense reveals it to him. This is an illustration of how Pure Light, free from intellectual and conceptual elements, comes into manifestation. In the matter of communicating his wisdom to others, he is guided solely by the consideration of the receptive capacity and other qualities of the seeker. Thus if the minds of the recipients are absolutely pure the beneficent Will of the Master is by itself sufficient to kindle their spiritual sense. But if they are not so pure, external accessories of a formal character consistent with their inner demands may have to be conceded to suit their requirements. Such a unique person is a Guru unto himself and is known as *Akalpita Guru*, possessed of Full Knowledge and Power manifested from within.

But when this self-derived knowledge and power is imperfect he has to remove it and bring the knowledge into perfection by some means or other, e.g. through a mental act viz. *bhavana* or contemplation or *japa* or yoga. Thus by constantly turning in his mind the thought that he is verily one with Brahman or by repetition of a potent mantra or by some such means he has to supplement the knowledge he has acquired from within. Such a person is called *Akalpita Kalpaka*. The difference between the two is that while in the former or superior type of self-illumination the co-operation of the mind, *prana*, senses or body is not essential, in the latter it is indispensable.

A superficial observer might find in Mother's self-knowledge some resemblance to the illumination of one of the two types mentioned above. If Her subsequent course of life be interpreted as a real process of *sadhana* intended to bring into perfection what She has derived from Her inner Self it would come, they say, under the second category. But if it means simply an outer expression of what She found within and does not convey the usual significance attached to *sadhana*, it would fall under the first category.

A little reflection would however show that Mother's case is exceptional and does not come under any of the two categories. The mere fact that Her knowledge did not originate from a Guru does not take us very far into its mystery.

In Vedic tradition we hear of one Trisanku as being blessed with such spontaneous illumination due to his deep contemplation on his self as identical with the Supreme Brahman. Recently we know of Jacob Boehme (1575-1624 A.D.) of Germany, the "God-taught philosopher", as blessed with some sort of intuitive *Jnana* directly from within or from above.

In the history of mysticism we come across cases of a sudden as well as of a gradual process of the on-coming of Light without the intervention of any mediating agency. The illumination differs, of course, in kind, quality and degree in each case. The self-evolved gnosis of the *Akalpita Yogi* stands also on a similar footing. But we must bear in mind that all this is a result of an intensive action of grace. For from a careful study of works on mystic theology, especially of the *Tantras*, it appears that there are three degrees of grace in respect of its intensity viz. high, medium and low, each of these being sub-divided into three similar classes. Thus in a general way we may speak of nine degrees in all, the first being the most intense and the ninth the mildest. The second degree of grace under this classification would by its descent enable the recipient soul to have self-knowledge without the aid of an external Guru. It purges and transforms the soul instantaneously. What is technically known as *Anaya* or *Sambhava Upaya* belongs to this class.

Here the *Upaya* or means is no other than the Supreme Power itself or its first manifestation as the Cosmic Will. It is certainly higher than *jnana* as well as *kriya*. But it is nonetheless a means to an end and not an end in itself and is intended to convert an animal soul or *pasu* into the divine Self

or *Siva*. Its sole objective is to divinise the soul or rather to reclaim it into its divine status, which lay always inherent within itself.

Mother's self-knowledge as already pointed out is not easily explicable on the analogy of the cases referred to above. It cannot be interpreted in terms of the experiences of saints and sages. Hence the difficulty of estimating Mother's personality. We cannot ignore the fact that She was never subject to ignorance and the question of saving grace even in its highest degree can never arise in Her case. She played the role of a *sadhika* in Her earlier years, no doubt, and during this period She seemed to have passed through all the stages of a real *sadhika*; In this play She started with ignorance and proceeded through various austerities, observing silence, regulating diet, practising japa and yogic exercises and performing puja and other similar rites. Dawn of knowledge formed also a part of this play. A sense of agony and dryness of the soul followed by the bliss of union had Their own places in this self-enacted drama.

The whole affair was an imitation of *sadhana* and it was so arranged that it had all the air of naturalness in it. Her self-knowledge, fortified in its unshakeable purity, stood behind this play of self-assumed ignorance and the dramatic impersonation of an ordinary *sadhika* in quest of supreme Realization.

One should not take it as an illustration of divided self and of its activities - it is rather the outcome of an eternally vigilant and self-conscious will, playing the double part of impersonation of a *sadhika*, passing through the shadows and lights of a disciplined life and still is a witness behind observing and directing its own play on the stage.

Some people are inclined to regard Mother as an *Avatara* or incarnation of a god or goddess. This view, whatever its merits may be, is supposed to be free from the difficulties noted in the earlier view. But what is an *Avatara*? It is the descent of Energy to the earth level from the pure causal plane with the object of bringing order into a troubled world, establishing righteousness and restoring moral balance to humanity. The Energy which comes down to an *Avatara* is distinguished from what descends to a man on the ground that its connection with the source remains unbroken whereas in the case of a man it is discontinued.

Notwithstanding this its relation with the source is like that of a part with the whole, and even when the descending Energy is continuous with the source, it is only a projection and nothing more. The original source lies outside the field of the descended energy. The very expression *Avatara* mean descent and presupposes a higher source from which the descent is made. All the *Avataras* as such have their respective centres, their prototypes so to say, in the *Para Vyoman* (Highest Heaven) or *Maha Vaikuntha* and these are different modes of the Central Energy of the World Administrator.

We are not concerned here with the particular god or goddess of which She is claimed to be an *Avatara*. The difficulty is everywhere the same. Even if the god or goddess be taken to be divine in essence the difficulty remains.

Knowing Mother through personal contact in the light of what She says about Herself indirectly from time to time I cannot bring myself to believe that this view would solve the difficulty. If *Avatara* is understood in the sense in which a Buddhist would consider a *Nirmana Kaya* in relation to *Dharmakaya* it would be a different matter. But even then some difficulty would persist.

If the *Nirmana Kaya* is considered to be a projection of *Dharmakaya*, the difficulty of *Avatara*hood would remain as before. If the absolute unity of *all* the *Kayas* of the Buddha is recognised as a fact, the difficulty may perhaps be removed to some extent. We should then be left with the supposition of the *Adi Buddha* as it were and not with any of the historical Buddhas appearing in time. In the case of a historical Buddha we have a long history of strenuous *sadhana* extending over a series of successive lives with a view to eradicate the fundamental obscurations

and cultivate the basic virtues and seeds of knowledge.

As a result of this, the historical Buddha was endowed with fourfold knowledge, viz.

Adarsa Jnana, Samanta Jnana, Pratyaveksa Jnana and Krityanusthana Jnana.

In Mother all these types of *Jnana* are believed to exist from the very beginning. Of these the first kind means a general vision of all things of all times without any let or hindrance. It is like a mirror reflecting on its bosom the entire creation. The second kind refers to realization of the essential equality or sameness in all beings. The third variety of *Jnana* enables one to have a sense of absolute certainty in regard to everything in existence. The fourth *Jnana* has a bearing on the world and its good and is devoted to the service of humanity. It is a knowledge of manifesting an infinite number of *Nirmana Kayas* in response to the different needs of different persons.

Some people are disposed to look upon Mother as a *Vilasa*, a self-projection in time and space of the Timeless Divine. I do not know how far this view is tenable. If the conception *Narayana* (of *Vaikuntha*) as a *Vilasa* of Sri Krishna (of *Goloka*) be the true conception of *Vilasa*, which involves loss of power and knowledge in relation to the original, we shall find it difficult to explain her own statement regarding Herself like the following:-

"Yet here the aforesaid holds good, for this body responds strictly to the line of thought and to the spirit in which a question is asked. Consequently, what is the opinion of this body and what is not? If there is a line of approach, there must be a goal to which it leads and beyond that is the unattainable. But where the distinction between the attainable and the unattainable does not arise is THAT Itself. What you hear depends on how you play the instrument. For this body the problem of difference of opinion in no wise exists."

"Words of Sri Anandamayi Ma," p.119.

This statement cannot apply to a *Vilasa* for obvious reasons.

Is She then the Divine in its *Svayam Rupa*, in its plenary and perfect Form? Is She then a visible expression of the Absolute Itself? Is She the outer manifestation, within a self-imposed veil, of the Inner *Atma* of the world, of all of us, revealed to us clothed in a human form simply to draw us towards Herself away from the turmoils and tumults of fettered existence? Who can say?

These were some of the difficulties I anticipated in writing about Mother. I have placed them before my readers. Let them judge for themselves and draw their own conclusions.

It is believed by some that Mother has come down on a definite mission viz. to awaken divine consciousness in man and bring love and peace into the present world. But some deny this on the ground that Her actions are purposeless in the sense that they are actuated by Divine Will directly and not by a personal will of Her own as an ordinary individual. In any case it seems clear that a descent or manifestation so remarkably great as this cannot fail to have a great consummation in its own course.

She never claims to be a Teacher though she sometimes seems to some to function as such indirectly, for the Teacher is one who has the limitation of teacher-ship attached to him on account of his pure *Vasana*. But the Mother is free from every kind of *Vasana* as such from the very beginning. She claims to be Herself alone - nothing more and nothing less. In a sense She is perhaps the very Truth which the Teacher promulgates.

We are often told that Mother has no mind and no body. The meaning of the statement does not seem to be clear, at least to some of us. To me it means that the statement is intended to convey the sense that as an ordinary body or physical organism together with its term of existence as a vehicle of worldly experience is due to one's prior *karmas* maturing for fruition and having their

roots in ignorance, Mother on account of Her immunity from these causal factors cannot be said to bear the burden of such a body and of such a mind. It means that even a pure body and a pure mind cannot be really attributed to a person who is eternally free from ignorance and *karma*.

(Note: It is evidently for this reason that the human body of *Sakya Muni* was pronounced illusory in the ancient Buddhist work, *Saddhidharma Pundarika*. The view of this work on the life and achievement of Gautama Buddha has been ably summed up by Poussin and is reproduced below: "Although completely divine, Sakya Muni is not God, he is Buddha 'from the beginning' he is the father of the worlds, the father of the future Buddhas and Saints, the universal Providence in order to save human beings and to lead them to *Nirvana*. He appears in a human form which is illusory; he is born, teaches and enters *Nirvana* - at last as far as ordinary men can see; but in reality, while illusory Sakya Munis are appearing in this world, the true Sakya Muni reigns on a divine 'mountain of vultures' surrounded by future Buddhas and imparting to them the true teaching, the true law." Even the true *Sakya Muni*, according to the teaching of *Saddharma Pundarika*, though eternal and divine, is not God.

In all cognate schools of Indian thought we are familiar with a similar conception of the relation between *karma* and body. In Jainism, for instance, we are told that *Jivan mukti* follows on the wake of the cessation of what is called *ghati* or obscuring *karma*, viz. *karma* which deludes, obstructs and obscures knowledge and intuition. But *ghati karma*, which gives rise to experience of pleasure and pain, determines one's term of life and status and builds one's body, continues. (Note: These correspond to *Jati*, *ayu*, and *bhoga* of Patanjali.) Even a *Tirthankara* is not immune from this. When even these are destroyed there is an absolute cessation of *karmas* and the body ceases to exist. It is a bodiless state of *Atma*. *Kevala Jnana* emerges at the end of *ghati karma*, which implies the end of impure mind (and of impure body) while Perfection arises at the end of *aghati karma*, which means the cessation of pure body and pure mind as well.

Similarly in Buddhism we find that an *Arhat* or *Jivanmukta* is liberated from *kleshas* and is consequently free from a defiled mind. But this is not an essential character of *Arhat*, for even a person in *Nirodha Samadhi* as one in the meditation on nothingness or a *vitara* or an *anagami* has his lower mind inhibited (though not cleansed, as it re-appears on reawakening). The lower mind is held in abeyance in the supernormal Way also for a definite period. Even an *Arhat* has to experience the fruits of his earlier *karmas*.

Maudgalayana, for instance, was a great yogi, the greatest perhaps among Buddha's disciples, and yet he was tortured and his body cut to pieces by robbers and even the bones were powdered. Buddha explained that this was a retribution of heinous *karma* viz. patricide committed by him in an earlier life.

How then are we to account for what appears like Mother's body and mind? May they not be due to an act of the Supreme Will playing in its freedom or to the same Will in response to the cumulative *karmas* of humanity crying out for ages for a Divine Appearance? It comes to this, then Mother's body is no body and Her mind is no mind in the ordinary connotation of the terms. They are only apparent and exist for the ignorant who are under *maya* and unable to see behind the veil.

This is a docetic view to be sure, but there seems to be no escape from it. Did we not hear of it in connection with the Buddha's body and also the body of Jesus Christ? Did not Sri Krisna too say that he did not really take any birth and had no *karma* of his own like ordinary men and that his birth and *karma* were both divine in nature?

Mother Herself said once as to whether the persistence in consciousness of a body is consistent with the dawn of knowledge "For a Self-realized Being neither the world with its pairs of opposites exists, nor does the body. If there is no world there can obviously be no body either!"

Who says the body exists? There is no question at all of name and form. To wonder whether a realized Being sees anything outside of himself is also beside the point. Who is there to whom he can say: "Give, give"? Yet this state of wanting is precisely the reason for one's belief in the reality of the body. Therefore, since there is no world and no body there can be no action either; this stands to reason.

To make it quite clear: after Self-realization there is no body, no world and no action not even the

faintest possibility of these - nor is there such an idea as "there is not". To use words is exactly the same as not to speak; to keep silent or not is identical - all is THAT alone."

This is in regard to persons who have awakened to eternal life from the torpor of worldly existence. (Note: The context refers to the life of the young queen Chudala who realized Self-knowledge through yoga and jnana and converted her ignorant husband Sikhidhvaja. It was asked how Chudala could possibly conduct the affairs of the world after her Self-realization instead of keeping her-self as the witness of all that happened in nature's course. Mother said in reply that true knowledge burns out the worldly life and with that the body also.) It is equally applicable certainly with a greater force to those who have never been in that existence.

(6)

We hear of a general complaint that Mother's language is not intelligible. The complaint is unfounded in go far as it relates to the language used by her in ordinary correspondence and conversation. The language of *Matri Vani* extracted from letters written to Mother's dictation is, for instance, simple, graceful, straightforward and luminous. The complaint is perhaps true when we consider the language employed for interpreting profound experiences and transcendent truths. But it should be remembered that supra-mental truths do not easily lend themselves to an expression on the lower or even on the higher mental levels to which alone our language is adapted. It seems to me that what appears to the average reader with his logical bent of thought-structure as a riddle is a plain truth on a higher level of consciousness and has been recognized as such by eminent philosophers and saints. What looks like contradiction in logic and on the finite plane of mind, is verily a truism when the threshold of consciousness is lifted and we are face to face with the Infinite.

I propose, therefore to analyse some of Mother's well-known utterances which are apparently meaningless, and try to see if we can discover any great significance in them. Out of a large number of sayings we have chosen a few by way of illustrations. This will give an idea of what for want of a better word we might call Mother's outlook on life and reality.

(a) *Yata*: This expression cannot be easily rendered. The usual rendering would be something like 'It is - what it is'.

These words are often uttered by Mother when She speaks of the Absolute. It is difficult to say what it exactly stands for. One may equate it with the conception of Pure Being, Non-Being, Self, the Infinite, the Ineffable, the Universal, the Immaculate, the Immutable etc. according to one's point of view. It is the Nameless referred to under different names and the Formless under different forms. She also speaks of it as *Charam Param* in the sense of Ultimate Reality. As for the implications of this enigmatical expression we may compare the following sayings of Mother Herself :

- i. Whether you say it exists or does not exist, or that it is beyond both existence and non-existence, or even beyond that, as you please.**
- ii. Whether you call it the One, the Two, or the Infinite, whatever anyone may say, all is well.**
- iii. When this is possible the wall is not there although it exists and even if no wall exists, yet it is there.**
- iv. For the Supreme it is possible to be everything and yet nothing.**
- v. A state of being exists where it is immaterial whether He assumes a form or not what is, is He, In this state of complete poise nothing at all is any longer apart from Him, what is, is the Thing Itself.**

This shows that in it, there is no difference at all not even between Being and Non-Being, between

Light and Darkness, between Good and Evil, between Motion and Rest and between Personal and Impersonal.

All is one - one is all.

Even the equation is not possible, for True One is where there is no sense of the one.

All this sounds paradoxical, but it is the highest truth. - Nagarjuna says: "- It cannot be described as void or non-void, nor even as both void and non-void simultaneously, or as above the two modes of statements whatever is expressed in language is only a thought and appeals only to the thought level of human consciousness."

We have a similar description of the Supreme Reality by Manjusri when he refers to *Dharma Kaya* of the Buddha.

Thus Manjusri says:

" The Body of Truth is neither - one nor many; it is the foundation on which the great wealth of individual or universal good is based. It is neither Being nor Non-Being; it is a state of balance like the *Akasa*; its nature is beyond man's power of imagination; it does not allow itself to be attached to anything and he soiled by it; it is free from change; it is auspicious; it is equal as well as unequal at one and the same time; it is all-pervading and transcendent."

We have an utterance in a similar strain from the great *yogi* Abhinava Gupta of Kashmir in a still later age. The following lines are addressed by the Guru to the disciple who has attained to Supreme Realization:

"Things do not emerge of themselves - they appear only when they are thought out by Thee (projected by Thy imagination). They are unreal and yet for a moment seem to be real due to experience which is only apparent. The glory and grandeur of this creation is the result of Thy will and has its source nowhere else. It is for this reason that Thou, though one, shining in all these worlds as many by virtue of Thy self-multiplying power.

Whatever shines in the mirror of consciousness - be it true or false, small or great, eternal or temporary, defiled through *Maya* or pure by itself. All these experienced on the dawn of the Supreme Wisdom as of the nature of *Prakasa* and marked by reflective self-knowledge Thou, the Lord of the world, realizing Thy greatness through personal intuition, wilt preserve in Thy memory."

The yogins speak of two-fold *Samadhi*, viz. *Nimilana* and *Unmilana*. In the former aspect One alone shines in its unity - undifferentiated unity and one may say that the sense of unity is absent. One is, but it is not aware of itself as one. This means that *Shakti* does not function. In the other aspect *Shakti* is unceasing in its movement producing in consciousness a sense of one, many-in-one, one in-many and many. And yet the two aspects are mysteriously one and the same in reality. They are co-eternal, and truly speaking they represent a single truth. The Great *Prakasa* - infinite in its extension is wonderful - all contradictions are solved in that Light and it seems as if darkness and light have lost their difference in meaning in that unity.

(b) *Kheyala* (i) : It is also very difficult to render correctly and in terms intelligible to the average reader the exact significance of the expression *kheyala* used often by Mother in Her discourses. Ordinarily it means a sudden and unexpected psychic emergence, be it desire, will, attention, memory or even knowledge without any adequate causal antecedent behind to account for its origin. There is thus an -element of spontaneity in the act. It might thus seem to be - analogous to the playful vagaries and caprices of an eccentric and non-purposive mentality. The

word is in popular use. Mother has borrowed it and used it in Her own sense, enriching it with Her own associations.

Why One becomes many, why the primal Unity, Being and Power, divides itself into infinite varieties in creation, why the subject itself becomes the object of its own action, or why the Ineffable splits itself up into subject and object is a mystery which no man can dare to unravel. All that we can say is that it is due to an act of the ultimate One which is named *kheyala* by Mother and is variously named by various thinkers. By some it is called the Lord's *Svabhava*, for the One Being free from desires cannot have any desire:

By others it is called *krida* (play) or *lila*.

By others still it is called Will, emanating from the overflow of Bliss on the white screen of Eternal Consciousness and followed by creative action It is called the Divine Word or Logos. It is in fact the Will-to-become where in reality there is neither any will nor any becoming. It is called by different names in different Systems of thought. The expression *kheyala* as used by Mother covers all these senses.

We have spoken of the Supreme Reality, the Ultimate One as Mother refers to it, and of the expression of its outgoing inner act in the form of what She describes as *kheyala*. Divine Power is really inscrutable - it is one and yet embraces an infinite range, each being associated with a function appropriate to it.

But we should remember the general truth that behind the outer manifestation each power is within every other as identical with it, so that all powers- are latent within each. This is as true in the centre as in every sphere of the manifestation. Still, however, we should confine ourselves, in all schemes of intellectual analysis, to the basic powers of the Divine Reality. The following lines describing the working of some of the central powers may be of some use for a clearer understanding of the empirical side of Divine Mind. There are, if we may say so, different centres of Being and Consciousness in- the Divine Self, and corresponding to these there are different centres in man. So long as a man is ego-centric, his actions which follow from his individual will constitute *karma*, the consequence of which in the form of pleasure and pain he has to reap - in life. As he believes himself to be the doer of the action independently of Divine initiative, he is affected by its consequences. If he could realize truly that he had no power of his own and that even his will did not really belong to him but formed an expression of the Divine Will, he would get rid of the moral responsibility. It would be the beginning of Wisdom when a man could see the working of a general Will behind all phenomena in man and nature. Going deeper down along the line he would find that there is no will left in him no, not even a shadow of it. He then finds no will in the Divine Consciousness as well, for he cannot find in God what he is unable to find in himself.

Evidently it refers to a centre in God beyond will - a centre in which will is absent but from which will in the lower centre springs. This centre is the inner Divine *Sakti* from which Will, Knowledge and Action issue forth in separate streams - it is the centre of *Ananda* or Divine Bliss and Love. Behind *Ananda* is the uncoloured *Chit* or Supernal Light where even Joy transcends itself through self-obliteration. This is the Supreme Divine Power co-related and co-eternal with the Supreme Divine Essence in a sort of undifferentiated oneness. All contradictions and conflicts lose their strength of opposition and become one with the One.

The divine power of action (*Kriya*) is *Maya* controlled by *Ishvara*.

The world as we know it in its lower material aspect is a product of *Maya* and is under *Ishvara* who, as its moral governor, is responsible for the maintenance of righteousness and justice. The principle of Justice called *niyati* as a natural and moral law operates in this world and is inviolable. Man being ignorant and ego-centred sows seeds of *karma*, the fruits of which are awarded by *Ishvara* in strict conformity to the principle of justice. It is asserted by some that the *karmas* bear

their own fruits under the laws of Nature. But these laws are in the ultimate analysis explicable as the dictates of an inscrutable Will in the Divine Centre of that name. For God is law.

It was in this sense that *Dharma* used to be identified with the Buddha and Guru *Vakya* is identified with the Guru and Word of God with God.

This Will is of the nature of the general Will and has no special or individual reference. A man who has the insight to see behind his own will has the privilege of discovering in the Divine Will the hidden spring of the Cosmic Laws which regulate individual existence. He sees clearly that like the general Will special Will also has its place in the centre. Looked at from this view-point God would appear to him as love (*prema*) and compassion (*mahakaruna*), which is the fulfilment of Law. If it is true that Law prescribes penalty for its transgression, that any offence is bound to be visited with punishment in proportion to its gravity to meet the demands of justice in nature, it is also true that Love condones, makes - amends, forgives and atones. There is no conflict between the two - the special Will or Love when it is exercised simply supplements the general Will expressed in Law.

Both are forms of *Ichha*.

The overflowing qualities of Love and Grace are not in any way incompatible with the evenness of judicial outlook. For does not Sri Krisna say in the Gita that even in the midst of his evenness and impartiality there is a sort of hidden partiality towards those who love him - between Will and Action is to be found the place of Knowledge, both intuitive and rational. This is judgement, for action follows judgement, which is the function of knowledge as a power. In other words the special Will is in the inmost Centre where from Love and Grace flow out; and general Will functions as the judicial and the executive. With Knowledge it is concerned with judgement and with Action it is concerned with its execution. This is how the world administration is being carried on. (Note: We all know that some Vaishnava philosophers of the Mediaeval Ages used to distinguish between different aspects of Divine Unity. Thus for instance *Svayam Bhagavan* and *Bhagavan* on one hand and *Bhagavan* and *Paramatma* on the other are distinguished. There is no functioning of *Maya* and *Tatastha Saktis* (Extrinsic and Neutral Divine powers associated with the manifestation of the soul and with the creation of the world) within the central domain of *Svayam Bhagavan* (God in Himself) or even of *Bhagavan* (God), where the intrinsic Divine Powers consisting of *Sandhini*, *Samvit* and *Hladini* as connected with the triple aspects of Supreme Godhead (*viz.* Being, Consciousness and Bliss) alone prevail. But while the latter (*Bhagavan*) represents mainly the Majesty and Compassion of the Lord, the former (*Svayam Bhagavan*) adds to them is Beauty and Love. For this reason *Goloka*, the Abode of the former, is distinguished from *Vaikuntha*, the Abode of the latter. Both are Heavens, but while *Vaikuntha* is Heaven proper in its highest form, *Goloka*, though higher than *Vaikuntha*, is centrally situated and is the most secret region resembling the earth *minus* its defects. Similarly the Lord of *Vaikuntha* is the proper Lord, being exclusively divine in character, while the Lord of *Goloka* is human and hides His highest divinity within humanity. Even in *Goloka* the most secret centre is the *Vrindavana* where humanity and love alone have their play. The Lord of *Goloka* is *Sri Krishna* as Divine Man and the Beloved in *Vrindavana* is *Sri Krisna* as man *per excellence*.

In the same way there is a distinction between *Bhagavan* and *Paramatma*, because *Bhagavan* as such has nothing to do with *Maya* and *Tatastha Saktis*, while *Paramatma* is the controller of both, as a result of which the worlds and the souls come out into light and begin to function. The Intrinsic Power is there too, for without it the souls or the spiritual monads could not have been manifested and the *Iksana* of *Paramatma*, which disturbs the equilibrium of *Maya* could not have been effected. The subsequent history of creation down to the formation of earth and of individual human beings is concerned with the four hypostases of *Paramatma*; *viz.* the four so-called *Vyuhas*: The world administration in all its phases including the making and enforcement of Law is entrusted to them. Lower Grace leading to *Kaivalya* (freedom from *Maya*) and higher Grace leading to admission into the higher world of *Narayana* (*Vaikuntha*) or of *Sri Krishna* (*Goloka* and *Vrindavana*) flow from the respective sources above the *Vyuhas*.

- All these plays are due to the action of *Shakti* or the Divine Power.
- *Brahman*, however, in which power is not manifest, stands in its eternity and self-centred aloofness as the silent witness at it were of all these plays.
- Really it cannot properly be described as the witness also, though it is self-luminous.

Beyond Special Will is the Centre where there is no longer any will at all. The entire creation is there in total abeyance.

Creation begins with will and ends with its cessation both in the individual and in the cosmos. The cessation of will opens out into the centre within the Divine Consciousness where one enjoys the bliss of communion with the Self, for what the mystics call 'spiritual marriage', generally from the view-point of a basically dualistic Self is a reflection of Self-delight of God.

This state is free from all outgoing urges and is self-contained. On the background of this *Ananda* there is the all-expansive *Chit* infinite in extension, continuous, self-revealed, unitary and *self-sufficient*.

These two are expressions of the Divine Power, which is always in undivided union with the Godhead.

Now God in His Essence is above all activity, but His Power is always bubbling with activities, though it is also true that somewhere in the Beyond, God and his Power are absolutely One.

What Mother calls *kheyala* is really an upsurge of Will in a particular direction which is undoubtedly free and not indicated in the plan of things - it is usually connected with the domain of special Will rather than general Will. No law governs this region and there is no interruption in its freedom of activity. Even pre-destination which takes into consideration the triple flow of time-current is not an appropriate word for an urge which knows nothing but the Eternal Present. There is no consideration of an outside factor - karma (merits and demerits) or anything of the sort has no meaning there. It is also difficult to say whether it is intellectual or volitional. It has all the freshness of a playful and apparently un-purposive act holding within itself incomprehensible possibilities.

(c) *Ja haye jaya*: Literally the expression means the attitude of one's abiding by God's disposal by all means and at all times. It implies an unconditional surrender to the Divine Will which shapes the course of events. Man does not know what lies in store as a possibility in the womb of the future. Ordinarily he has his own likes and dislikes and wishes that the future should be according to his liking.

But his life of resignation begins when he is free from these likes and dislikes and is prepared to accept gladly and without murmur whatever turn events may take in future.. This attitude of perfect equanimity under all circumstances makes one really free in spirit, as it does not allow outer forces to disturb the even poise of the mind, but it also makes oneself strong enough to welcome even sorrows as joys.

Whatever happens in life or in the world has really the sanction of God's will and as this will, however it may affect the actual happening, is believed to be not only in consonance with the demands of justice but also truly auspicious, one is able to greet with joy everything that takes place in life or in the world. But the expression also implies an attitude of passive but self-conscious complaisance in Divine Dispensation. As coming from Mother's lips it cannot have the possible sense of forced resignation to the inevitable.

(7)

Mother says that the teachings of all lines and of all teachers, provided they are genuine and proceed from the right sources, are correct and should be followed by those for whom they are meant. They may be opposed to one another, but that does not detract from each its peculiar value as a distinct path leading to the goal set before it. If this path is self-consistent and lies unblocked till the end of the journey it will not mislead, though it may carry the pilgrim to a sectional truth and not the *whole* Truth. But if the pilgrim has within him genuine aspiration for the Supreme Reality, Reality will assert itself and overtake him at any point of the journey. In that case the sectional truth will be either brought into relation with the whole and make a step in its direction or will be converted into a medium through which the Supreme Truth will reveal itself. The Ultimate Truth is one and the Way to it is also one.

An earnest Seeker, free from worldly attachments and desires, has no reason for disappointment. What is needed is unflinching patience, grim resolution, persistent endeavour, unflinching faith in Divine Providence and unconditional surrender to the Divine Will, preceded by a life of purity, devotion and self-dedication.

Mother has no line of Her own, no particular teaching or doctrine. She recognises that though at bottom the Way is unique, it assumes varied forms as the temperaments and capacities of individuals are varied. The true test of real advance in spiritual life lies in the gradual purification, illumination and transformation of the human soul whereby in the end it may be restored to its lost unity with the Divine. She is at times very eloquent on the deprecation of the so-called spiritual favours, including revelations, visions, locutions etc. and exhibitions of occult powers.

Not that they are always bad or inspired by dark forces, but the point to be remembered is that they have generally a tendency to deflect us from the right path, which consists in a single-minded and all-absorbing attention to the great Aim held in view. She does not, however, actually comment, even in an indirect manner, on anybody's personal experiences. She simply wants that we should be guarded against what Sri Aurobindo calls: - "the valley of the false glimmer".

Usually these experiences arise from perverted imagination or alien powers, hostile or neutral. Self-deception, She points out, is always possible on the path. In very rare cases these favours are real and welcome and may be helpful on the path. In such cases there is no harm in allowing them to continue, though even then the *sadhaka* should not actively co-operate with them until he feels strongly fortified against all outer influences. It is very important to bear in mind that the strength of personal will, self-consciousness and power of rational discrimination should not suffer in any way.

It is thus intelligible that Mother is tolerant to all. She sees the bright side of every object and every event and asks all to do the same as far as they can. Everything has its own use and importance. People have different points of view. what one says from his own view-point may be as true as what another says from his own view-point. She speaks to people from their own standpoints so that they may understand Her well, showing that She is familiar with all. This is the secret of Her universal sympathy and compassion. She always makes it clear that different people with different temperaments and intellectual backgrounds have to be led in different ways.

A great World-Teacher said "there are many mansions in my Father's house". Mother says that there are really infinite mansions and that there are infinite ways leading to each and yet what She insists on is that we should not forget the fact that the House is one. All the creatures live in the same house and are members of one and the same family. They all have descended from One and are parts of One and verily One and the Same. Differences are in appearance only; due to *Maya*, but even this is in reality the play of the One. When we are ourselves again we are bound to realize this. Though She moves about from place to place She is always aware that She is in the same house - movement and rest, many and one, are always co-existent in Her consciousness; nay, they are aspects of the self-same Reality, indeed the Reality itself is aspectless.

For the same reason people of different creeds and persuasions find in Her their strongest support, each for reasons best known to himself.

Karma, Jnana, yoga and bhakti, in fact all the ways of spiritual life, find their best exponent in Her.

She knows the value of each, the relation of one with the others and the fact that all are simultaneously operative.

She recognises the different grades of spiritual advancement and yet She is emphatic - of course to those who can appreciate it - that the universal and integral self-revelation of God is always sudden and the question of a Moment, for it never happens in time.

She teaches the law of moral and spiritual causality on the analogy of natural law and yet She stresses the supreme value of Divine Freedom, which stands above all laws and restraints. She attaches great importance to Teachers and yet She holds that even Teachers are not indispensable.

She reconciles all conflicts in Her own inimitable way saying that behind all varieties and diversities one Truth shines in its own glory and adds strength to every position. It is not possible to speak at greater length on Mother's teachings within the brief compass of an Introduction which has already exceeded its scheduled limits. (Note: Readers, anxious to have some clear ideas of these teachings, may consult with profit "*Matri Vani*" and "*Words of Sri Anandamayi Ma*", published by the Shree Shree Anandamayee Sangha. The first of these books contains extracts from Mother's letters addressed to people seeking consolation and advice; and the second contains Mother's answers to questions asking for light on great metaphysical problems of a *sadhaka* inner life.)

There is a deep meaning in Mother's utterances some of which may seem to be obscure to a casual reader. It should not be thought that Mother is not accustomed to speak in plain language. So far as Her ordinary speeches are concerned, speeches addressed to the people of the world coming to Her in search of blessings or assurance or directions in a state of trouble or embarrassment, they are simple, straightforward, free from ambiguity and full of wisdom and compassion.

From what has been said above one may have a faint idea of what Mother is like and what Her central teachings are, but it would be a futile attempt to try to estimate Mother's position on the strength of what little we know about Her. We must go beyond surmises and grip Reality in its heart. The best thing for us- would be to try to love Her deeply and sincerely as Mother and by loving Her to bring ourselves into closer and closer union with Her true Self. I felt this years ago and feel this even now. I am convinced that as a result of this process Mother will surely reveal Herself to us more and more fully according to the degree of our fitness and receptivity and that we shall then be in a fortunate position to know *immediately*, and not through our intellect which sees through a veil and perverts what it sees, what Mother truly is. And in so knowing Her we shall be able to know our own selves also. For She is verily one with us.

No intellectual approach, however free from pre-dispositions and prejudices, is capable of revealing the heart of truth.

So much of disharmony and opposition in the world today, engendering bitterness and strife, is due to our lack of sympathy and sense of oneness. The root cause is the lack of self-knowledge. There is but one Self which is Love and Wisdom eternal and we shall share it if we but know it in a proper way. Discord and hatred are bound to disappear like mists before the light of the sun. It will herald the advent of a New Life in the world when the central principle of Unity and Love will reign and dominate all its thoughts and activities.

May Mother hasten that glorious day and shower Her blessings on humanity.

ii. (A) Sagra, Banaras.

Gopinath Kaviraj.

SRI ANANDAMAYI

By **B. Sanjiva Rao, B.A. (Cantab.),**

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Many thousands of people, Her devoted followers, call Her MA, the great MOTHER, whose love fills the worlds visible and invisible with the radiance of an eternal peace and joy. I too will call Her MA.

Who is MA? What is Her special message or teaching, Her relationship to the world in which She has taken birth? What is the significance of Her life? These question naturally occur to the mind, especially to the one who undertakes the task of writing about Her. Swiftly the answer comes from the depths of my being, so beautifully expressed by Edwin Arnold:

Measure not with words

.....Immeasurable; nor sink the strings of thought

Into the fathomless. Who asks both err,

Who answers, errs. Say nought."

Whenever I have sat in front of Her, marvelling at the perfection of Her love, the profundity of Her wisdom expressing itself in the simplest of words intelligible to the least among us, I have realized that it is not by the mind that She can be understood, that no mental plumb-line can ever discover the depths of Her being. Thousands have seen Her body, the radiance of Her wonderful face, but I do not know how many there are to whom She has revealed Her real presence.

To the mind She must ever remain a mystery. But to the heart that loves, She is no insoluble riddle - She is, in fact, intelligible only when the mind recognises its own limitations and surrenders itself to Her influence. To love Her is the indispensable condition for gaining a real insight into Her nature. It seems almost a paradox of the spiritual life that to understand the essence of things the mind must abandon its normal function of knowing - yet it is a fact of human experience, that so long as the mind is busy accumulating information about any object, it is incapable of gaining an insight into its real nature. The way of the artist and the mystic is not the way of the analytical scientist. So only those who love MA will understand Her. To them no evidence is needed to prove that She is one of those blessed ones through whom the Light and Love of the Divine pour into our world of darkness and conflict. She is Her own proof. She is self-luminous, *Swayam Prakasa*.

The function of the mind.

The achievements of the mind have been truly amazing in the realm of scientific thought. This has obscured its true function. It has assumed the role of a judge, a tribunal before whose bar all experience must be justified and proved.

It is only recently that the West has begun to question the authority of the mind as an instrument for the discovery of Truth. It is beginning to discover that the supreme values of life are beyond the realm of the mind. Truth, Love, Bliss, all these come into being only when the mind recognises its own limitations, and surrenders itself to the Light of the Supreme.

It must quieten itself by the constant rejection of the false contents of its consciousness. The discovery of Truth, even in the domain of Science, has been the continual abandonment of the imperfect formulations of the mind in favour of less unsatisfactory ones. When the mind has purified itself of all that is false and become quiet by giving up all its demands, then it becomes ready for the reception of the Light of the Spirit. It is in this quiet state that Truth dawns upon the human consciousness. Not by an intensification but by complete cessation of its activity does the mind discover the Right, the True, the Beautiful.

Mind is not the master, but the tool of desire - what we ordinarily mean by its controlling desire is merely the attempt to control the expression of desire and not desire itself.

Such control is necessary in the interests of the social order to which we belong. But we have to see clearly that desire does not die by mere control. All that the human mind can achieve is a sublimation, a diversion of it from one channel to another so that it does not endanger the stability of social life.

Cessation of Desire.

Desire dies when the mind surrenders itself to the Supreme. The soul must strip itself of everything, every possession, physical or psychological. It must have nothing, it must be nothing. It must make no claims, no demands.

This process of self-denudation is known as 'self-noughting'.

The self must learn to die. That is the condition for the gaining of Eternal Life. It is the secret of the mystic life that when the self or the mind gives up its own egoistic life, it enters into the larger life of the Spirit. Such a life seems an impossible one to the modern mind. If the self is annihilated, what remains? If the 'I' is destroyed, who is there to enjoy the bliss of *Nirvana*? These are the problems which the mind creates for its own diversion. There is no solution for these problems of the logical mind. They cannot be solved but only dissolved. Peace and joy form the very core and essence of our being. They do not depend upon outer conditions. They are unconditioned states of our essential being. Because of our fundamental knowledge or intuition of this truth, every satisfaction we derive from external objects is not enduring. Nothing can make us happy except being ourselves. To be just ourselves, neither more nor less than what we truly are, that is the beginning of wisdom. All things, all beings constituting what we call Nature, follow this way of life.

Therefore even in the midst of much destruction of forms, there is peace, beauty and splendour in the world of God's creation. It is only when man seeks to create his own world and lives in it as a prisoner that he is limited and creates ugliness and disorder. It is given to few human beings to live in the state of perfection, in the 'natural' state. In fact it is a rare experience to come into contact with one who is the living embodiment of this perfection. Ma is the living proof of the existence of what I may call the *advaitic* or non-dual state of consciousness.

Ma's psychological state is a rare phenomenon, which is worth examination and understanding. She contacts the world around Her, the world of people and of things without the mediation or interpretation of the mind. The mind carries on no independent activity of its own, but is a clear mirror for the reflection of Truth. It is like an extraordinarily sensitive, photographic plate, capable of recording without distortion or exaggeration the physical and psychic influences in the world around. Ma possesses an extraordinary gift of remembering people whom She has met or even of knowing those whom She is going to meet. The past and the future are blended in Her consciousness and fuses into the present. It is not memory, but what may be called knowledge of Being, some process which is the result of the non-dual state of consciousness. It is obviously impossible for one who has not attained this state to understand how this kind of knowledge is obtained.

But nevertheless it is an indubitable fact that Ma does possess this phenomenal power of remembering anyone whom She has met and being able to recall the details of such a meeting.

Ma repeatedly affirms that She does not use Her mind; I presume that it means that the mind does not indulge in its own independent activities, but is a focus for the Universal Life', which work through Her without obstruction. To the modern mind, or rather, to anyone who has not had experience of the super-mental condition, the idea of silencing the mind being a condition precedent to the manifestation of a higher state of consciousness, is completely unintelligible. *Nirvana* is to them a state of extinction, of nothingness. If the end of the spiritual life is nothingness, of what use is such a life? Ma's life is a complete answer to this natural question. She demonstrates that the mind is the 'slayer' of the Real and when the slayer is slain, the Real, the Eternal comes into being.

Real Action.

All action that comes out of this selfless state is true and right action. It is usual for the mind to distinguish between thought and action-between Being and manifestation. Such polarisation is the characteristic of the mental process. But in reality, Being is inseparable from its manifestation. To be is to be creative. Creation then is inseparable from Being. Ma ever acts from Her Being. That is what She implies when She says She does not plan, does not think. There is an activity which transcends the processes of the logical reasoning.

Plotinus said practically the same thing. Contemplation was to him true action. It is most important to understand the full significance of such a statement. It does not imply that right action is right from the standpoint of the world, of society or that it conforms to the ideas and standards of modern or ancient thinkers. It simply means at the only state of Being which is right, is the selfless state, when the personal will is completely surrendered to and is in conformity with the Divine Will; and as in such a state, Being and action are inseparable, right state of being is also right action. Right action then is 'what should be' - not according to the standards of the mind acting in ignorance but acting in harmony with the Divine Will. Such a state is intensely dynamic; it sets in motion a vast amount of unseen activity. To live a truly holy life is not so much to be engaged in ceaseless activity, but to be in that dynamic condition which, without haste or without rest, creates the right conditions, both material and psychic in the world around. Ma does not do much Herself, but wherever She is, She is the centre of an enormous activity. An occasional directive is all that is needed.

The full implications of 'right' action can be easily understood from Ma's own personal history. She had no visible, human Teacher or Guru. She has practised no *sadhana* in order to attain Her present state. From Her early years of childhood She has been in intimate contact with the invisible worlds and has been guided by unseen influences. All that we can surmise is that She has no 'personal' life of Her own and has been completely free from desire of any kind. God's will has been Her will. It is no wonder then that the Eternal Itself has been Her guide, prescribed for Her body the *sadhana* that it had to go through, for some purpose of its own. It would be presumptuous to suggest what this purpose is. To understand the psychology of Ma's inner life, one has to study deeply the lives of the mystics. It is clear that the physical, material plane is closely connected with the subtler planes of the manifested Universe. No plane is superior or inferior, lower or higher. The physical body is the manifestation or expression of the subtler bodies on the physical plane. When there is an internal surrender, the acceptance of the Divine in every detail of life, no matter how trivial it may appear to the limited mind, then the entire governance of such a life is taken up by the Divine'. All planning by the individual life ceases. Even when there is apparent attempt at *sadhana*, it is merely the Divine Power purifying the various vehicles in Its own way. Real yoga is not an individual effort. It is the Divine that does the yoga through an individual. It is not the individual seeking God through yoga. All that the individual need do, is to give up the sense of separateness. The moment such a surrender of self is achieved, there is a descent of the Divine and it is the Divine activity that results from such a union that we see as yoga. Ma explained on one occasion how the body moves in obedience to the

rhythm -of music. The gestures of the musician are the spontaneous expressions by the body' of its response to music. Likewise all *asanas*, *mudras* are the natural poses resulting from certain psychological states of the mind. By a careful study of these, Indian psychology has built up an elaborate structure of ritual and form of worship. Religion is really applied psychology. Ma's own experiences are of great significance. She discovered that Her body was going through extraordinary experiences of which She was more or less a detached spectator; one such occasion was, when she suddenly discovered that Her body was performing with great accuracy the prescribed form of prayer or Namaz of the Muslims -with all its appropriate gestures. Her husband thought She had gone mad or was obsessed by some disembodied entity. The doctor who was consulted, however, seems to have been a man of deep understanding, and he declared that She was not mad and that She should be left alone. That anyone who surrenders himself to the Supreme is directly guided is borne out by the experience of several mystics. Sri Aurobindo had his inner voice, his Guide to whom he gave implicit obedience. Sri Anandamayi Ma was completely an obedient instrument of the Power that guided the activities of Her body. Her body and mind were given to the service of Her children, the devotees. It is stated that Ma is God, *Pur Brahman Narayana*. It is not for me to express an opinion on such a question and besides it seems to me not to be of any real importance. Whether She is the perfect instrument of the Divine, a channel for his *Shakti* or a Power of the Godhead acting directly, is impossible for us humans to decide. So the wisest answer is that given to us by Ma Herself: "I am, for you, what you think me to be." Speculation about Her spiritual status is both futile and presumptuous.

The study of Ma's psychological experiences throws a flood of light on what is called *sadhana*. There is the spiritual or rather psychological discipline which leads to the release of super-physical powers or *siddhis*. Popularly this is called yoga.

Undoubtedly yogic powers are a genuine manifestation of the hidden powers latent in the psyche. They lead to an expansion of the ego-consciousness. The psyche becomes powerful, with enormous control over the material and even the subtler worlds. This heightened self-consciousness is attractive to minds which have not yet transcended the self-life. It is in the hands of the ambitious that such powers become dangerous. Power, material or super-physical, is not in itself either good or evil; but because it has a tendency to corrupt the wielders of such power that all spiritual teachers have warned *sadhakas* against the seeking of *siddhis*.

Ma's discipline is simply described as a complete surrender of the personal will to the Will of God. The release of Divine *Shakti*, which follows such surrender is never a source of corruption, never a danger, for the power is used by the Supreme Itself and never by an individualistic agency. The knowledge that is attained in such a state is not what is called conceptual knowledge. It belongs to a plane higher than the mental. Is it what in our ancient books is called the *Sat-chit-ananda* consciousness? It is difficult for those of us who are still living within the framework of the intellect, the logical mind, to speak of a supra-mental consciousness. But some of us have seen the manifestation of the results of such a consciousness. Even at the risk of being autobiographical, I cannot help mentioning a rather striking illustration of the power which Ma exercises with such extraordinary ease and spontaneity. I belong to a school of thought which looks upon running to a teacher for the solution of one's personal problems as rather childish. The pupil is expected to cooperate with the teacher in the helping of the world and not waste the teacher's time in diverting his attention to his own little self. But without any kind of warning, a problem, a conflict of a peculiarly difficult nature, arose in my mind. No amount of wrestling with it or attempts to quieten the mind in order to dissolve it, were of any avail. I felt that I could not waste more time over such a conflict. I asked for an interview with Ma, which was readily granted. I could only tell Ma that I had a problem - I was not in a position to explain the nature of that problem. So I sat quietly in front of Her. She spoke no word, offered me no verbal explanation; within a couple of minutes, the mind was in a state of a deep stillness, the problem was effortlessly dissolved - I was in a state of an ineffable peace and joy. She quietly said to me, - "Pitaji, you are in that state now -continue to be like that." I made my *pranama* and left Her presence. It is possible to give all kinds of psychological explanations of the manner in which such mental transformations are brought about. If I had been cured of some physical ailment as quickly, I am sure that such an event would have

been hailed as a miracle. But the cure of a psychic disease is just as significant as the healing of a physical one. I cannot pretend to explain such a phenomenon. I merely wish to draw attention to the fact that the state of 'no-mind' as it is called in Zen Buddhism, or the *Sat-chit-ananda* consciousness, is a very vital and dynamic condition. It is not out of the emptiness, but of the fullness of Life that the Divine *Shakti* performs its miracles of healing, physical or super-physical.

The state of 'no-mind' is not a mere negation, a mere emptiness. The mind has to be emptied of all purely mental creations. But the state of emptiness is immediately followed by the manifestation of a Divine Consciousness, which has always been there, ceaselessly at work, but of which we become aware only when the play of the mind has ceased. What we call emptying is merely the cessation of such play. What is the part that Ma plays in such an event? Obviously, the mind of the patient must be receptive, sensitive to the great current of Love and understanding that is poured on him. But when I recall this experience, I am forcibly reminded of the great statement of Sri Krishna that when the Supreme is seen, desire dies. All those who have had the privilege of contacting Ma, will bear out my own experience that if one allows oneself to be receptive to Her Grace, all desire dies. Evil does not and cannot live in the wonderful atmosphere which She carries with Her wherever She is, and yet it is not so much the destruction of desire, as the transformation of it into a thing of Beauty by the extra-ordinary power of Love. The no-mind state is apparently a state of nothingness. But what is it? To have nothing, to be nothing. When one is stripped of all that one has and all that is distinctive in oneself, there is nothing else that one can lose; and that destroys fear - for no one can take away anything from us. And the state of fearlessness is the state of absolute Love - the state of Divinity itself. This, as far as I can understand, is the secret of Ma's extraordinary influence over all those who have the privilege of being blessed by Her.

Is there any distinctive teaching, any special message, which could be considered as distinctive of Ma's spiritual relationship to the world ?

Can a flower teach us anything? Does the tree-top swaying in the breeze bring us any message? Is the Beauty, the Peace of the everlasting hills, communicable through the medium of the spoken word? I do not think so. The song of the sea, the wild music of the storm, they just form part of that Eternal Harmony which enters into our being but is incapable of being rendered into human speech.

Likewise the mind is enable to create an intellectual system out of Ma's answers to the questionings of Her pupils. She is no teacher who accepts disciples and yet She is loved and revered as the Mother who loves, guides and protects, who is able to give, out of the inexhaustible store of wisdom, inspiration, solace and strength. Day after day She sits in the hall of Her Ashram in Benares and gives of Her rich experience and wisdom. The answers to the many questions that are put to Her come not as the result of deliberate thought but as a spontaneous pouring forth of an intuitive understanding.

"Why does not the Mother answer to the cry of Her children?" She was once asked. Immediately without a moment's deliberation, rang out Her voice, - 'Pitaji Pitaji'. There was no response to Her call. Once more She called and someone stood up in the hall and responded. She laughed - and She laughs with the whole of Her being - and triumphantly said - "You did not answer, because you thought I was not serious in calling you. But you answered when you realised that I was calling you. Likewise the great Mother knows when Her children are at play and when they really need Her. They call Her often without really wanting Her. But when they fall and are hurt and cry for Her help, She answers immediately."

One is reminded of Christ's teaching, - "Ask and it shall be given you; seek and ye shall find; knock and it shall be opened unto you." But this asking, seeking and knocking must be genuine, must come out of the depths of our being; only when there is this integral demand, will there be an appropriate answer.

One great quality of Her answers is worth noting: The answer is on the same plane as the question: She is able to read the thought behind the question, sense the precise need of the person who is asking for Her help. There is a completely perfect adaptation of the reply to the capacity of the individual concerned and to the demands of any particular situation. A friend of mine went to see Her after the loss of a dearly loved wife and was slightly annoyed when Ma greeted him with a loud peal of laughter. He asked "Ma, why are you laughing when I am so unhappy?" Spontaneously came the swift reply: "Pitaji, there is one less barrier between you and God."

For Ma, life has only one purpose, it is God. Whenever a barrier of attachment is removed, there is cause for rejoicing. It is not my intention to multiply such instances. I desire only to emphasise a point, which is significant: 'It is that the answer comes out of a consciousness higher than that of the logical mind.' Ma identifies Herself with the individual who is asking for Her help, and out of the knowledge and insight that arises out of such identification does the appropriate answer come.

What happens in these cases of individual response to human need is also true of the collective need of humanity. When the cry of a world in suffering reaches the Supreme, there is an immediate answer. Teacher after Teacher appears in response to the need of the Epoch - it is no coincidence that in this fateful crisis, when the world is facing the destruction of a whole civilisation, there should have appeared in this country spiritual Teachers of extraordinary wisdom and insight. It is not entirely a coincidence that India should have thrown up great personalities of almost superhuman stature. Sri Ramana Maharshi, Sri Aurobindo, J. Krishnamurti and others are no mere accidents in world history. What is Sri Anandamayi's relationship to these Teachers?

The Disease and the Remedy.

What is wrong with our world today? Long ago, at the beginning of the century, a writer of great spiritual insight, Edward Carpenter, summed up the symptoms of the disorder from which humanity was suffering in a book called 'Civilisation, Its Cause and Cure'. Civilisation is the disease which is afflicting humanity - that is his diagnosis. Two World wars and a third one in the offing are a justification of his prophetic insight. Stated in their simplest terms, the roots of war and conflict are to be found in the idea that an individual can possibly be happy at the expense of another. This delusion is responsible for all the conflicts in human relationship. What is true of the individual is also true of groups, of those mentally constructed entities, which we call nations or races. Conflicts arise out of the ignoring of the vital truth that man is not an isolated unit.

Individual life gains its significance only in the context of an integrated whole of which he is a part. Torn from the context, the individual man, isolated from the family or the social group, has no meaning. Man can only be a man in relationship and not in isolation. The man who lives only for himself and disregards his relation to the whole misses happiness. Likewise a group has no meaning except in terms of the individuals which constitute the group. If the individuals are selfish, corrupt, no organisational changes can create an honest group out of such dishonest individuals. All democratic, individualistic societies, as well as all the totalitarian ones, are guilty of practising one or the other of these delusions. Modern civilisation built upon the idea of achieving happiness by perfect organisation on the material and even the social level is bound to crash and crumble. The cement which holds modern society together is self-interest, enlightened or unenlightened. Such a society must sooner or later disintegrate. There can be and there is no future for a generation consisting of individuals who live only for themselves, whose criterion of the 'good' life is the largest share for themselves of the 'good' things of life. So long as this view of life prevails, war and conflict are inevitable.

What then is the remedy for such a disease? Obviously there must be a complete change of values. It is not an easy process to convince a modern man that the way of self-assertion is the way of destruction. Yet when an individual realizes -and not merely accepts intellectually -that happiness, peace and liberation spontaneously result when the self is abnegated, that he finds himself in harmony with everyone and everything. No league of nations can achieve world unity by compromise formulas which seek to balance the interests of one nation by the interests of another.

Such a system of checks and balances is bound to break down. The imposition of a superficial unity by force, either physical or even 'moral', will prove a failure. Unity cannot be 'imposed' by any organisational methods, just as no law can compel a husband to love his wife. Unity is inner relationship of harmony.

Such harmony and unity can only be achieved by the removal of disharmony and disunity - you cannot impose health, you can only remove disease. Any social order which is to be stable must be based on the sure foundations of the law which governs all relationships. Dharma is properly a network of such relationships, not only between humans, but between the individual and the entire universe, living as well as non-living. Dharma is the expression in terms of behaviour and conduct of this universal law of harmony. This law states clearly that man can only be happy when he lives for the whole and not for himself.

This is not a Utopian ideal - it is the law which daily governs the universe and even our human body. My little finger cannot think in terms of its own growth and stature. If it did it would lead to a monstrosity. Even the growth of cells has to be bound by the law of harmony, which in the case of the body we call health. If they grow in defiance of this law, we call it 'cancer', a disease. Health is an indivisible state of harmony - one finger does not enjoy more of health than another - health is the harmony of the whole, the harmony of the inter-relationship of the parts. Such harmony can only exist when the smallest part, as well as the largest, the cell and the organ, both live in complete obedience to the law. In Nature there is no great and small, there is perfection, not a division of superior and inferior. Superiority and inferiority, which constitute the cause of all conflict, are the characteristics of our ego-centred civilisation. Where these are eliminated there are the true beginnings of a real community.

In the family, there is an inequality of capacity, of temperament, of experience. But in any well ordered family such inequalities result merely in a differentiation of functions without the idea of superiority or inferiority. The family is the only social unit in which an individual can be fully himself. There is no ulterior purpose for which the different individuals have come together.

The child is not branded with the stamp of inferiority, of a lower status, because it is unable to earn its own way. Differentiation of functions involves no psycho-logical superiority or inferiority: out of such a relationship of love comes peace and joy. The family system in the West, and slowly in the East also, is beginning to feel the influence of political, economic and social organisation - and less and less does the family fulfil man's fundamental need for communion, for love. All social disorders, all conflicts at whatever level of our existence, are due to the increasing mechanising of man's consciousness, his mind, his work. Man is essentially a living force and his whole being revolts against the crushing burden of organisation. The Church, the State, increasingly direct his activity and thwart his spontaneity. It is man's attempt to be free from this deadening influence of his environment that results in all the hideous tragedies that are taking place around us. What will bring back to man the happiness, the peace, the living creative power of his being which are now almost hopelessly lost? Our spiritual Teachers speak with one voice in answer to the demand of the entire human race for the bread of life, the living waters that shall bring healing to a sorely afflicted world - only Love can bring salvation to man.

Sri Anandamayi is the refuge of thousands of despairing hearts - among them are many from western lands. They do not understand Her spoken words. But they do not fail to catch the fragrance of Her marvellous love. It heals the wounds of the heart, broken by all the cruel things that have happened to them.

"Peace is not to be found in the world outside. Dive deeply in the depths of your own being and find therein the pearl of great price." That is the message of every Teacher since the beginning of days. It is Ma's message. Love is the very core of our being and Peace and Joy. Shri Aurobindo speaks of the Supra-mental Power, Sri Ramana Maharshi and Krishnamurti speak of the Power of the Eternal, the only Reality. The Truth is the same. There is but one Reality, one Truth. That Truth is Beauty, it is the very heart of Love. It manifests itself in a heart purified of self. Ma is the

living proof of such Love and Joy. Effortlessly She pours out that Love on - all who come to Her. She is the Mother, and the men and women of the world are Her children. Their hearts are an open book to Her. The pattern of their individual lives is clearly visible to Her. She has come in answer to the cry of a world which has lost the power to Love. All problems are dissolved by and in Love - conflicts cease when men are prepared to break down the walls of prejudice, the walls created by self-interest. Problems, whether they are individual or national, are only capable of solution where there is a completely disinterested search for Truth. Truth becomes manifest when the false is given up. The life of sensation is false, the life which seeks satisfaction in power is false, whether that power is physical or super-physical. When all that is false in our thought is given up, Truth dawns upon us. Likewise when all that is false in our feelings is eliminated, Love comes into manifestation. Love and Truth and Beauty cannot be taught, are incommunicable through the medium of thought. They are directly apprehended by the spirit. Such immediate experience of Reality seems to be possible in the presence of one, who, like Ma, lives in the super-mental consciousness - one begins to sense the life beyond thought when one is in contact with Ma. Such a state of being becomes more concrete, is felt as even more real than the life of sensation. One has only to watch the results of the working of this higher consciousness, to realize how problems dissolve themselves around a person living in this state. On every occasion when men and women gather around Her the most noticeable feature is the quality of the atmosphere. Rich and poor, Maharani and humble devotee, the learned Pandit or Professor and the ignorant seeker, the Sannyasi, the Yogi and the Devotee meet on a common level - they all drop their titles, distinctions, wealth, power and feel like common children of the great Mother. In Her blessed presence, all differences, inequalities are dropped with an ease that borders on the miraculous - and yet people are perpetually discussing the problems of Peace and War, of the way of removing international tensions. There is only one way, the way of Love. When people meet in the name of the Supreme, there the spirit of Love and Peace abides. Even a casual visit to Ma's Ashram is sufficient to make us aware of this Truth. The answer to every problem is Love. For a problem is an ever-varying manifestation of the spirit of isolation, the expression of the ego. There is only one essential problem - the self, the ego. Love dissolves this knot of the heart. In Ma's presence one achieves this sense of freedom, this release from the tension of self-consciousness. One realizes that the loss of the false life of the self is the gaining of Eternal Life. The teaching of the great Masters of Divine Wisdom is seen to be the only way out of this terrible crisis, the impending tragedy of a third global war.

Once in a long while Humanity puts forth a rare flower of exquisite Beauty and Fragrance. It cannot be said to teach, to have a message, it lives for only one purpose, to demonstrate the existence of a Power, that is ever at work creating by Its transforming influence, Beauty out of ugliness, Love out of strife. Such a Power is Sri Anandamayi.

May She bring peace and harmony into this world of strife.

GOD AS LOVE

Raj Sahib Akshoy Kumar Datta Gupta,

Kaviratna, M.A.

God is Love, say the wise.

But it may be asked: Is not there also Law, the natural antithesis of Love, which rights wrongs, decrees penalties, and so upholds the moral order of the world? So it has been said in the Gita that the Lord incarnates Himself from time to time in order to protect the good and destroy the wicked' for the rehabilitation of *dharma*. Here certainly the Lord speaks more of Law than of Love as the

raison d'etre for His direct personal intervention in the affairs of this world.

In fact, however, the antithesis between Love and Law as applicable to the ways of God to men is more apparent than real. They are like the two faces, obverse and reverse, of a coin which in essence is the same. Love in fact is the fulfilment of Law.

In past aeons when the passions were more elemental and, therefore, more subversive and more catastrophic, God had to come down in person the more quickly and effectively to make short work of them. But as stated in the *Durga-Saptasati (Chandi)* the Divine Mother, instead of reducing the asuras to ashes by a mere glance, took the trouble of engaging in open battle to kill them in order that being purified by the weapons hitting them, they might have access to heaven.

And again "In Thee alone, O Divine One, that dispensest blessings, in all the three worlds, is to be seen ruthlessness in battle combined with compassion in the heart. "

Indeed such were the circumstances in those days that Lord Krishna in his early sports (*Lila*) in Vrindaban, designed chiefly to show how to love and be loved, had nevertheless to go -apparently out of his way to kill Putna, Agha, Baka, Kaliya, and a few other demons, not to speak of Kansa, Kesin, Sisupala and others who were disposed of after the Lord had left the serene precincts of Vrindavan.

Circumstances would appear to have changed very considerably since then. Even in this much maligned Kali Yuga the Divine does not have to descend in person to kill or otherwise to deal condign punishment to the wicked.

That is left to be accomplished by Law, the wheel of which grinds quite effectively, though somewhat slowly. So Buddha's message was *ahimsa* (non-violence), forgiveness and mercy and according to the Mahayana School, the essential nature of a Bodhisattva is a great loving heart (*Maha Karuna Chitta*) and all sentient beings constitute the object of his love.

So Christ's message was forgiveness and charity (love), and "forgive" was one of the last words that fell from his lips before his spirit left the mortal body. Nearer home we see Jagai and Madhai overwhelmed less by Sri Gauranga's call for the *Sudarsana Chakra* than by the matchless love of Sri Nityananda who is supposed to be the second self of Sri Gauranga.

If, therefore, agreeable to changed circumstances of the present epoch of the so-called iron age, the milder way of love commends itself to the Divine about to operate in human form for the rehabilitation of *dharma* by encouraging the good, sustaining and energizing the despondent and weaning the wicked from sinful ways, what more appropriate and attractive form can the Eternal Formless One assume than that of Mother?

For in all human relations, the Mother alone is all love. You may be peevish, you may be rude, you may be cheeky, you may give pain and offence in a hundred foolish and inconsiderate ways, but your Mother is ever the same soft, patient, self-forgetful self that hugged you to her gentle breast in your infancy and is ever ready to forgive and forget. When weary or despondent or ill, no matter how old you are, you go to your Mother and without any ceremony recline on her lap as a storm-battered ship betakes itself to the nearest haven for shelter and safety.

So it has been truly said by Sankaracharya: There may be a bad son, but never, never a bad Mother.

Christ preferred to call God father, and Father, Son, and Holy Spirit constitute the Christian Trinity. "Thou art our Father," says Sruti (Yajur-veda). But the *Shakti Tantra*, which originated and flourished in Bengal at least a thousand years ago, knows only the Mother and would not recognise any other independent reality by Her side on the same plane.

For Isvara or Siva is only an emanation from Her and waits for invigoration by Her before setting about his appointed task. So says the well-known *Ananda Lahari*: "Only when joined by Sakti can Siva function. Otherwise he lacks even the pulsation of life force."

Bengal has been worshipping the Divine as Mother from the time when the *Shakti Tantra* was revealed to her and that was some centuries before the advent of Vaishnavism, the other popular creed, from South India. The Mother cult is still going strong here. Not so long ago Ramprasad Sen (d. 1775 A.D.), the great poet devotee, attained *siddhi*, that is, the goal of spiritual endeavour and aspiration, by his songs, beautifully rich in emotional fervour and reflecting in a superb way all imaginable moods, stable or fleeting, of filial love and devotion. Ramprasad's songs still ring in the throats of all classes of Hindus in both parts of Bengal. Many other devotees on this side of India, including even a few Bengali Mohammedans, have invoked the Divine Mother by means of songs instinct with beauty and emotion of no mean order before and after Ramprasad Sen.

The great Ramakrishna Paramahansa, who is now regarded as an *Avatara* by many, also was a devotee of the Divine Mother, often singing entrancingly, as only he could sing, the songs of Ramprasad and others. If, therefore, the Divine chose to operate here below in the role of Mother, what other region in all India might be thought to be more worthy of the honour of receiving Her on its lap than Bengal? Besides, dire misfortunes including vivisection after vivisection planned from political motives and attended by orgies of murder, rapine, rape and famine were ominously in the offing. As dispensations of Law or Karma of the Hindus who have suffered the most, these could not perhaps be prevented, but it was most necessary that they should not be left to wander miserably adrift on the uncharted sea of life at the mercy of the winds and waves of adverse circumstances, cut off from their age-old spiritual moorings.

It must also be said here that if Bengal's condition was much graver, the whole of India was standing on the edge of a precipice.

So here you have Ma Anandamayi come to give you the much needed spiritual succour. A tiny peaceful village in a remote corner of a remote East Bengal district, Tippera (Tripura), was elected to have the glorious privilege of first receiving Her on its lap in the holy month of *Vaisakha* of the Bengali year 1303, that is, 30th of April 1896 A.D.

Here the reader will kindly put up with a little digression. The district of Tippera, like most East Bengal districts, has long had a Mohammedan population, mostly descendants of converted Hindus. But when Mother was born, there were as yet no base communal feelings rampant in any part of Bengal and little religious acrimony. Indeed there had been a few well-known and esteemed members of that community in the Tippera district who sang of and worshipped the goddess Kali. The house where Mother was born was surrounded by houses of Mohammedans, mostly illiterate peasants, and was some years later purchased and occupied by a Mohammedan family. (Note: The house has since been acquired by the Shree Shree Anandamayee Sangha.)

Mother in Her childhood used frequently to visit the houses of those Mohammedan neighbours who all loved and liked Her, as She also had a soft corner of Her heart for them. No religious scruples were violated. At one time the revered Ramani Mohan Chakravarti (later called Bholanath), Mother's late husband, was employed as keeper of Shahbagh, a garden at Ramna, Dacca, belonging to the well-known Nawab family of that town. He had his quarters within the extensive compound of the garden. Mother had already attracted many devotees who performed *Kali Puja* within the garden, without any objection raised by or on behalf of its owners. Indeed some members of the Nawab family, both ladies and gentlemen, soon learnt to appreciate and respect Her.

There was within the compound of Shahbagh the grave of a *siddha fakir* supposed to have hailed from Arabia. On one occasion Mother had the *kheyala* to go quite close to the grave and at once felt like performing *namaz*, uttering words She knew not of what language. A Mohammedan worker in the garden saw all this and soon a report of the incident reached the ears of the owners.

They came in great curiosity and the ladies among them earnestly requested Mother to repeat the performance; and though She at first declined, the old feeling came upon Her again when She was taken by them to the vicinity of the grave. They recognised that She was repeating portions of the *Quran*. Mother gave out later that the long, long departed fakir had revealed himself to Her with a disciple in his company at Bajitpur, the former place of Bholanath's employment, and invited Her to come and stay in Shahbagh where later She again saw him.

Another long departed saint, not a Mohammedan, who also played some, though not fully revealed, part in Mother's *Lila*, may be mentioned here. He followed Mother in the not very attractive form of a cobra at Vindhychal (U.P.) and Dacca and lastly when She was going in a boat along a *beel* in Tippera District. He also was accompanied by a disciple. He bit a toe of Mother's foot at Vindhychal, and at Dacca meekly allowed Her to tread on his reptile body. About the bite Mother said later that it had been no more than a caress. The saint had been interred at a spot in Ramna which later was chosen to be the site of Mother's Ashram at Dacca. The snake was given architectural commemoration and honour round the top of a small temple erected over the spot where the mortal remains of the saint were supposed to have been buried. A *lingam* was installed in the temple.

The whole of East Bengal and the Dacca town in particular, falling some years later into the jaws of a rabid communal spirit, it is small wonder that the above ashram has not been spared the tender mercies of fanatics and this in spite of the fact that Mother was held in great respect not only by many members of the Nawab family of the town but by many other highly respectable persons belonging to the Mohammedan community there as well as elsewhere.

Now to return to Mother's birth and early life. The more than cherubic looks of the baby charmed everybody, as they have done ever since. The proud Mother named her darling Nirmala (Taintless) and no truer name could be given to the One whom *Sruti* has described as "holy and immaculate." About three decades later a spiritual son (the late Jyotish Chandra Roy) in a flash of genius called Her Anandamayi (All Joy), and the name caught on instantly, side-tracking the one given by the parents who had brought Her into the world. It was Mother's son's triumph over Her own mother, as perhaps it should be.

One or two years' very irregular attendance at a moribund lower primary *pathasala*, the only educational institution available for Her, was the only schooling She has ever had. Even rapid reading was not one of Her accomplishments when She left the school to be married. But is She or the world any the worse for it? Thousands have listened and still listen, to their intense delight and incalculable benefit, to the words of supreme knowledge and wisdom acquired at no second hand but welling up from Her nature. Long established custom which allowed to be transgressed only in the interests of Kulinism and had also at that time just begun to be defied in the cities by English education (both of which circumstances were absent in this case) required that girls should be given in marriage before they acquired either physical fitness or desire for motherhood. So the humble parents selected an equally humble husband for their girl before She completed Her thirteenth year, and She went to live in the husband's family in Dacca district, hiding Her angelic face under a cubit long veil, as village girls of those days invariably did for years after their marriage. Something unworldly was noticed in the girl even in Her childhood. She was often absent-minded, seeing or dreaming of we know not what, but nothing connected with play or work in hand. This trait developed after marriage into frequent fits of apparent insensibility to external surroundings, sometimes involving repetition of hymns or mantras in a tongue or tongues unknown to anybody near Her, although at other times She was perfectly natural, doing all that She was required to do to the satisfaction of every person concerned.

At first these fits were suspected to be hysteric or some distemper of that class. But they occurred generally, though not invariably, when religious chants came to Her ear and they had certain other characteristics that clearly marked them off from any morbid state of the mind. The result was that the young husband felt awe-struck in Her presence and soon enough ceased to look upon Her as wife proper. Thus in spite of marriage and staying with the husband, She continued a *Kumari*

(*chaste virgin*), under which living form the followers of *Shakti Tantra* have worshipped the Divine for ages.

The first man to call Her mother was Hara Kumar, a Vaidya by caste, at Bajitpur in the district of Mymensingh where Bholanath was employed at that time in the estate of the Nawab of Dacca. Hara Kumar was regarded as an eccentric fellow, but his feeling was genuine, and he confidently and as it now appears with a prophetic vision, predicted that a time would come when She would be acknowledged as Mother by all. Blessed be his eccentricity! Bholanath liked him and he used to come twice every day to kneel and bow at Mother's feet. But She was as yet very young and this first son of Hers failed for a long time to persuade Her to speak to him, until at last Bholanath pressed Her to overcome Her shyness.

So the Mother, without any possibility of bearing any child by Her physical body, got Her first son. Hundreds and thousands of sons, and daughters too, perhaps more in number than sons, were to follow in good time, as She said later to some of them, "You may not want me, but I want you." This is Love. This is *Maha Karuna* (Supreme Compassion) as the Mahayana Buddhists say. This is *Ahetuki Kripa* (causeless mercy) as we say.

After Hara Kumar had set the ball rolling, others including men holding positions in the Nawab estate superior to that of Bholanath, and the ladies of their families who had already been much struck by the stamp of other-worldliness on the young wife's features and Her trancelike fits, began gradually to see things in a new light.

Perhaps, thought they, that eccentric fellow Hara Kumar was right. And when on the termination of Bholanath's employment at Bajitpur, he and Mother came to Shahbagh, it was found that reports about Her unique spirituality had preceded them to Dacca. People now began to come in larger numbers and view Her with admiration and amazement. Among them were Jyotish Chandra Roy (spoken of before), Personal Assistant to the Director of Agriculture, Bengal (whose headquarters were at Dacca), Dr. Sasanka Mukherji, a retired civil surgeon and his young daughter, familiarly called Khukuni, who, though married, continued a virgin by choice.

Some time later Jyotish Chandra Roy was snatched by Mother from the jaws of death, when lying helpless in an advanced stage of *phthisis*.

A few years afterwards he retired from the service of Government and devoted himself to the more congenial service of the Mother, his saviour in more senses than one. He even accompanied Mother and Bholanath to Kailas and Manas Sarovar, two most difficult places of pilgrimage across the Himalayas in Tibet, where he received *samnyasa* (the status of one who has renounced the world) and as a mark of renunciation received the name of Maunananda Parvat, and Bholanath about a year later the name of Tibbatananda Tirtha. The former died at Almora on his way back from Kailash in 1937 and the latter also departed from this life in 1938 at Dehradun. The urge for *samnyasa* in either case came from the inner Self - from *Antaryamin*, that is to say, who may be supposed thus to have completely snapped off their mortal coils - the fivefold as a student of the *Yoga Sutras* of Patanjali would say, in order to prepare them for higher life - the life divine - in the Mother.

Dr. Sasanka Mukherji and his daughter also practically renounced the world and dedicated their lives to Mother's service with a devotion and single-minded purpose rarely equalled and never surpassed by any other person. The former also finally adopted *samnyasa* at Mother's advice from a guru and came thence to be known as Swami Akhandananda Giri. Few people have a more pleasant temper than he had or devote their time more assiduously to *japa* (repeating God's name) than he did. He shuffled off his mortal coil some years afterwards. His daughter, renamed Gurupriya by Mother and called *Didi* by everybody else, is still Her constant companion and no Mother could wish for a daughter and no mistress an attendant more devoted and tireless and possessed of both understanding and imagination.

If any of Mother's heavenly ("retinue") has come down to wait upon Her here, this *Didi* of ours must surely be such.

I hazard no guesses as to the identities of Swamis Tibbatananda Tirtha (Bholonath), Maunananda Parvat and Akhandananda Giri. It may not be generally known that the first, Tibbatananda, openly and loudly called Ma Anandamayi 'Mother' on his death-bed; that is to say, he acknowledged the status of a son in relation to Her.

All, the while that Ma Anandamayi (not yet so called) seemed to be in fits of insensibility to happenings in the work-a-day world, She was experiencing in regular order all the known *prakriyas* (processes) of *Yoga* such as *asana* (posture), *mudra* (disposition of the hands and fingers as symbolic gestures), *pranayama* (control of the breath), *trataka* (fixation of the eye balls), *japa* (repetition of *bija*, mantra or name) etc. It must be emphasised that She did all this under no outside guidance.

Next began Her 'ministry' proper, which was done and is still done in answer to questions asked by the inquisitive or merely curious. She would be seen in the early part of this ministry sitting absent-minded and when a question was asked, Her face would light up with a divine smile and straight would come out the proper answer, even arguments ending with a charming laugh. Next came those long, tireless, and almost incessant tours over the whole of upper and central India which are still continuing.

She scarcely stays more than a very few days continuously in any one place but gives *darshana* to all and advice to those that seek it, encourages *kirtanas* and *Nama yajnas*, sometimes Herself taking part in them, answers questions and solves doubts. She has picked up beautiful Hindi by which She makes Herself understood by most up-country people. Mother's tours, long or short, are always unplanned. (Note: Nowadays Her tours are sometimes planned.) She follows, so to speak, the bent of Her inclinations or movings of the spirit in every matter. That spirit as we see fails only in raising Her fingers to the mouth. So She has to be fed like a child by somebody else's hand.

Now, from the beginning there has been no end of questionings as to who or what She may be. Not presuming to offer any solution, I only proceed to discuss the matter and that also not without much diffidence. May not She, some have said, be a fully God-conscious devotee, who having lifted Her soul to the highest plane, is now in a true spirit of love and mercy going about advising and assisting others to lift their souls from the mire of worldly entanglements? It may be pointed out in reply that there is no evidence of Her having performed any regular *sadhana* (conscious and determined spiritual endeavour), such as most other eminent saints are reported to have done.

Nor does She appear to have ever had the guidance of a guru (spiritual teacher) indispensable on that path. But, the arguer would say, She might be a free and enlightened (*mukta* and *buddha*) soul that performed all or nearly all the necessary *sadhana* in the preceding incarnation under the guidance of a *Sad* (competent) *guru* and has now come to complete the inescapable round of rebirths and incidentally to give spiritual light and leading to those coming in contact with Her.

To this suggestion it may be replied that persons attaining some height in their upward spiritual progress come to recollect the details of their previous births and often relate them to their closest disciples. Mother on the contrary is positive that She has had no previous births.

Then is She an *Avatara*? ask others. Why not? reply some. No doubt this is a most natural supposition; and indeed I myself have commenced this humble tribute to the Mother by throwing out a suggestion of that kind. But the critical reader would not be satisfied with an *ipse dixit* and would want to know what constitutes *avatahood*. It is difficult to answer that question. Look at the ten universally acknowledged *Avataras*. Even leaving out the four non-humans, the Fish, the Turtle, the Pig, and the Man-Lion, as well as the fifth, the Divine Dwarf, it is not easy to discover any family likeness among the three Ramas: Parasurama, Rama, and Balarama, while a veritable spiritual gulf separates Buddha from all of them and most particularly from Parasurama on the one

hand and the future *Avatara* Kalki on the other.

What then is the criterion? How to tell the true penny from a seeming one? The fact is that *avatarahood* rests chiefly, if not wholly, on scriptural authority, though in a comparatively recent case that authority was greatly strained and in still more recent one or two cases not sought at all.

Here persons with a philosophical bent of the mind might say that as there is but One being in the Universe, all entities, animate or inanimate, are only His becomings; phenomenal manifestations, that is to say, of One all-embracing Noumenon. An incarnation of that One Being considered as a Person for directly interfering in the affairs of the world in a more or less arbitrary way is not admitted as a possibility in many schools of thought. But a phenomenal manifestation of outstanding power, grace, beauty or strength, may, according to some, accepting to that extent the authority of the Gita, be looked upon as God's '*Vibhuti*' and in special cases something of an *Avatara*.

Mother Anandamayi with Her over-flowing abundance of grace, sweetness and love may, according to this view, well be looked upon as an *Avatara* in this sense. In this case there is no descent of Divine Personality into a human form, but only the ascent or exaltation of jiva towards Divinity as largely reflecting some of its glories. A *Vibhuti*, though euphemistically called an *Avatara*, would still be subject to *maya*. So the suggestion falls through.

Another possible view is what the Bengal School of Vaishnavism calls a *Vilasa*, which is a sort of second personality. According to this school Vishnu or Narayana functioning in Vaikuntha is a *Vilasa* of Krishna, who never steps out of Vrindaban. Balarama, ordinarily regarded as one of the ten *Avataras*, is also *Vilasa* of Krishna and even the Krishna functioning in Dwaraka or at Kurukshetra is not the *Parameswara* Krishna but a *Vilasa* of Him. So *Nityananda* is regarded as a *Vilasa* of Sri Gauranga.

All these are second personalities: the same yet not quite the same as the Principals. May not, it may be asked, Mother Anandamayi be a *Vilasa* of the Divine Mother, Durga or Mahalakshmi or by whatever name you choose to call Her? Who will answer?

Persons with preference for a more practical approach to the problem would like first to enquire what Mother Herself says about it. A great many statements of Her, bearing on this matter have been recorded in Sri Amulya Kumar Datta Gupta's *Sri Sri Ma Anandamayl Prasanga, Parts I & II*.

Once, we are told, Mother was asked point blank by a relative (Nisi Kanta Bhattacharya by name): "Who are you?" Mother at once replied: "*Purna Brahma Narayana*".

To Bhudev Basu She said: "Who or what I am will probably come out of my mouth one day. Now it is not so happening". To Jotish C. Roy: "If there were *aham jnana* (), I-consciousness in me I could express who I am. As it is not there I am what you may choose to say about me." To Khan Bahadur Nazir-ud-din Alimed, Registrar, Dacca University : "This entire universe is my house. I am in my own house even when seeming to be roaming from place to place." To Amulya Kumar Datta Gupta:

- a. I am conditioned as well as unconditioned. I am neither infinite nor confined within limits. I am both at the same time."
- b."My will would be irresistible if I expressed it."
- c."I am with everybody, whether twenty, fifty or a hundred years old ; I exist before there is any creation, duration, or dissolution of the world."

These, no doubt, are very significant statements but how to fit them into the framework of any known system of religious philosophy? As they are they are not calculated to silence speculation.

For the learned would ask: Can the Mother not have said that She was the *Purna Brahma* and all that, in the same sense in which Indra is stated in the *Kaushliaki Upanishad* to have told Pratardana that he (Indra) was Prana (explained as Brahma) and should be worshipped by Pratardana as such, or as Vamadeva is stated in the *Bdhad Aranyaka Upanishad* to have claimed that he was Surya and Manu, or, to give yet another and a more striking example, as that immortal daughter of the *Rishi Ambhrina (wr)*, named Yak, to whom the world is indebted for that gem of a hymn in the *RigVeda*, now known as the *Devi Sukta*, claimed in no faltering voice and uncertain terms that she was all in all the world?

All the above quoted words of Mother Anandamayi, interpreted in the light of thee well known analogies, would only take us back to the supposition already dealt with that She is no more than a freed and fully enlightened soul.

The common man and woman untroubled by any load of learning in their heads know letter. They trust to their unsophisticated hearts which tell them: "Here is *Jagadama* (the Mother of the world) smiling Her sweetest at you. Go and fall at Her feet." So they rush up, bow their heads in unfeigned reverence, throng round Her and feel quite gratified if they can throw a garland of flowers round Her neck and catch a word falling from Her hallowed lips.

All honour to Pandit Swarup Damodar who at a moment, no doubt, of spiritual exaltation, conceived the idea that Sri Gauranga was none other than Lord Krishna himself assuming the complexion and character of Sri Radha in order to taste of her supreme love for him and thus to give the world a lesson in devotion livened by love.

The conceit was literally swallowed with avidity by Sri Gauranga's followers and admirers; and the poets, scholars, and dialecticians among them at once set al: out illustrating, elaborating, supporting and popularising it in their own particular ways till it passed current as a gospel truth, Swarup Damodar being regarded as being more than a Rishi, that is, a *parshada* (companion) of Sri Krishna.

The times are different now ; but will it be too much to hope that a genius with true spiritual insight, a seer, will arise at o distant date to give an enlightened and convincing interpretation of Ma Anandamayi's personality and *lila*?

Sri Krishna, we are told, was so named by the seer Garga because of his power of attracting all people. His smiles and glances attracted Gopis to distraction, his boyish sporting enraptured the foster parents, Nanda and Yasoda, his company filled the hearts of the cow-boys with ineffable delight, and his bewitching performances on the flute made the cattle forget their creaturely needs and the waters of the *Yamuna* flow backwards.

Now look at Ma Anandamayi. All roads lead to the spot where She stops even for a day or two in the course of Her unplanned ramblings, and men and women as soon as they come to know of it flock with eagerness to have a *darshana*. It makes no difference whether they understand Her words or not, as it often happens in parts of Gujerat, Baroda State, Rajasthan, Madras, Bombay, etc., where common people do not understand Hindi, not to speak of Bengali.

She was once taken to Rameswaram and certain other places of pilgrimage in South India. We are told by Khukuni Didi that at one place boys and girls (no beggars) surrounded Her, singing and dancing in great delight though not knowing who or what She was or understanding a single word falling from Her lips and though there was nothing in Her attire to show that She was not a Bengali woman of the common run. This is how love makes the whole world kin.

In verses breathing ecstatic delight and admiration a Vaishnava poet has described how the face, the smiles, the lips, the gait, - in fact everything pertaining to the Lord of Madhura (Mathura) is *madhura* (sweet). Again look at our Mother and see if there is any feature of Her physiognomy or any trait of Her character, deportment, and conversation anything but exceedingly sweet.

It has been said of Sri Gauranga that he was extremely wayward and naughty in childhood and by his boyish pranks drove to exasperation even elderly men and women bathing in the *Ganga* near his house or performing *puja* on its bank.

There may, of course, have been more in these than appeared on the surface. For it is said that Murari Gupta, a respectable Yaidya physician) both by profession and caste and a worshipper of Rama, on whom was perpetrated what may more fitly be called an outrage than a boyish prank and who later became an ardent devotee and the first biographer of Sri Gauranga, took the outrage in astonishingly good part.

We also hear of Gauranga's pride as a young scholar. Genius, they say, is often restless in its early manifestations.

But he suddenly turned a remarkably new leaf after his visit to Gaya where he was initiated in Krishna mantra by Isvar Pun, a disciple of Madhavendra Pun, a most eminent Vaishnava saint. Sri Gauranga then became a model of modesty and tearful humility, thus teaching by ideal example his own precept that to adore Han one must be lowlier than grass and more patient of suffering than a tree. In the child Nirmala (Anandamayi) we see no trace of eccentricity of any kind nor any sign of a native or assumed spirit of mischief. She was docile and obedient to a degree, though sometimes absent-minded. As a young married girl She was a pattern of modesty, shyness and other domestic virtues according to the exacting standard of those days, particularly in rural areas, though, again, often subject to absorbing God-Consciousness.

As already indicated, in spite of untouched virginity and in spite of the absence of the shadow of a shade of any morbid or natural craving for motherhood of which we read so much in the so-called psychological novels of these days, the role of mother descended on Her early enough in Her youth and has stuck to Her with rare grace and dignity ever since. Young or old, no man ever feels the least embarrassed in Her presence; while women approach Her as if She were their very own, at times taking the most unreasonable advantage of Her patience. Yet when She proceeds to give a word of advice or admonition to anybody, She never assumes a patronising or superior air, which would not be unbecoming on the part of a Mother speaking to her Children.

She rather says: "Baba (daddy), just for the sake of this little daughter of yours, let the name of the Deity be always in your mind even when attending to the affairs of your family, office or business." To Pratap Chandra Sen, Health Officer, Dacca Municipality, she said: "Baba, I know you won't call me Mother; but I am your daughter. Will you comply with a small request of this daughter? Say whether you will. Just as you perform your other duties, so consider the contemplation and invocation of God as a bounded duty... Whatever you do, it is really His Work, for in this world He alone is. He is with you as your wife, He is with you as your official duty. Only you should be aware of it." To the late Pran Kumar Basu, a retired district judge and an old admirer, She said some time before his death, "Baba, are not the sands running out? Give all your time to the Deity's name." To some students of Dacca University She once said, "I am your daughter, so I ask you to comply with this small request of mine. No matter where and when, whether sitting or standing, give some of your time to your Maker, an hour, or half an hour or even only ten minutes every day in whatever condition you may be.

I beg of many persons to give me these ten minutes. But I do not like the word begging; for who ever begs of his or her own kith and kin?" It will be seen that there is no patronising air in all this. Like a fondling daughter She speaks direct to the heart and Her words have always a ring of sincerity that softens and wins over the most critical person addressed by Her.

On the two rather ticklish questions which often are put to Her by many people viz. first, whether there is any need for a guru (spiritual guide) and second, what particular name should be "taken", that is, repeated, She would say,

"A guru is surely necessary on an unfamiliar track, but you need not indolently wait for him.

Go on repeating God's name regularly and earnestly and he will surely send a Guru in His own good time. As for the name, if you have a Guru repeat the name that you have ceremoniously received from him. If not, take the name that appeals to you most. For all names are the names of the One Divine and all gods are His manifestations." Here also, it will be observed, there is no air of superiority and no attempt to impose any particular view. It may be stated incidentally that sectarianism has no place in Her advice or in Her ashrams. She values and encourages the true spirit of devotion irrespectively of credal affiliations or preferences.

Yet, though soft and rather modernish in outlook in many matters, it would be a mistake to suppose that She tolerates any lapses in morality and good behaviour in general on the part of anyone in any of Her ashrams. The sexes are not allowed to mix in a way that may spell danger. The Brahmacharinis are taught by women teachers well versed in the subjects taught. They are also kept constantly occupied in other useful work. The resident Brahmacharis are warned against associating with women visitors or seeking their admiration by discourses or skill in singing songs, though devotional. Anyone with a weakness in that direction is asked to retire to an ashram where there are no women inmates and give all time to prayer, meditation, etc. If the advice does not suit his taste, he leaves.

And with all Her breadth of view in regard to creed and "name", Mother sees to it that *pujas* in the ashram are performed strictly according to the rituals laid down in the *shastras*, and cleanliness, both physical and ceremonial, is meticulously observed by persons of either sex taking part or assisting in them. No compromise or laxity is permitted here.

Nor is She in favour of the abolition of the caste system, which, She says, came by the will of God for the maintenance of order in society. If it goes it will do so by His will only. Till then it should be conformed to.

While laying the utmost stress on *bhakti* (devotion) as a suitable path for all classes of people to follow, She never belittles, as some people do, *jnana* (knowledge) and, under proper guidance, *dhyana* (meditation) and yoga as suitable approaches to the Deity.

Nor does She say that the Vedic *Yajnas* are useless. Indeed only the other day (in January 1950) a *Yajna* involving a crore of oblations of ghee with repetitions of the *Gayatri Mantra* and of course with other appropriate rituals was completed at the Banaras Ashram where it had been commenced three years previously. The object of the *Yajna* was stated to be the good of the whole world. It was a right royal undertaking which it would be madness on the part of any person to set his hand to unless he has ready at his disposal a pile of money that would do good to the heart of a Croesus.

The Mother has not, and indeed never had at any stage of Her life, a single copper in Her purse. In fact She has never had any purse at all. The ashrams also have no permanent funds.

The *Yajna* was commenced in a very humble way so as not to frighten any of Her nearest followers. Its nature was gradually revealed, and with the progress of the rite, money began to pour in amounts just sufficient for the immediate requirements as also pure bovine ghee from people, many of whom had but seen the Mother only once. Brahmans had to be fed whose number could not be less than one thousand, the normal being ten thousand. The number actually so entertained during the progress of the rite exceeded twelve thousand. They were drawn from all provinces and their respective peculiar customs were fully honoured. *Sadhus* of all descriptions in Banaras were also entertained, Mahatmas came from far off places like Uttar Kasi and Khanna and were suitably honoured. They all said that a gigantic rite of this kind so magnificently performed had never been witnessed at any time in the past.

It should be stated that the fire kindled for the performance of the above *Yajna* has not been extinguished, but is being kept burning with proper ceremony at the Banaras Ashram. So whatever certain other sects may think of them, the Vedic *Yajnas* are not an anachronism with Ma

Anandamayi, who sees into the heart of all religious rites and does not superciliously reject any.

I feel I have held forth much longer than I proposed to myself at the start and should now bring this artless prattle to a close. I may be permitted to do so by giving expression, in the words of the *Anandalahari stotra*, (by Sri Shankaracharya) to the fervent hope which has all along been at the back of my mind:

"As a piece of iron coming in contact with the philosopher's stone at once turns into gold, and drain water becomes holy by mingling with the stream of the Ganga, so why should my mind, very much soiled as it is by a hundred sins, not be cleansed by clinging to Thee (O, Mother) in loving adoration."

A Unique Being

By Dr. Nalini Kanta Brahma, M.A., Ph.D.

It was a cold evening in December 1924, when I was taken to Shahbagh for a *darshana* of the Mother by Rai Bahadur Pran Gopal Mukherji, the then Deputy Postmaster General of Dacca. He had already secured the permission of Her husband for the purpose and we were taken straight to the room where Mother was sitting alone deeply absorbed in meditation.

A dim lamp was burning in front of Her and that was perhaps the only thing in the room. Mother's face was completely hidden from our view as in those days She used to veil it exactly like a newly married village girl. After we had waited there for about half an hour, suddenly the veil loosened itself and Mother's face became visible in all its brilliance and lustre.

Hymns containing many "seed mantras" began to be recited by the Mother in uncommon accents, producing wonderful resonance, which affected the whole surroundings. The stillness of the cold December night, the loneliness of the Shahbagh gardens and above all the sublimity and serenity of the atmosphere in the Mother's room—all combined to produce a sense of holiness which could be distinctly felt.

As soon as the recitations ceased, Mother's father who was present that day at Shahbagh began to sing a few songs of Ramprasad with an exquisitely melodious voice, and Rai Bahadur Mukherji remarked that the sweet songs of the old man must have been instrumental in bringing about the descent of the Divine Mother. As long as we were in the room, we felt an indescribable elevation of the spirit, a silence and a depth not previously experienced, a peace that passeth all understanding. We came away from Shahbagh late at night with the conviction that we had been in the presence of a superior Being whom it is difficult to doubt or deny.

I had the good fortune of seeing Mother next in the summer of 1926 at Deoghar, where She had gone at the invitation of She Rai Bahadur Pran Gopal Mukherji. On that occasion stayed there for a week.

Sri Balananda Brahmachari Maharaj was alive then and used to have conversations on spiritual topics with the Mother for long hours both morning and evening. *Namakirtana* was held in the Ashram and Mother went into states of deep *samadhi* during the *kirtana*. One evening after the *samadhi*, Mother was almost dancing with joy whilst singing 'Han Om'.

She sang with such a sweet and melodious voice that it seemed to all present that She could not be any human being, but must be a Goddess in human form.

Sri Bralimachari Maharaj himself remarked that he had carefully observed that Her feet did not touch the ground and this was to him a conclusive proof that She was the Divine Mother incarnate. After singing *Hari Om, Hari Om* for about half an hour She took Brahmachari Maharaj to his room in the upper storey of the "Dhyana-Kutir" and there told him certain very deep things.

As nobody else was allowed in the room, the substance of the conversation can only be conjectured. Sri Brahmachari Maharaj was very much impressed by the Mother and it was at his special request that She agreed to stay for a week, changing Her original programme of remaining for three days only.

Even after these twenty-five years *Hari Om* as sung by Her seems to be still ringing in our ears, and it had such a charming and wonderful effect that even agnostic youths and non-believers felt its influence and some of them were heard actually chanting *Hari Om* in their sleep. At that period, for the major portion of the day, Mother used to live in a higher world as it were and whenever She had to reply to any questions put to Her, it seemed definitely that She was descending from a higher level and for several minutes She could utter word only with great difficulty.

The look in Her eyes changed whenever She attempted to speak and proved beyond doubt that She was forcibly attempting to come down from a higher level.

This transition is not noticeable now and it is quite likely that She now always lives on the higher plane and that this has become so natural and spontaneous that it need not be shut off even when there is work at the lower level, and that the two go on simultaneously.

In the afternoon of the day of starting from Deoghar I was granted the privilege of a private interview. I asked Mother what I could do for spiritual advancement and was told in reply that what I did was all right and that nothing further could be done even if She instructed me to do so. I betrayed signs of doubts. Mother noticed it and said,

"Very well, I am telling you a very simple thing. Do not worship the portrait of a man who is alive." "I never do and why should I?" was my answer.

Mother merely smiled and said: "Very well."

After two years and a half I met Her in the house of Her husband's brother at Calcutta. I remember two or three missionary gentlemen coming to see Her that evening and She was busy with them. As soon as I approached Her, She said: "Well, you do not worship the portrait of any living man, do you?" I was bewildered. During the interval of those two years and a half I had got a bromide enlargement of a saint (who was then alive) kept in my puja room and had been worshipping it every day. She did not wait for an answer and said to me,

"You see, then, that what is ordained to happen, happens and nothing but that."

Mother is a great personality. It is impossible not to bow down in Her presence and not to obey Her commands. She is not the person to be persuaded by entreaties and whatever She wills must needs be performed. When She decides to go out on a tour alone and asks Her nearest associates to stay behind, however harsh and cruel the command may appear, it has to be carried out without a murmur.

Nobody has the courage to go against the decision of the dynamic personality.

Mother is kind-hearted, so soft and so tender, so merciful and so gentle, that it often seems

impossible that She could wound the feelings of anybody.

Again, at times She is so strong and so resolute, that She seems harder than steel and almost heartless and cruel. It may truly be said of Her that She is "harder than thunder and softer than a flower, gentler than the gentlest and more beautiful than the most beautiful" and yet as dreadful as enraged Death Itself, as mild and sweet as the silvery rays of the moon and yet as harsh as Severity Itself merciful yet cruel.

These seemingly contradictory characteristics merely show that She transcends the ordinary human categories. Her beauty surpasses the most beautiful of all earthly things and so She is truly described as more beautiful than the most beautiful.

She is cruel when She has to fight against evil forces and then She knows no compromise. She is again exceedingly gracious to those who are striving towards righteousness and Her infinite love encompasses all. When She travels hundreds of miles to see an ailing patient in the hospital or to console a mother who has lost Her only child. Her mercy and love are evident. But who knows whether Her mercy and love are not even greater when She does not yield to entreaties and appears to be cruel? Fighting against evil forces is also an indication of mercy, because it is the only way to the Kingdom of Heaven that has been lost.

Mother's answers to questions are so simple and so forcible that they cannot but touch the hearts of those who listen to them. Wonderful solutions of difficult philosophical problems by an almost illiterate woman show that there is in Her the great Light that illumines everything.

Ceaseless activity without rest for 365 days of the year shows it must be the universal Life that is pulsating in Her.

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. The single-minded devotion to Truth, the utter spontaneity and freedom in all Her actions, the steadfast adherence to the ideal, the constant reverence for all that is great and holy, the respect for tradition and custom, the utter disregard of worldly praise or blame - all these go to show that we have in the Mother a very unique being worthy of love and adoration, of reverence and worship.

MY FIRST IMPRESSION

Dr. Adolphe Jaques Weintrob Vijayananda

It is a difficult task to try and give a reader who often is only curious, if not indifferent, an idea of that which for you is the most precious thing, the jewel of jewels.

There are two dangers to be avoided:

The first is to let your heart run away with you, to write an account so enthusiastic, so extravagant that the reader gets the impression of having before him the product of an unbalanced mind or at least of a rank sentimentalist, and consequently hurries through the article with an amused smile full of ironic pity.

The other danger would be to endeavour to remain completely cold and detached, to write like an impartial observer. This would be even worse, because one cannot speak of Her, who is the very embodiment of Love Divine, as if one were dealing with a scientific problem. I shall, therefore, try to restrain my heart, without however reducing it to complete silence.

It is bad taste to talk about oneself, but all I can do, is to relate the story of how I got in touch with "MA". For it is impossible to describe Her objectively: She is different for every one of us.

"I am whatever you think I am", She has often said.

It was on the 2nd of February, 1951, at about six o'clock in the evening that I saw Her for the first time in Her Ashram at Banaras.

Having "provisionally" placed a substitute in charge of my medical practice, I had left France in quest of spiritual guidance in this country, which since time immemorial has illumined the world.

Landing in Buddhist Ceylon, then proceeding along the East coast of India I had arrived in Banaras the previous day. Tired and disappointed, almost convinced that my journey had been in vain, and determined to return to France, I had already reserved a berth on the "Marseillaise", which was to sail from Colombo on February 21st.

I am frequently asked what was my first impression of Ma, what made me decide to leave everything-family, friends, country, profession, wealth-to follow Her.

Why I have clung to Her like a shadow for the last 11 months, suffering torments whenever I am unable to see Her for a few hours. Why, though I cannot understand what She says, I spend hours at Her - feet, without taking my eyes off Her.

It is very difficult to reply to these questions. Not because language lacks words, but because a word has not the same meaning for different persons, unless they all have experienced the sensation corresponding to that word. Thus one may well try with the aid of comparisons to make a child in France realize what exactly is the flavour of a mango. Even if one spent hours over it, he would only get a very vague idea and that also most likely false.

Having made room for all these unavoidable limitations I shall now make an attempt all the same.

What then was my first impression? It was in the evening of the 2nd of February, I found myself in the presence of a woman of 55, looking younger than her age, still beautiful. But at that moment I did not notice Her beauty, it was only later that I became aware of it. I still see Her, focussing Her eyes on me with that strange gaze that seemed to embrace my whole destiny.

That same evening, at about ten o'clock, She had granted me an interview which lasted for about 20 minutes. She was supposed to answer my questions, but I had nothing to ask. I simply desired to make a spiritual contact. She seemed to divine thought. It was She who put the questions, clear, precise, going straight to the heart of things, raising exactly the points which interested me. But Her words were only a play on the surface. In those 20 minutes She had infused something into me, which was to last for a long time, which still continues. I returned to 'Clark's Hotel' after having secured Her permission to come back the next day to live in the Ashram.

I was in a trance state-my heart welled with jubilation, with joyful exaltation - the state of one, who has just found what he has always yearned for in the most secret recess of his heart. Her image did not leave me any more, even at night, and the very thought of Her drove tears into my eyes.

What exactly had happened to me? My critical sense, which had been submerged by the first wave, awoke on the 3rd or 4th day. "Take care", it told me: "you have fallen into the hands of a

great magician. She has cast a spell over you to make you her obedient slave." And I began to be on the defensive, to struggle against Her influence-rather feebly, I confess, for how can one fight Love; there is no power in the world mightier than Love.

But what kind of love was this? It is not directed towards the woman. It has nothing whatsoever to do with the love one may feel for a woman. As by a strange alchemy my entire potentiality for affection, all that one can love and admire in the world, had been transferred to Her. But at the same time this love became so pure, so sublimated, that it merged into and, greatly intensified the call for the Absolute that I had always felt. All worldly attachment lost its attraction and the spiritual ascent became easier, since She had donned me the wings of Love. In one single person all that one can love, admire, respect and adore became identified with the *Sad-Guru*, the Lord. For these eleven months that I have spent near Her, have given me the conviction that She is the Lord Himself, incarnate in the body of a woman.

I thought that this Love I am obliged to use this word for want of a better one, though it does not express exactly what it stands for would disappear or at least dwindle with time. The very contrary has happened: It has only grown in intensity. For it is like with those ancient cities buried underground; as one delves deeper, ever more new marvels are brought to light.

Something that has struck me from the very first day is the atmosphere of the miraculous in which one moves when one is with Her. Let me explain: In Europe and no doubt here also by the word "miracle" one conceives of a breaking away from the laws of nature, something that strikes one as impossible, as absurd. But this is only its crude, objective side. Its subtle, subjective aspect is quite different.

What does it matter to me if a certain yogi has walked across the waters or flown through the air?

The real miracle is, when that which one needs, which one desire keenly of feebly, comes at the very moment it is needed.

And still better when it comes, not only as one desired it, but as one would - have loved to see it in the innermost depth of ones heart. It has been for me as if I were guided on a path beset with obstacles by the hand of the most loving mother-an all-powerful mother. As you advance She removes all the thorns, all the stones, from your path and, when it is necessary, She even lifts you across in Her arms. And all circumstances adjust and adapt themselves with a marvellous precision, without hurt. "Coincidence;" I thought at first. But a coincidence that goes on repeating itself daily cannot be called so any more. And all this happens without apparently violating the laws of nature - for the Lord has no need to break any laws: He is the Law.

Should I give examples?

No, for those who do not know Her will not believe me and those who have lived near Her have already understood.

She is like the Ganges-Her very touch purifies. In Her presence one feels oneself getting better all the time. Not by the suppression of one's faults: The very fault is sublimated and becomes an aid in the search for the Divine. She does not seem to notice or does not want to notice the dark sides of the individual. She only sees our luminous aspects, enhanced considerably by Her Divine mercy.

All the *Jivan-Muktas*, all the emanations of the Divine give in broad outline the same message; and Ma Anandamayi does not make an exception to this rule. Yet there is an aspect of Her which no other *Sad-Guru* has ever before presented not to my knowledge at least except perhaps Sri Krishna: I am referring to Her power to attract human hearts.

It seems to me this is an entirely personal opinion that the first contact She makes with those who

come to Her, is essentially a contact of Love. Instantaneously She recognises the dominant note in the individual's emotional nature and it is this aspect in which She appears to him or her.

For some - for the great majority-She is a Mother, full of love and tenderness, to others a friend and elder sister or even their child. For others yet, who are spiritually more advanced, She is the Guru or an aspect of God: Durga, Krishna, etc.

And it is not only in the imagination of the *bhakta* that She represents these various aspects; Her physical appearance, Her behaviour, Her voice are actually transformed and adapted to the part She wishes to play. To illustrate this I should like to mention a striking little incident that I witnessed.

It was during the last *Janmashtami* festival Sri Krishna's birthday at Banaras.

She had been dressed up as Lord Krishna and we were all allowed to go and see Her. I went with a certain reluctance and with a slight irritation, for I do not like disguises. But when I beheld Her, I understood that there was no question of a disguise. Her face, though one could still recognise it, was completely transformed.

It shone with a Divine beauty, with a truly super-natural calm and sweetness. She had really become one with Sri Krishna Himself. This is only an example among a thousand.

- I have often seen Her features assuming entirely different aspects within a sine hour. According to the person who questions Her, She appears at times like an old mother with a sweet face, her features drawn and tired; a few minutes later the radiant face of a young girl of twenty emerges. At another time She takes on the noble, serious, almost severe, almost masculine, countenance of the Guru, a little later again Her laughter, Her caressing voice, Her tender look conjure up those of a child.

This contact of love or affection becomes in some way the lure that will entice him, who has had the great good fortune of getting in touch with Her, away from attachment to worldly things. For it will be transmuted and turned to the Divine.

What else can I say about Her? But have I not promised to limit my effusions? Perhaps it would have been better, had I acted like the friend who, when asked to write an article, replied "All I can say is: Ma, Ma, Ma."

May these few lines be not altogether unworthy of Her.

They have been written not from any ulterior motive, but as a humble testimony of the love, the veneration and the gratitude I feel for Her. And may they induce some readers to come and quench their thirst at that source of Life Eternal, which is Ma Anandamayi.

"JOY, LOVE AND WISDOM"

Jean Herbert

Translation of the Preface of the French Edition of Sad Vani

published in the series: "Les Grands Maitres Spirituels",

dans 'L' Inde Coniemporaine, 1943. Editions Ophrys,

Adrien-Maisomicuve, II Rue Saint Sulpice,

Paris 6e and Delaehaux and Niestle, Neuchatel, Suisse.

The original work (Sad Vani) is in Bengali compiled by Jotish Chandra

Roy and contains instructions on spiritual matters by Ma Anandamayi.

Seeing the radiant face of Ma Anandamayi and hearing Her laughter, you guess that She is an incarnation of joy. Touched by the caress of Her glance you know that Her heart is overflowing with love for all beings. Listening to Her teaching, so simple and clear, you understand that She is in Possession of all wisdom. But one cannot say, whether it is Joy, Love or Wisdom that is the source of all this, for with Her all three are inextricably and indissolubly mingled one could not exist without the others.

The Joy which Ma Anandamayi lives is not that which we know in the worldly life, where pleasure and pain, hope, regret and disillusionment, attraction and repulsion follow on each other's heels, born one of another.

Nor is it an egocentric calm of the stoic rigidity that erects around itself a rampart of indifference. Hers is an overflowing, irrepressible Joy that expresses itself in gaiety, that knows no obstacles, because it is deeply rooted in the Absolute, beyond the dualities of good and evil, I and not-I, of pleasant and unpleasant, because its unshakeable base is Love and Wisdom.

The Love which Ma Anandamayi radiates is not the selfish, demanding attachment that men feel, that passion which often generates hate, which leads to bitterness and despair more easily than to peace. Nor is it the haughty, protecting benevolence of one who enjoys giving, but would consider it degrading to receive. Hers is a living, active, generous Love that links with a constant warm flow the hearts that open to it. For the Love of Ma Anandamayi is rooted in the fact of Unity : the oneness of all creatures, the oneness of man with God, the oneness of the lover with the beloved, and in all difference it sees only the joyous play of the Divine, for it is unshakeably based on Joy and Wisdom.

The Wisdom of Ma Anandamayi is not the knowledge found in books, always incomplete and hesitant, which all the time discovers yet unexplored regions, stumbles over contradictions, destroys its hypotheses in order to set up new ones and is not concerned whether its achievements lead to benefit or to cataclysm. Nor is it ethereal vision, born out of ecstasy, which has no connection with the world in which other human beings live and struggle.

It is Wisdom which at the same time embraces the most arduous metaphysical subjects, the most agonising problems of morality as well as the smallest details of daily life ; which sees everything in its right relation, because it knows the Reality of which our world is an appearance and of which all beings, all facts, all becoming, are but partial and changing manifestations, distorted by our senses and our thoughts, and to these also She has the key. This Wisdom has a clear and intimate knowledge of all that is, because it is firmly based on Joy which realizes all unity.

Since Ma Anandamayi lives in fact integrally and not only intellectually in that "consciousness of Oneness", She is no longer tempted to identify Herself, as men do, with Her own body and Her own mind. And this depersonalisation makes it possible for Her to fix Her centre of consciousness at once in the minds of those who come to Her for guidance. Identifying Herself with them She sees at the same time the true being of the one who questions (that is his divine perfect nature) and its appearance (that is the illusion in which he fights with all sorts of problems). And therefore to questions put to Her, She replies almost simultaneously on three planes:

monistically on the plane of the noumenal reality of monism, and dualistically on the plane of the

religious attitude, and on the plane of practical morality. It is for him who asks to follow the advice that corresponds with his own state of consciousness - to live Unity, to listen to the voice of God, or to obey the rules of social life.

An example of this has been given by Lizelle Reymond in her study on Ma Anandamayi (*Etudes et Portraits*, Adriens Maisoneuve, Paris, 1943).

MATAJI

Colin Turnbull, M.A., Ph.D. (Premananda)

The world is shaken by a series of wars, it is filled with suspicion and hatred, there is no peace for the body, mind or spirit. That is how we of the West felt at the end of the last World War, and we feel the same today. Everywhere there is disunity, unhappiness, and emptiness in our innermost lives.

The last war was, in some ways, necessary for our spiritual welfare. It shook us all into a momentary realization of our need for a firm spiritual foundation for our lives. The churches were filled and for a while it seemed that we were turning to God at last. The war ended, however, and the churches became empty again, and God was forgotten; man returned to his normal humdrum life, moved mainly by purely material considerations. Material considerations were, in fact, our only guide and standard, even morality was largely a matter of social convenience. There was a spiritual emptiness and although many were too engrossed in their whirl of activity, there were some of us who felt only a great loneliness, and a longing for something deep and lasting on which to build our shattered lives. Our eyes had been opened and we could no longer remain satisfied with a way of life, which not only ignored the world outside our own small society, but ignored the very deepest meaning and purpose of life itself.

I left my home and came to India for the sole purpose of discovering what it was that was missing in my life, and of filling that spiritual emptiness, which made life, seem so pointless. I had studied Indian philosophy and had a number of Indian friends, and felt convinced that in India I would find not only what I myself wanted, but what the whole of the western world needed.

It was not easy at first, although the Hindu family with which I lived in Baroda treated me as their own son. I learned to live the Indian way of life without too much difficulty, but all the time I was aware of some intangible difference between us, something which they had and I had not. Then I came to Banaras and settled down at the University to a serious and concentrated study of Indian philosophy. I found an increasing amount of intellectual satisfaction and yet that "something" still eluded me. Argue and reason as I might, I could not break that chain which anchored my inner life to the West and prevented me from feeling at one with my Indian friends. As long as I concerned myself with the intellect the Spirit eluded me.

I had read many books on yoga, and although again I could find myself in complete intellectual agreement with the system, yoga meant nothing more. Then, one day, a friend at the University told me that there was a woman in Banaras who was regarded as a saint and would I like to meet her? My immediate reaction was "No", but when I saw some of the articles in that book compiled by her devotees I felt less certain.

It was Anandamayi Ma, and although I still felt that my western ways of thought and conduct revolted against the idea of a woman saint, I could not help feeling a curiosity, and beneath that something more-irresistible attraction, which came through the pages of the book and filled my thoughts as I sat in the Guest House reading it.

It was through no will of my own, it was something inevitable, like the action of a magnet, and one evening I found myself wandering through Lanka and down to Assi, and then through the narrow twisting lanes until we came to Anandamayi Ashram. There were three of us, and we had all come to India from the West for the same purpose, the other two were Americans; one went to Ramana Maharshi and the other to Sri Aurobindo not long after the day we first met Anandamayi Ma.

I cannot describe that first meeting; there was a large crowd, all sitting on the lovely terrace over the Ganga. And there, in the midst of us, in simple white clothes, was Anandamayi Ma.

The first sight of Her unsettled me, and made me feel as though the precarious hold I did have on life was being swept away, and after She had said a few words to us I felt almost glad to get away and return to the safety of the University. It was, I suppose, the natural reaction to the impact of two worlds. I had been on the borders between East and West still holding grimly on to the West because it was all I knew, but now I had been plunged into the unknown by the mere sight of a woman.

The very next day, in the morning, I was again making my way to the Ashram, and this time I sat for an hour or more in the hall beneath the terrace listening to the *kirian* and to Anandamayi as She spoke and laughed and sang. She sang and She seemed to be singing to me. All the time She was asking me the question She had asked one of my friends the evening before: "Will you surrender, will you do whatever I tell you, without question?" Those were Her terms if I was to get any further, and again I felt a wild urge to run away. One of the devotees (Dr. Panna Lal) even asked me directly, in English, and although I opened my mouth I could say nothing.

It was not long afterwards that Anandamayi became "Mataji" and I became "Premananda", and from then onwards there was never any question of doubt. Mataji filled exactly that emptiness I had felt in the western world, and through Her I learned how to lead a whole life, how to carry the Spirit into the every-day world, how to lead an every-day life that is at the same time a dedicated life, and intensely spiritual. The combination of spirituality and practicality is one of the most valuable gifts that the East has to offer to the West, and Mataji taught accordingly.

In Her ashrams I felt the bond of brotherhood which will eventually unite the world, and in the mutual love and consideration which pervaded all those gathered around Mataji, I found a way of life which is yet but a dream among the majority of the peoples of the western world. There was no question of rich or poor, good or bad, high or low, there was perfect brotherhood among all. I think that perhaps the greatest things I learned were a love for Truth and a love for all my fellow-beings. Truth can be a hard master, but there are none better, for Truth is one of the ways in which the Spirit is revealed. Those around Mataji could not help but be impregnated with this wonderful ideal, and at the same time feel all the petty differences and distinctions which normally surround us, disappearing. Here was life as it should be led, life for the One Self, not for the little individual self, a life in which all of us could join equally, no matter how feeble and weak we were.

I find it impossible to describe Mataji, and have given up trying to do so. She is both a woman and not a woman, for in Her bodily form She gives us a living example of what life should be like -and just to see Her is to know - and yet after a few minutes in Her presence you know that the body is a mere shell, and that Mataji is essentially far beyond its narrow confines. Mataji is everywhere and at all times for those who want Her, and nothing is more delightful than complete surrender and a great plunge into the ocean of Truth, Goodness and Beauty with which Mataji surrounds Herself. She has something different for every one of us, each according to his innermost nature and it seems almost wrong to speak or Write about such a person, as that immediately limits Her.

Not long before I left India to return to the West; a number of us were returning in a bus from a visit with Mataji to Pao Puri and Nalanda. It was a tiring journey, but we were all singing *kirtan* for the first hour or so. We seemed to exhaust the possibilities of even this but one of Mataji's fondest devotees went on singing "Ma, Ma, Ma, Ma, Ma, Ma," until we reached home.

We tried to persuade him to introduce some variety, but he resisted our attempts and even refused to add "Jay Ma, Jay Ma" for our benefit. He was right. How useless words are! And if we must use them it is better to confine ourselves to as few as possible. For him Mataji was the only reality in the world. He was a *samnyasi* and wanted one thing only - he could see that one thing in Mataji. So why sing elaborate *kirtan* when he could do just as well by singing the name of 'Ma' only?

Over here in the midst of the turmoil and trouble of western life I often think of that bus ride, and as I sit in the evenings and think of Mataji I find that all words and thoughts leave me, and I am conscious only of 'Ma' and all She stands for. It is the only thing which makes life worth while under such conditions, and it is an additional proof that it is in the eternal Truth which is so perfectly revealed in Mataji that the world today will find the foundations on which to build a happier future.

Mataji has a message for each one who comes to Her, but in Her very being She is a message for the whole of mankind.

AN INDIAN SAGE

By Ethel Merston, O.B.E.

All books and articles about people are subjective to the writers, depending upon their attitude towards their comprehension of and their degree of capacity to contact the person of whom they write. Men and women are mostly so subjective that they can only know others in so far as they have found and known themselves, which is, for the greater number of us, scarcely at all.

If, then, we can so little know others who are more or less like ourselves, subjective, ego-ridden, desire-obsessed mortals, how much less can we know that rare Being, the ego-less, desire-less, objective Soul? To be able to recognise His or Her Greatness is all that we can hope, and, even for that boon; we have much indeed, to be thankful for. But to describe them, to explain their actions, to postulate anything about them other than a love and wisdom so different in quality and so far surpassing our own that they appear to us as God incarnate, is an impossibility.

Such a Being is Anandamayi Ma or Mataji as Her devotees call Her. Impossible to describe Her with a subjective mind to each one She means something different according to how our limited ego-minds allow us to glimpse the whole that is such an ego-less Being. To some She is Love personified, to others God Himself, All-powerful, to yet others She is Wisdom, All-knowledge. In the stories told of Her, some see divine miracles and they worship Her, praying that She may exercise Her powers on their behalf; others again, are attracted by the radiance of Her smile and the rippling, infectious laugh, free as a child's.

What is the real purpose of the incarnation of such as Mataji? Has She a mission to fulfil towards others and the world? Or some obligation towards Herself, during the course of which those who come into contact with Her can get in their turn, the help they are capable of receiving? Or is such an incarnation as purposeless as our own lives often appear to be? And moreover of what concern is it to us? But what we can say is that we feel such an attraction to these rare Beings that we are ready to cast all the world to the winds to be near them, to live within their radiance content with a crumb of their Love and Wisdom rather than have all the riches of the earth.

In the West, too, men and women have given up the world for the Bliss that is Christ, and entered monasteries and convents to spend their lives with the Divine Name on their lips. In the East, to us living, the representative of God is adored, His or Her Name constantly repeated. In the West, Christ is one, although the methods taken to contact God through Him are numerous. So, too, in

the East different methods of approaches to the Divine have been recommended by sages from time to time. Be our *dharma* what it may, few, indeed, can attain without help from one such Great Soul, and, according to our *dharma* we find the Teacher we need to further us along our path.

In the world of today, as in that of four thousand years ago, when the Lord Krishna was teaching his disciple Arjuna, the way of devotion and worship is the easiest and most seekers take it, ever searching for an object through which they may worship the Divine, be the object wood, stone, a painting, or a living being.

Hence, most of the Hindu Sages of today are surrounded by devotees, adorers, and some of them, like Anandamayi Ma, apparently use this urge-to-worship to turn their followers away from selfish desires to selflessness and God. Through the trust Mataji inspires, verily as a mother is trusted by her child, we gradually become more sensitive to the impermanence and unreality of our cares, less identified with them, and so, more sensitive to the immeasurability of the power of Love and of its eternal quality; more gradually yet do we begin to feel that stillness and love within, which is beyond disturbance, apart from, yet infusing, life.

From the world over Mataji attracts seekers; French, German, Austrian, English, American, Dutch men and women are to be met in Her ashrams - all are welcomed by Her loving radiance. How often do we come to Her, worried by the cares of life, puzzled about ourselves and others, and in Her presence our problems resolve themselves, we find peace in the glory of Her smile and relaxed, we face life's cares afresh, energy renewed, understanding of ourselves and others deepened.

And even when devotion is not our *dharma*, and we cannot follow the *marga* of worship and *japam*, we recognise the greatness of all such Beings as Mataji, and, along with Her worshippers, but on our own path, find help and stimulation from the force of that Love which passeth understanding and which is Her Grace.

MOTHER AS SEEN BY A WESTERNER

Arnaud Desjardins

The following are short extracts translated from the French book by

Arnaud Desjardins: *Ashram, Les Yogi et les Sages*,

published by *La Palatine, Paris-Geneva*,

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

At last I shall see face to face the sage whose two pictures, at an interval of several years, stirred me so profoundly that I could never forget them. When I had only just completed my studies, lost among the various problems that confront a young man hardly prepared for life, I one day, in a bookshop, glanced casually through the pages of *Autobiography of a Yogi* by Paramahansa Yogananda, the founder of the well known *Self-Realization Fellowship*. Among all the photos of austere sages and venerable old men that illustrate the work, the picture of a very young woman with closed eyes struck me like a shock. She seemed extraordinarily beautiful and I thought: this is the Woman, the Mother, the Virgin.

Eight years later someone presented to me the beautiful book *India* by the English photographer and writer Richard Lannoy. As I turn its pages, the face of an elderly woman with a look unlike

any other, touches me to the quick.

I am reminded of the meaning of the name *Krishna*: "he who steals the hearts." I do not even skim through the rest of the book: it has remained open on that page and never been closed again.

And a few months ago, when in my own car I started on my first trip to India, I made my first halt in a small Swiss village, at a distance of several thousand miles from my destination. Two courageous women spend every summer in that village. They both have lived a number of eventful years in the country that I am about to explore. To my question:

"If I were to meet only one person in India, who should it be?" one of them replied very softly: "Ma Anandamayi."

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

Today I only think: "It can hardly be that I shall not be disappointed."

And I am not even sure that I wish to meet Her.

Benares is the touchstone for the love or the horror of India for Europeans. I have perhaps never been so perfectly happy as during the weeks that I spent in that city, and thanks to my friends Bhattacharya who made me discover the heart of their city, I lived as if in the Kingdom of Heaven. But I know a number of travellers for whom it remains the memory a veritable nightmare. I am sure that one could spend one's whole life in Benares without exhausting its riches.

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

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

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

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

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

Some wandering *sadhu* for whom this evening is but a halt on the road without end. The serene and silent peace that emanates from him, his ineffable smile and the light in his eyes give their meaning to the clangour of the brass under the blows of the clappers, Then he vanishes.

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

The noise, the chanting, the music are deafening. But as we enter a terrace where the crowd becomes, if possible, even more dense, the threefold rhythm beaten on gongs, bells and cymbals bursts forth abruptly. Those who know it, will guess at once. Those who have never heard it, cannot imagine it. Thundering, sublime, piercing, overwhelming, shaking the whole body with its ever repeated three beats, capturing emotion, imposing silence on the mind, it raises in that wonderful autumn night the cry of the planet towards the sparkling sky. Across the white of a portico, amidst the black infinity of the plain far below, I distinguish the broad band of the eternal Ganga. In that frame, which opens out from a small outer staircase rising from the river, I see the most beautiful face of a man I have ever seen.

I do not know for how long.

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

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

* * *

Devotees and visitors are sitting around Mother in a cluster in order to have Her *darsana*, Her blessed sight, and She enlivens by Her supernatural presence and Her silent radiance the singing of the hymns. Close by Her, dressed all in white, the young girls who have dedicated their lives to Her. By Her side a woman of hoary age, very thin, very frail, a *samnyasini* with shaven head, clad in the orange robe. It is Didima, Mother's mother, the mother of Ma Anandamayi.

And I marvel at the extraordinary destiny of that humble woman of the village, who lost several children at a tender age, and whose baling little girl, more serious, more gentle and more joyous than all the others, the little girl who did not cry after she was born and who never wept except once during her childhood, has become the epitome of the Mother for millions of men and women.

While Didima's life was confined to her modest home how could she have thought that she would one day travel all over India and that the crowd of the small and the splendour of the great would come and bow at her feet?

Three young women share the honour of fanning Mataji, and their movements seem in rhythm with the music.

To the accompaniment of his little harmonium, a *brahmachari* sings. His singing has attained to such an abandon, to such an impersonality that he really seems to transmit something divine. Then two of the young girls, dressed all in white sing some songs and this is perhaps even more perfect, even purer.

Among the crowd are many children. Some play quietly in their corner. Others, curled up, sleep without the slightest movement. A few gaze at Mataji, unwearied.

Without a pause, newcomers worm their way to Ma, prostrate and offer a few fruits, flowers or a garland.

Indifferent to all this veneration, Ma Anandamayi is basking in peace and bliss.

Off and on Her eyes gaze into the far distance and Her expression takes on a beauty that is truly divine and beyond all description. What does She see at such moments? With which world is She

in touch? What is the significance of a being in our midst so totally different? She has eyes like ourselves and yet so entirely unlike. She sees us and sees much more than us. Why have we no access to Her vision? Why are we thus banished from the world of which She is a living proof? The more I look at Her, the more fascinated, the more amazed am I.

Sometimes She smiles at a newcomer. Sometimes suddenly, Her gaze fastens on one or the other with such intensity that it is almost unbearable even for those who only witness it. This lasts for a few seconds that seem an eternity.

The hymns follow one another, but now it is Ma who sings, and the crowd repeats in chorus: "*Hari bol, Hari bol, Hari bol, Hari bol*".

Her singing has such force, such vigour that we are shaken in our entire being. This surpasses by far everything of that order that I have had the chance to experience. Something immense that very nearly causes giddiness makes its presence felt among us. We want even more of it. But we feel that we should be unable to bear it.

Her face is so powerful that I cannot disengage myself from it.

Lost in a crowd I have never before known a similar impression of intensity and fullness. At last something has actually happened in my life. And this certainty remains with me day after day for weeks, together with the one, not less forceful, that everything is possible for Mataji.

A sentence comes to my mind: "I am not worthy that you enter my house, but say only one word and my child will be saved." Perhaps I have been capable of really knowing this, for at this very moment Ma Anandamayi slowly turns Her face in my direction and looks at me. Of that instant I will not speak. Now She talks. She speaks with animation and gaiety. She laughs a great deal. "Anandamayi" - does it not signify "permeated by joy"? Everyone seems highly amused. Questions are asked in quick succession.

The atmosphere is completely free, intimate, spontaneous, relaxed. I do not understand anything, for sure. But what does it matter? The French disciple to whom someone remarked: "You don't understand anything of what Ma says?" only replied: "But who does?"

This reply is correct. The teaching of Ma Anandamayi is absolutely beyond words, just like that of Ramana Maharshi. And when She speaks, She still remains beyond Her words and beyond the comprehension of Her listeners. Nevertheless, a teaching of Ma Anandamayi, formulated in words, certainly does exist. One has often been surprised and dumbfounded by the way this unlettered woman replies, without ever a moment's reflection, to the most difficult and perilous questions that are put to Her by very learned men. Her words have for years been recorded by Her disciples, especially by a quite astonishing and indefatigable woman, Sri Gurupriya Devi, and by Brahmachari Kamalda, and some have been translated into English. They are extraordinarily interesting and striking, and represent one of the monuments of metaphysical thought and a prodigious commentary on all *sadhanas* known to us.

I myself have, assisted by the Swami who served me as an interpreter, prepared in minute detail several conversations with Her. Certain sayings, certain utterances have impressed me profoundly.

But this was never the most essential point.

The more I observe Ma Anandamayi, the more I am struck by the extreme changeability of Her expressions. This is in fact the first thing one notices when comparing all the photos that have been taken of Her: one can hardly believe that they are of the same person. All those who come to Her have observed this diversity.

At an interval of a few seconds I have seen Her appear thirty and seventy years old, be the image of gentleness and the embodiment of severity; I have seen in Her the laughing little girl and the terrifying man, the radiant saint and the inspirer of a heavy congregation.

This unlimited possibility of diverse appearances giving at the same time the paradoxical impression of ever remaining unutterably the same, reveals that - quite contrary to us who are entirely conditioned and answer to certain types which modern characterology has found - Ma Anandamayi is absolutely free inwardly, devoid of all limitations, always perfectly unencumbered and spontaneous, ready to respond to what every moment demands of Her.

Does She not say of Herself: "This body is like a musical instrument; what you hear depends on how you play."

Mataji has very aptly been compared to a perfectly pure and transparent crystal, which reflects everything that happens around it. I have even asked myself whether ten different people do not at the very same moment perceive Her in ten different ways, depending on their respective inner states. I have just mentioned Her terrifying aspect. Some Hindus will probably not agree to this. But during one moment I have seen in Her the witness to my lie, my impurity, to my contradictions - truths about ourselves of which we usually are not aware.

Is it surprising therefore that I was actually terrified, in spite of all the kindness and love by which I felt myself enveloped?

For weeks and weeks I did not understand anything of what She said. What of it? With hundreds of thousands of Indians and a few dozen Westerners I believe that Ma Anandamayi represents a really miraculous event.

And when I say miraculous, I do not only think of the fact that the consciousness of Oneness in which She lives enables Her readily to know of happenings of which She has not been told, of future events, and of what is taking place in the present at a distance. Neither, as I have often experienced, of Her reading the thoughts of those who approach Her, and replying very clearly to questions that have been put to Her only mentally, and that in a language which She does not understand. Neither do I merely refer to the large number of cures that She has effected. Even less to the fact that She has often produced phenomena of radiating dazzling light, such as other saints have before Her.

For, all these miracles - if one may be allowed to use this word - are still within the world of multiplicity, within the world conditioned by time: everything that has a beginning has also an end and a cause and is limited by birth and death.

What I really find miraculous in Ma Anandamayi is what I should like to call the echo of her Consciousness in the depth of our own.

We can have absolutely no idea of the level of a Master who lives on a different plane to our own. At the most we may be struck by his extraordinary look. But we can, through that look of the Master, become conscious, by our own experience, of what is happening within us, and of the world which he allows us to glimpse.

The majority of men and women who have contacted Ma Anandamayi and who have not been completely closed to Her influence, have felt - and it is here that I find something miraculous - the phenomenon Ma Anandamayi within them-selves and known what Life is in its boundlessness, compared to which our life is not Life; have understood "how the blind can discover light and how the deaf can hear."

This is certainly the most important experience one can be led to have: - I live and until today I was dead.

Near Ma, no matter where we may follow Her, we live in beauty. Every moment lies in another dimension, larger, wider, of another scale in which there is no room for ordinary petty details. This beauty comes from within, from the propriety of every expression, every attitude, and each of them opens out into the Infinite.

Propriety and conformity to what? To the Law of the Universe, to *Dharma*, to the harmony in which everyone must discover his exact place in order to find also his freedom and his spontaneity, just as the Indian musicians improvise for hours within the strict frame of the various *ragas*.

The music of the morning is different from that of midday, evening or night. There is a time for everything and a place for everything. And the way to the Absolute goes through the respect for that order.

Since that first day at Benares, I have met Ma under many different conditions: in the midst of teeming crowds, surrounded by a few disciples only, and even - very rarely - alone with Her.

But most of all I cherish the memory of the blessed days at Vindhyachal.

After the excitement of the *Durga Puja* celebrations at Benares, Mataji retired far away from the multitude to a very small Ashram, perched on a hill, lost in the midst of the beautiful Indian country-side. On no other occasion did I have so strongly the feeling of our being children gathered round their Mother, as Her disciples like to express it.

No more formality, no more rules for approaching Mataji.

No more formality, no more rules for approaching Mataji. We Went freely to Her room and for walks with Her in the woods. No distance between Her and us, only close companionship, familiarity. Mother behaved alike to each one, full of tenderness and affection so naturally and simply. The whole atmosphere was of friendship and joy.

On a particular evening we are sitting around Her on a small terrace that looks out on the vast landscape of plains and hills. Far away, the Ganges draws its glittering ribbon in the light of the setting sun. All is love and contemplation.

In that silence one of the disciples reads softly. Mataji says nothing. We say nothing. She looks at us. We look at Her. With the gathering night a peace that passes understanding descends on us and we see Her eyes radiate the light of true Life, radiate the message that awakening may pull us out of our world of slumber.

Here I am, back again near Mother.

Had I really left Her? It is not the human being that attracts us in Her, but something that we feel to be infinitely greater. If it is true that one sole Reality exists, a Consciousness underlying all appearances and happenings in the phenomenal world, and if it is true that Ma Anandamayi is a direct manifestation of that Reality, one with It, should I not say that all is in Her, that I am within Her and She within me?

For Her disciples this would be the right way of expressing it. But it would be equally right to say the same of Ramana Maharshi and Ramdas, for there is only one Guru under different names and forms.

Ma Anandamayi states this frequently. Twice when I said good bye to Her before returning to Paris, She told me that.

She was never far away, that the whole world was Her Ashram. And last time, when the interpreter had finished translating Her message to me, She who does not speak English at all, had known what words to pick up. For She repeated several times with indescribable love: "No boundaries, no boundaries, Paris, Ashram, Paris, Ashram, *Ek: One, Ek: One.*"

Mataji has often declared that She is not a Guru. But to us, who live on the plane of duality and relativity, She appears to be a Master and She teaches.

This teaching has two aspects; it depends on Her, on Her presence. And, collected in Her replies, it will live after Her. Yet, should I call it "Her" 'teaching'? All Her glory lies in Her Impersonality, and Her teaching has been born with the world.

The most remarkable characteristic of Ma Anandamayi and this is probably Her most important mission is to awaken or intensify the keen desire for the spiritual life in all who approach Her. In this sense, how many retractions, how many conversions has She not effected.!

What we lack most is that desire more powerful than all the others. Thus, Ma Anandamayi simply makes you long for Reality. The more we see Her live before us, the more the Love, the Joy, the Wisdom, the Serenity, the Freedom and the fundamental absence of all fear that emanate from Her make us yearn for It yearn more than anything else.

We feel that these qualities have their source in something which is not an individuality however exceptional but that we are face to face with reality of another order.

In Her presence we feel that we are required to "seek first of all the Kingdom of God and its justice," without the slightest thought at the back of our minds that "all the rest will be added unto it."

I often marvelled when watching the way in which Mother plays - or seems to play for our spiritual progress, with our attachment to Her: how She keeps this love in its place and prevents us from giving too much importance to Her person. By attachment (*moha*) to Her all other attachment is Annihilated. But later She teaches us to destroy even that fervour. Does She not frequently say: "God is the sole Guru. It is a sin to look upon the Guru as a human being."

One of the most striking features of Her teaching as is the case with all genuine Masters is that for all who live around Her the best conditions for their awakening are always given.

For one who has lived close to Her, it seems that this aspect of Her role is quite beyond the usual measures.

However large be the number of those who turn to Her at the same time, it appears that the circumstances are at every moment the best for each one of them. Each one is under the impression that, during the weeks that have passed, Mataji has devoted Her whole interest to him and organised all that has happened in the Ashram with a view to his benefit and to what would be the most appropriate teaching for him.

This is something, which is entirely beyond all possibility of explanation. No competence, however outstanding, no genius of organisation, not even the most prodigious efficiency could obtain this result. One is forced to conclude that Ma Anandamayi teaches as the fire heats, as the light illumines. Just as She is Love, Wisdom and Joy, She is also Teaching.

The exceptional conditions for *sadhana* and awakening that ever exist around Her are not due to

Her capacity for execution, however superior, but rather to Her Being.

And Being is able to work in Her the miracle, which Victor Hugo so aptly attributes to all motherhood: of the Love of Anandamayi Ma everyone receives his share and all possess the whole of it.

MATAJI GIVES DARSHAN

Melita Maschmann

Towards the end of the summer of 1962, I visited India for a few weeks. In the very first days, 'chance' (if there is such a thing) led me to a famous saint. Subsequently I believe that a centre of *karmayoga* has to be seen in his Ashram, and it would surely be presumptuous if I dared to give an opinion.

But at that time I was disappointed. Probably I noticed only the surface.

However, after this experience I decided to keep away from the living saints of India and to let the past speak to me through its temples. But 'chance' brought me straight to Ma Anandamayi at Kankhal. While waiting for Her in the small courtyard of the Ashram, I was angry with myself. What a waste of time! Could I expect anything but new disappointment? If someone had told me that I would a few hours later kneel before a human being, I should have laughed. My religious upbringing forbids such a gesture, except in specially solemn moments of divine worship.

About fifteen people had been waiting together with me. At dusk we were taken to a roof-garden. When later Mataji appeared, I had no choice to decide whether it would be against my convictions to kneel before a human being. 'It' simply threw me on my knees.

What I experienced in the next few seconds cannot be conveyed to a person who has never known anything similar. I can only relate outer signs and speak in metaphors. Just imagine that a tree a beautiful, strong, old beech for instance approaches you with calm steps. What would you feel? "Have I gone crazy?" you would ask yourself.

"Or perhaps I am dreaming?" Finally you would have to concede that you had entered a new dimension of reality of which you had hitherto been ignorant. This exactly was my position.

So far as we know, it is part of the nature of a tree to be rooted into the ground, is it not? According to western thinking, a human being is characterised by his 'I'. In his existence as 'persona' Christians recognise the mystery of his immortality. Here I was suddenly confronted with a human being of whom I felt that She had no 'I' any more. Expressed in non-medical language, it may be said of certain mentally deranged patients that their 'I' is disjoined or diffused and that they have thereby lost the special quality which is the distinctive mark of a human being. I have come across such patients. The profound senselessness of their existence called forth a similar horror as I felt at the sight of a forest in the mountains after a heavy storm: the old pine trees stood with their crowns piercing the earth and their roots sticking up towards the sky.

However, here now is Mataji a human being that has no more. 'I' and just because of this, is not less but *more* than all other men I have ever met!

Later I read much about this and learnt that ego-lessness is one of the characteristics of a *jivan-mukta*. But at that time I did not know anything about it except what I saw with my own eyes. That I did not deceive myself is testified by a letter written to friends, which marks an inarticulate attempt to express what I had experienced.

I wrote: "...She seems to be a human being without an 'I', belonging to the category of Mata Ganga or Pita Himalaya. Looking at Her, one feels that She must have transcended good and evil." (These considerations crowded upon me, while I felt that I did not understand their significance.) Something similar I also said a few days later to one of the ashramites who replied: "Do not imagine it is your merit that you have been able to recognise Her so instantaneously. It depends entirely on Mataji how much She allows anyone to see of Her."

I gladly agreed to this statement. Everything great in our life is a gift, or as the Christians say, Grace.

While writing all this I realize that I am talking much, because I haven't the courage to say something about Mataji Herself, and even less to describe Her. In my travel diary there are a few groping sentences: "Mataji has the super-personal personality that speaks to us when we stand at the seashore or at the foot of a mighty mountain. But what is it that speaks to us in those moments? Surely not the sea, whom men have named as one names a child.

The child is then its name. Mataji also must have been given a name when She was born. But what is the significance of Her existence grasped under that name? Anyone who would address Her by that name may be compared to a man who wants to attach a label to the Indian Ocean.

For about ten minutes Mataji slowly walked up and down along the far side of the roof garden. Sometimes She stopped and gazed at the sky. She did not seem to notice us. The evening clouds were reflected in Her eyes. What I perceived there is quite beyond the ken of rational thinking. The clouds, the woods, the mountain range of the Himalayas dived into that gaze as if it were their own home. When the moon is mirrored in a puddle of rainwater, it becomes tiny and pale. But Mataji's eyes reflected the sky as only the ocean can sisterly, out of the same order of creation.

"While watching Mataji, my whole body was trembling. What confounded and perplexed me so greatly was that this 'phenomenon Anandamayi Ma' did not fit into any place of my scheme of the world. Just as the tree that starts walking cannot be fitted in anywhere and therefore threatens to blow up the habitual order.

"Later Mataji sat down on a couch kept ready for Her, and conversed with the people. The strange bewildering element of Her being receded into the background, but never for a moment entirely disappeared. One could endeavour to forget it. Then, a woman clad in a white sari, I should have estimated Her about fifty, whose hair *fell* loosely over Her shoulders and back, sat there between the cushions.

Gracefully and at the same time with vigour, She was engaged in a lively conversation. Occasionally She broke out into laughter, then again seemed absorbed in some deep contemplation. Off and on affectionate mockery could be detected in the corners of Her eyes, while She discussed some theological problem with a distinguished old Indian dressed in European style. At one moment a tattered old pleasant woman who was almost blind and gave off an indescribable smell, came ad squatted on the floor close to Mataji. Mataji bent down low to Her. For several minutes their heads almost seemed to touch and one could hear a soft murmuring. Mataji listened with Her whole being. A kindness was expressed in this, which represented something human to perfection

That evening I made up my mind to drop all other plans and to proceed to Dehradun where Mataji was expected within the next few days. In the meanwhile I attempted in vain to gain clarity about what I had seen and felt. Finally I decided to postpone this for later and first of all to take in with

all my senses. In Kishenpur Mataji would appear twice daily, usually for about two hours, and was then mostly subjected to the onrush of Her devotees and admirers. Except for a very few hours of sleep, She had 'privates' for the rest of the days and nights.

Several times She Herself saw to it that I could Sit very near Her in spite of the crowd. I felt like an enthusiastic lover of music: while opening himself, heart and soul, to the enchantment of the music, he at the same time observes the way the instruments are played. Mataji's presence filled me with an irresistible mysterious fascination, such as I had never before experienced. And yet I was simultaneously clearly aware of the specific human element in Her. I saw how Her eyes lit up when amongst those who fell at Her feet and touched the ground with their foreheads, a familiar, friendly face turned up. I believed to notice how She suffered from the heat. I felt Her slight resistance when She withdrew Her feet from an importunate adorer. I observed Her pleasure in puns (an ashramite translated to me what was being said). I saw how She dismissed a Parsi lady from Bombay who requested a miraculous cure from Her. "Take your husband to a good doctor and pray to God for peace for both of you." At that moment Her face had an expression of sadness and inexorability.

I also marked how Her attitude and the deepening shadows in Her features betrayed fatigue before She got up and traced a passage for Herself through the multitude that thronged round Her.

The Christian painters of the early Middle Ages had a simple, yet effective device to express holiness when depicting scenes from the life of Jesus or any saint. Representing, for instance, the birth of Jesus, they would paint the infant and his parents as ordinary human beings, but put them against a background of gold. The golden background symbolised the inexpressible mystery of sanctity. One who wished to give a message of holiness by painting, was not free to let his brush be voluble, he could only tacitly hint at the mystery by the luminous background.

I feel very much like those artists. What is describable in Mataji is the familiar human element. For that which is beyond, for the Divine, I also have no means of expression. But I could use an expedient similar to that of those painters. Sometimes I believed to see a stream of light radiate from Her eyes. But at such moments, I more than ever felt pained at my blindness. I knew that, if only I were more of a seer, I should have beheld Her whole form in this halo. Although incapable of perceiving it, I yet felt it and was able to register its effect by the complete peace that infield me at certain hours.

The mystery in its secrecy shall remain untouched, but perhaps I may be permitted to try and approach it by a few more steps I felt that this divine Light must be connected with Mataji's egolessness. It originates from the eternal Ground of all existence let us unhesitatingly call it 'God.' And it streams through Mataji because it is not impaired by the opaque texture of the I-ness, which, in the case of all of us, is more or less dense.

I have yet to mention how very thoughtful it made me that although millions of men and women of all strata of society fell at Her feet, I could never detect even the faintest trace of pride, neither also of humility in Mataji. Probably there is a connection between this and what I stated when I first met Her, namely that She seemed beyond good and evil. I must confess that, to this day I am unable to understand this fully. I have still to ponder deeply about it, for I know now that this statement is in keeping with one of the elements of Hindu teaching.

Mataji's mysterious power lies in Her being, not in what She does. Without a doubt, She has for many, many years lived solely for Her fellow beings. But this may be said of a fair number of others as well, although with them it has a very different significance. Seen from our angle of vision, Her whole life seems to be one continuous self-sacrifice and could therefore still be called 'action'. Yet, when watching Mataji for a sufficiently long time, one comes to feel that, what is essential in Her existence does no longer fulfil itself by action She is not what She is because She *does* good. Her life seems a manifestation of pure, self contained Being, perhaps I should say 'Being reposing in God.' Hence She corresponds to our highest conception of 'good', but the ethical

laws are for Her not any more a matter of struggle and daily decision as for us who still live fully steeped in action.

The Christian apostle Paul says: "Christ is the end of the law:'

He does not thereby mean the denial of ethical commandments, but their fulfilment as a matter of course. For Him who is "one with the Father" (with God), ethical demands are no more of the nature of commandments. He fulfils them spontaneously by His very Being. This also holds good for Mataji. For One who sees Her with open eyes, not only the beauty of God is reflected in Her, such as we may recognise in a flower or more powerfully in the sea or the mountains, but also God's Love, Moreover Her whole being is a passionate, indefatigable, newly formulated proclamation of self experienced Divine Reality. According to the Christian doctrine, Christ is the most perfect child of God, the Son because His love for God and men was most perfect. The ocean or a mountain cannot testify to Divine Love, but man, if he is what he should be, gives evidence of God's Love. This is so with Mataji.

While I was sitting at Mataji's feet with Her other devotees and nothing happened except that we looked at Her, I, at certain moments, felt the presence of Divinity more powerfully than I had ever before during Church ceremonies. I believe, I understand that all ritual of that kind exists only because of the want of Divine Presence, as a gesture of longing and invocation of That, which cannot be forced to come. But where Divinity IS, even prayer is silenced. The ritual action is blotted out in the mysterious presence of Divine Being. A strange experience, impossible to convey to others this fullness in the void of gazing. A gazing with closed eyes, and yet with eyes wide open. Once or twice I perceived what can hardly be grasped by a western brain. I do not know how Mataji experiences Her own person. Certainly not as we should express it, namely as a human being in whom the divine spark emits a specially bright light for She lives in Oneness. I believed to observe that She, in whom Holiness is embodied before our eyes, 'joined' us in the reverent contemplation of the Divinity that She Herself IS. In my diary I find the clumsy sentence: "Sometimes one has the feeling as if Mataji revered Herself. But this attitude is completely superpersonal."

Later I discovered the conception of '*Lila*.'

Does it perhaps give the clue?

Mataji's Darshan I have probably experienced only three or four times. The numinous by which it was characterised did not lessen, but to my great surprise a fundamental change took place: My first feeling that I had lit upon a dimension of reality entirely foreign to me was reversed into its opposite. I now felt that I had only just, for the first time, discovered man's own true reality.

It may sound presumptuous, but I should like to say it in all humility: In Mataji, God allowed me to see Him with the closeness of intimacy. Ever clearer I felt, what distinguishes me from Her is nothing essential, it lies where the brightness of a candle is distinguished from that of the sun. This was of course a tremendous discovery.

Mataji's last evening in Kishenpur, which was also my last one, has remained in my memory as a big festival. About two hundred people had assembled in the Ashram. I see Mataji standing in the courtyard, indefatigably distributing *prasad* in all directions. Not in a solemn manner but laughingly, like a mother whose greatest happiness it is to satisfy the hunger of her children. Sometimes She would suddenly throw a fruit over many heads to someone standing at a distance, who had asked for it only with his eyes. Afterwards, for a long while, She walked up and down between us, talking to a child, joking with one or the other, allowing questions to be put to Her, sitting down near the musicians who were singing *kirtana*, then rising again to walk once more between us. It was as if She wished to distribute Herself, and She did this with a hundred hands. Never have I met a more beautiful human being, or more precisely, never have I seen the mysterious beauty of the Imperishable shine with such effulgence through mortal flesh.

Late that same evening, there was a very special moment for me. I stood behind a trellised window, which looked out over the temples. Mataji stood between them and, for a short while, all the people who had surrounded Her receded far back. My memory shows Her to me standing there all by Herself.

I raised my folded hands to bid goodbye to Her.

From my prison (behind the latticed window) my greeting went out and upwards to Her freedom. She lifted Her folded hands in response, and simultaneously sent a veritable torrent of joy right into the core of my heart. This instant lay outside of time. I felt this with every fibre of my being; here nothing was threatened with transitoriness!

Since then in more than one crisis it has become clear to me how much I owe to Mataji. Just like everyone else I see the danger but quite contrary to my attitude in other crises hitherto, I do not feel afraid. Perhaps I have grasped not with my mind but with my whole being that even the most cruel outer destruction does not touch that which we ARE in Reality.

There is a Zen Buddhist saying: "When an Enlightened one touches a dry twig, it begins to blossom....."

A CALL FROM ABOVE

Ganga Charan Das Gupta, M.A.

The present age is one of great confusion. There is a widespread feeling of impotent perplexity all over the globe. Horror stories of atomic weapons, of "Baby Atomic Bombs tested at Nevada Testing Grounds", of "Tactical Bombs ready for rapid use to stiffen the defences of the NATO forces facing aggression," of Petrol and Flame Throwers and Napalm Bombs showered in Korea, of brutal assertion of physical supremacy over the weaker peoples of the earth, all these conspire together to deepen the darkening gloom, foreboding disaster and doom to the human race all over the globe. There is moreover the grim apprehension of bacteriological and atomic warfare developing in the near future as feverish preparations for peace offensive in the garb of self-defence are being pushed on at tremendous speed.

The birth of a New Age was announced with pride and thankfulness to God when in August, 1945, about two lakhs of innocent men, women and children were exterminated in a few moments and five times that number maimed and crippled for life in Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Since then right up to June, 1952, the atom bomb colossus has gobbled up over eight billion dollars. The present condition of the world today has been summed up the other day by President Eisenhower: "Humanity under the present cloud of threatening war is hanging from a cross of iron ; if no turning could be found to the course of the last eight years, the worst to be feared and the best to be expected would be respectively, 'atomic war' and 'a life of unending fear and tension'." (Note: The Statesman 17.4.1953.)

A new and more formidable monster has been slowly rearing its ugly head since the middle of the last century, threatening to engulf the entire human race in bitter race conflict and mutual self-destruction. It is race-hatred plus colour prejudice. In Europe the Nazis deliberately exterminated five million Jews, whose only crime was that they were Jews. (Note: Bertrand Russel: New Hopes for a Changing World, P 110.)

In Africa, as a result of appalling programs in the Congo Region, the dark races were reduced, within a span of ten years, from twenty to nine millions. (Note: Ibid P 101.) In Abyssinia innocent

Ethiopians were slaughtered on a mass scale in millions most mercilessly for no crime other than their being a dark race. Intolerable hardships and injustices and cruelties and race restrictions are pushing race and colour antagonism to the point of universal disorder and destruction. "This race-hatred originates in the desire to feel superior as well as in the dreadful fear of proving inferior to the coloured races of the world." (Note: Bertrand Russell: *New Hopes for a Changing World*, P 110.) This leads to collective enmity between the two groups of people of the world Mahatma Gandhi, shortly before his death, anticipated with horror this prospective catastrophe befalling humanity.

Technological advances in course of the last decade have developed an atom mind, an overweening Imperialism amongst the big powers of the world; their attitude is gradually becoming more and more domineering and violent towards both man and nature. "Modern man no longer considers Nature as being in any sense sacred and divine and feels perfectly free to behave towards Her as an overweening conquer and tyrant." (Note: Aldous Huxley: *The Perennial Philosophy* P. 79.) Man now no longer seriously believes that God is in the world and is immanent in man and Nature. Man's folly rushes him on towards exploitation of all the resources of Nature, including human reserves, and spurs him on to be Her Master rather than Her collaborator. "

At the present time we are rushing towards the brink of a precipice and a grim dread is creeping into our souls, for we shall have to pay an appalling price for our much-vaunted conquest of Nature. (Note: A. Huxley – *The Perennial Philosophy* P.78)

The intoxication of atomic power has made man forget the sanctity of human and subhuman lives and look upon them as convenient tools for his aggressive impulses. History often tells us that nemesis has always followed such aggression whether in the nation or in the individual. Germany and Japan, or Hitler and Mussolini are recent examples for all men to remember.

We are at the crossroads. Old ideals have lost their hold upon our mind ; new ones have not yet emerged and taken shape. Man is groping in the dark in confusion. A mental fog is manifest everywhere.

It is refreshing to find that in India, a new personality has been working silently for the last forty years on an intensely human and spiritual plane. She is known everywhere in India as MOTHER ANANDAMAYI. It is not possible to give even a glimpse of Her immense power, working for the good of humanity. She seeks to restore to man the "Unitive knowledge and realization of the Divine Ground" (Note: *Ibid*: P.80) of all existence, and the vision of the Eternal One, in and through whom the Universe holds together. We can, without any doubt, say of Mother Anandamayi, what Romain Rolland said of Sri Ramakrishna in 1928, forty-two years after the departure of the saint from this world:

"He not only conceived but realized in himself, the Total Unity of the majestic river of God open to all rivers and all streams; so I have given him my love; and I have drawn a little of his sacred waters to slake the great thirst of the world." (Note: Romain Rolland – *Life of Ramakrishna*, translated by Malcolm Smith, 1930.)

Mother works quietly and almost unnoticed amongst 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. The rich and the poor, the young and the old, the invalid, men, women and children of all castes and creeds, Hindus, Moslems, Christians, Jews, Parsis and Buddhists - all have free access to Her presence at all times the day.

She welcomes them all and dispels their doubts and difficulties and offers a satisfying solution to all their problems. Foreign people who do not understand any Indian language are drawn by Her personality. Her grace and sweetness and some invisible power draw them on to Her. They obtain what they need most from Her gracious looks, Her silent, inspiring ways of joy and peace.

Her call urges all men to come out of their dark cells, by breaking the hard crust of their *samskaras*, into the bracing, shining and glorious atmosphere of everlasting life and happiness. At every breath She asks man to realize the Divine Unitive Ground in the world as well as in the core of his own soul. She implores all persons to forsake the evanescent and enter into the one Eternal Reality of all existence. She invites all people to look upon temptations and distractions of life as God given opportunities for their advance and to turn their eyes always towards Him on all levels of conscious activities.

She says : "You can never enjoy the beauty and majesty of God and of His world, till you, under divine intoxication, learn to sing and dance and weep like a mad man." (Note: Compare Srimad Bbagavata 7.7.29.)

She points out with unerring finger how in the midst of apparent joys and comforts of life, a man's soul gets covered up with hard layers of corrosive, internal rust through which the natural beauties of divine bliss and enlightenment, inherent in us, cannot find their way out from the mirror of our soul. She tells us directly, unless man comes to realize the "Unitive knowledge of the Divine Ground in all objects of this world," (Note: A. Huxley The Perennial Philosophy) fear and hatred, jealousy and antagonism, pride and greed amongst men and nations, will never cease, and all the physical power, prosperity, prowess and achievements of Science will lead us nowhere. What is of fundamental importance to every individual, is how he is purging from his mind, by daily practice and devotion, his imperviousness to grace and enlightenment, and dispelling all the mental fog of superstition and prejudice with which it is ever clouded.

Mother was given the name of Anandamayi by Her first devotee:, popularly known as Bhajji, (Note: J.C. Roy, I.S.O. better known as Bhajji in Northern India, was born in 1880 and expired in 1937 in Almora. He was the first bhakta of Mother, who announced to the world that Mother was the incarnation of Divine SAKTI.) because She is found to be, at all times, the human incarnation of Divine Bliss or *Anandam*. Wherever She happens to be present, She carries in Her person a Divine glow, an atmosphere of supreme joy and peace and enlightenment, which brighten up even a cheerless mind. All persons who approach Her become at once conscious of a Divine Presence, so full of love and affection for all that even the meanest and the most sinful fellow comes to feel that he too has a great chance of living a worthy life. Only two instances out of the many, are given below:-

A young man, aged about 20, crazy and wayward, impulsive and self-sufficient, self-willed and ego-centred, suffering from incipient hysteria, ever prone to wrong-doing and wrong being, with the divine springs in his soul almost parched up, happened to come near Mother. In one of Her Ashrams he behaved so very disgracefully that all the inmates of the Ashram got annoyed and demanded, with great indignation and excitement, that he must be expelled from the Ashram. Some Brahmacharis were so much upset by the misconduct of the fellow that they began to fast and would not touch *food*, as long as the culprit was not driven out. There was great excitement amongst all the inmates.

The matter was brought to Mother's notice. At about 9 p.m. all the inmates sat round Mother observing silence for a few minutes as was the usual practice. After the silence period was over, Mother called each one of the inmates to Her and enquired if he would like the erring youth to remain in the Ashram. Everybody said: "No, Ma, he should not stay here."

Mother with Her usual serenity and gracious looks, beaming with divine compassion, said: "When nobody wants such a poor and hapless boy, don't you think that he needs me most? Can a mother forsake her sick child in such distress? Will it do you and the world any good if this perverse young man be allowed to rot in the mire?" These words came from Her lips with so much tenderness and fervour, that the hearts of all persons were visibly moved. They had no answer to offer. They had to change their attitude and outlook on life. And this young man is now grown up and is one of Mother's most ardent devotees. And all admire his wonderful transformation.

Another young man, then a Brahmachari, residing in the Kishenpur Ashram, was very much aggrieved by the unsympathetic treatment meted out to him by some of the elderly inmates. His

heart was very tender. He started a fast. Most of the inmates were indifferent. When two days passed, Mother came to know about it. She at once went to the young man and with so much affection and motherly tenderness sat by his side passing Her hands over his head and body that Her touch soothed his nerves. She next began feeding him with Her own hands; the young man came to forget all about his mental irritation and pain. He is now one of Her most zealous children. Such instances are of common occurrence.

She said on another occasion: 'You may or may not want me; but I cannot pass a single moment without even the poorest or meanest of those that come to me for help and succour. (Note: Sri Sri Anandamayi Prasanga, by Amulya Kumar Dutta Gupta, Pt II P.146.)

On a different occasion Mother said: "In this world nobody stands alone ; one cannot get on without help from others. Therefore, everybody expects some regard or help from other people. The high or the low, the great or the small, everyone stands on an equal footing." (Note: Sad Vani.)

Very few men have the good fortune to see that this universe is a mirror of infinite loveliness, that it is a majestic temple of Mother Divine and a home of peace and plenty, to be shared and enjoyed by all. This is not a world for man alone nor only for his benefit or enjoyment. If a man does not care to find Him here and now, in his every day round of duties and in every creature about him, he will find Him never and nowhere. "Here or nowhere" is Her motto. Those that seek Him in all things about them, will, with continued practice, find all the mental comforts and peace as well as meet the basic needs of their lives in spite of all the privations and handicaps on the path. But those modern idolators of material progress who believe that after securing all the slime of personal comforts and happiness, they would find it easier to reach the immediate "Unitive Experience of the Divine Ground," will be doomed to disappointment. They are bound to lose what little mental wealth they now possess. They gloat over the wonderful achievements of modern Science in the conquest of Nature but they miss the fact that "their flourishing vine does not know yet that its roots are withering beneath the soil." (Note: G.R. Harrison – Physics Today, June 1952.)

On this topic Mother said on one occasion: "Try hard to concentrate on one Aim, namely God, from the very beginning, till by constant practice the habit becomes your second nature. Study of the sacred books, association with saintly persons, listening to their discourses on the Godhead and discussions on spiritual topics are some of the means to focus the mind on that one Aim. In doing your worldly duties always bear in mind that you are doing His work ; this is His creation and He is immanent in all created beings. (Note: Compare "Having created this universe He penetrates into the core of each being." Look upon all the members of your family as so many divine beings and with that attitude offer your services to them. When you do any work, forgetting all ideas of selfhood, it will lead you to your salvation; to work only for your personal self means bondage". (Note: Sri Sri Anandamayi Prasanga, by Amulya Kumar Dutta Gupta, Pt II P.182.)

In this connection Mother said to the students of the Dacca Hall one day with Her exquisitely sweet and loving voice: "My boys, I am your daughter. Will you grant just one request of mine? Assure me that you will." Then the students with one voice said: "Yes, Ma". She added: "I know you will. Just as you pass some time in doing your every day round of duties, devote also a little time every day to the contemplation of God. Devote one hour or half an hour, or at least ten or five minutes a day, to the thought of God. Out of twenty-four hours every day, to spare ten minutes on thoughts of God at a fixed time, is not much. You need not mind where you may be; you are not required to sit in any particular posture. Wherever you happen to be, spend that time silently meditating on His name any name that you like best. If that be not possible, observe silence for a few fixed minutes every day regularly, making your mind absolutely blank, keeping it open for cosmic forces to penetrate every fibre of your being." (Note: Sri Sri Anandamayi Prasanga, by Amulya Kumar Dutta Gupta, Pt II P.200.)

"When you observe silence freeze your mind and heart in the one thought of the Divine. Control of speech only is a minor matter." One student from amongst the audience asked Mother:

"Can a man see God?" "Certainly, one can", was the prompt reply. "He appears before the human eye. Just as you see me before you and are having a talk with me, so a man can have a vision of God and hold conversation with Him." (Note Mother as Revealed to Me.)

By this topic one is reminded of what Ramakrishna Paramahansa said in reply to the same query:

Q. Can God be seen?

A. He is; therefore, He can be seen. Because He exists, His Presence must be an object of vision.

Q. Does He *exist*?

A. Have a look at His creation; you will have a firm conviction that He exists. Hearing about God is a minor thing; seeing Him is a great affair indeed! But to have conversation with Him requires a far higher ascent. There are some who have heard of milk; others may have seen it; there are a few others who have tasted it.

When one drinks it, it gives joy, strength and nourishment." (Note: The Basumati, Jaistha, 1939 P. 185.)

On this topic the following extract is illuminating:

"Some people want to see God with their eyes as they see a cow and to love Him as they love the cow for the milk and cheese and profit it brings them. This is how it is with people who *love God for some outward wealth or in ward comfort*. They do not rightly love God. The object of their desire, however good, will be a barrier between them and God. (Note: Meister Eckhart – Works, translated by C.B. Evans, quoted in the Perennial Philosophy, P. 84.)

The same idea appears in greater details in Sri Bhagavata when Kunti Devi describes how one can have vision of the Divine:

"Oh! My Lord, those that always contemplate Thy marvellous deeds, sing about Thy glories with love and joy, listen to the discourses of saints on Thy achievements, hold conversation on Thy Grace with fellow devotees or repeat Thy name in a lonely place, can always see Thy lotus feet, the vision of which stops for ever the long cycles of birth and death." (Note: Srimad Bhagavata 1.8.35)

One day Bhaiji desired to know from Mother's own lips who She was and what Her *Swarupa* - the nature of Her human incarnation was on this earth. Some people would identify Her with the Goddess *Kali* or *Durga*, while others would call Her Divine *Sakti* incarnated in human form working for the welfare of all creation; different persons saw Her in different manifestations. In reply to Bhaiji's query Mother promptly said: "You will come to know it later.

A man or woman who has the ego-sense the I-ness, or the sense of body-mind, can easily say, who he or she is. There is no such ego-sense functioning in this body. So whatever you say or observe in this physical vehicle - **I AM THAT – WHAT MORE DO YOU WANT TO KNOW?**"

"This last sentence", added Bhaiji: "was uttered with such an unearthly fervour and vehemence that it sent a thrill through my entire body. Since then I have not questioned Her about it. I stopped with awe and fear; I REALIZED at once, WHO SHE WAS." (Note: Matri Darshan, P.6., Sri Sri Anandamayi Prasanga II, P.117)

These words of Mother exactly correspond with Brahma, said in respect of Shri Krishna:

"Men, according to the instructions of saints, always practise devotional songs and meditation to find out means to realize Thee.

When their heart becomes sanctified with intense love and devotion for Thy Godhead Thou dost manifest Thyself exactly in those forms on which they contemplate in the core of their heart according to their intelligence and *samskaras*. Out of Thy boundless love for Thy devotees, Thou dost assume those forms to help them towards the realization of Thy Being." (Note: Srimad Bhagavat 3.9.11.)

Mother said on another occasion: "You find that this body appears to different bhaktas in different Divine Forms. Those are only your lip expressions. You have not developed real faith in the divinity of images of God; without such living faith there is no proper realization of the Divine Ground of all those forms. In the Sastras you read about many manifestations of the Supreme Being; but those are only faint suggestions to direct your attention towards them.

Just as in the Railway time-table you find the names and locations of many stations, but real experience of those places cannot be had from the Railway Guide; so to have real experience of the Supreme Being one must pass through various devotional practices which make concrete realization possible." (Note:Sri Sri Anandamayi Prasanga II, P.179)

Once a question was posed to Mother: "How can a man control the restlessness of his mind ?"

She replied: "Mind is ever restless. It is its nature. It is ever seeking its own treasure the real object of its love; as long as it fails to achieve it, its restlessness does not calm down. To steady the mind one must needs focus all its forces upon one divine object or name of God. Repetition of the divine name or mantra at all times, constant meditation its meaning and on the Divine entity, which it symbolises, purify both body and mind, just as your kitchen utensils become bright and shiny by constant rubbing.

When you find your mind wandering away in spite of your effort to control it, you should persist in taking the name of God, even against your disposition, either orally or by inner speech. Keep yourself in touch with the Divine thought or name, just as the kite moving about in the sky is in touch with one's hand by a thin thread. When such a direct tie is established between man and his Master, the mind will steady itself in the Mantra or Name. Then you will feel a joy emanating from the name of God, which was never experienced by you before.

It is called delight in the Name.

Try to devote three hours every day to this practice and increase the span gradually to six hours a day. The name of God will give you real and abiding happiness, in search of which your mind ever moves restlessly among the various fleeting objects of the world ." (Note: Sri Sri Anandamayi Prasanga I, P.145-46)

Mother lays great stress on *Faith in God*.

It is the one essential condition to control the mind and to obtain success in spiritual life. She says: "Faith, steady and sincere, leads you directly to the Divine Being. But reasoned debates and discussions will make you recede farther from Him. (Note: Familiar Bengali proverb quoted by Mother.) God is the Eternal Sound symbolising PARABRAHMAN. Hold on to It and there will be no chance of your slipping away from It.

Of course the strength of your hold is His, but at all times try to lay yourself down before Him with what little faith you possess.

"If you want to talk, talk about Him; if there is a desire to hear, hear all about His glories; if there grows a desire to do any work, always offer your services to Him. Look upon your own body as His Temple, keep it ever pure and clean, just as you do with your shrines. Dwell upon those holy

thoughts that cleanse your mind and soul. Try to find in the stainless mirror of your mind the reflection of your Real Self, the "I" of your Person.

Find out who this "I" is. All your quest should be directed to discover it.

You often hear people say: "Keep the mirror of your mind clean". Do it. He will reveal Himself and at the right time. You need not worry about His revelation. With what little He has given you in this life pass your days joyfully, being in vital touch with Him.

"The more your doubts disappear, the nearer will be your approach towards Him. A time will arrive when you will find Him everywhere and you will be ALL-ONE-WITH-HIM."

In another letter (Note: Gurupriya Didi's letter from Vindhyaachal Ashram to Gopla, dated 10.4.48, quoting Mother's words.) Mother says: "In your thoughts all strength and driving force come from Him. So He alone should be the object of your thoughts and actions. Behind all your reasoning, His Guidance has to be realized. Your only business is to get on with your contemplation and worship at the appointed hour."

The following words of Mother appear in a different letter: (Note: a letter from Mother to Gopal from Sri Hari Baba's Bund, dated 29.2.47.) "In all affairs of life absolute reliance upon Him must be sought. Wherever you happen to be, pray to Him with as much devotion as you possibly can. There must not be any fear of transgression. He is ever with you in all forms.

What ever happens to you all your opportunities and obstacles are ordained by Him.

When He makes you do anything, He does it Himself; He does, He knows, He hears. The only course left to you is to depend on Him always."

One more letter (Note: a letter written by Renu to Gopal conveying the words of Mother from Solon in the Simla Hills, dated 23.6.49.) from Mother says on the control of the mind:

"Your one duty is to keep Him always in mind; His presence will chase away all distractions; thoughts of the world cannot peep out through Him. The desire to realize Him, the Supreme Truth of all existence, will dominate all your thought processes."

Mother is ever full of love for all men. This enables Her to enter into every detail of the life of Her devotees and of other persons. She looks upon all people as Her own. She finds their doubts and problems, their struggles and distractions to be Hers. She listens to them with great sympathy and understanding. She therefore possesses the Supreme Power of healing all wounds, sorrows and bereavements; so She is often called the "Great Healer" of man's woes.

A small incident of Her life will illustrate what has been stated above.

In the twin temples of Shiva near the lakes in South Calcutta, Mother sat in the S.E. corner of the Temple hall one morning; then the Ekdalia Ashram was not built. A crowd assembled in the small hall to celebrate the Holi festival with Mother. A large number of ladies pressed hard round Mother's body. Mother sat almost bundled up. The temperature was high, the rush of people was too tense for Her. Many persons sitting round Mother were profusely perspiring. It was felt that the pressure of people had become almost oppressive and suffocating to Mother. The following questions, to Mother and the answers they elicited from Her are given below:

Question: Mother, why do you allow these people to crowd round your body?

Answer: Perhaps this body draws them so close to it. It is not their fault.

Q. Don't you find it highly oppressive and disgusting, Mother?

A. No. It is a great pleasure to me to find them pressing so close to me.

Q. Ma, we feel it awfully boring to have such a crowd pestering us with tales of their domestic troubles and worries.

A. Because you feel that your own body and theirs are distinctly separate. As 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, so 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. Their acts and awards, too, are essentially mine, I have no ego-sense, nor conception of separateness. Each one of you have the "height and depth of eternity" in me equally. (Note: the conversation was with the writer of this sketch.)

These experiences of Mother, quoted above, find their echoes in these lines:

"How wonderful! In Me, the shore-less expanse of My Being, the ripples of individual selves rise, strike each other down, play about for some time and then finally merge themselves into Me according to their nature." (Note: Ashtavakrasanhita, Ch II, verse 25, translated by Sw Nitya Swarupananda.)

There assembled one day some devotees before Mother at the Kishenpur Ashram. Mother said to them: "You have brought down this body to the physical plane for accomplishing your work here below, for your spiritual uplift." (Note: Mother as Revealed to Me.)

She added : "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 or deed, whether you are near or in distant lands, never escapes my attention." (Note: Mother as Revealed to Me.)

"Just as at a flash of torchlight 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." (Note: Sri Sri Anandamayi Prasanga I, P.115)

Though Mother with Her Body Divine soars in the higher regions of spiritual life, yet we find in Her all the highest and noblest attributes of man, functioning in all their majesty and beauty. She is intensely human in all Her ways. No human mother has such selfless, pure and glowing compassion for the distressed. The highest expressions of human life as manifested in the lives of saints, those that reveal themselves in love, charity and goodwill towards all created beings, figure prominently in all Her actions and thoughts, at all times of the day and night.

There is always, in all Her manners, a heavenly glow of supra-mental Intelligence and Joy in their fullness. She carries in Her Person a perpetual source of Divine *Anandam*. When She rests after day-long work, She lapses into the blissful state named in our *shastras* '*Supti - Jagara*, (Note: Yoga Vasishtha – Nirvana Prakarana Part II Ch 165 versse 1-2.) i.e. a state in which the body is physically relaxed in light sleep but the mind wide awake in the region of the Over- Mind.

When She retires covering up Her body with a bed-sheet, She says: "I am just going to do my office-work now like you. I move about in other spheres of life holding conversation with higher beings. (Note: Sri Sri Anandamayi Prasanga II, P.174.)

During sleep Her mind remains thus wide awake and responds to appeals of distress from common men. One instance may be briefly cited here:

April 16, 1952. An old Brahmin widower, a retired Head Cashier of a large mercantile firm in Calcutta (Note: Sri Anadi Nath Mukherjee, Calcutta (26), who was suffering badly from high blood

pressure and was bedridden for a few years after a prostate gland operation, had a very strong desire to see Mother. But he was forbidden to leave his bed by his attending physician and by his sons and daughters in law. There was a nurse and a servant in constant attendance.

When his sons had gone away to their office during midday, and the ladies of the household were all asleep, the old man, aged about 82, with the help of his servant and the nurse, secretly had a taxi hired, slipped out of his house and arrived at 44, Hazra Road at 3 p.m. in the grilling heat of summer. On getting down from the taxi he barely could take four or five steps supported by his attendants, when he fainted. He was carried to the lawn in front of the premises. When after much nursing he recovered his consciousness, he implored all people present to take him to Mother. Unfortunately She was sound asleep on a bed without any pillow, resting repose fully like a child; the owner of the house peeped into the room but had not the courage to disturb Her repose full tranquillity.

Meanwhile the old man was getting more and more impatient and almost despaired of seeing Mother, before his life passed off. He implored everyone present to take him to Mother. He felt his life was fast ebbing away; his desire to see Mother became so intense that he was about to crawl towards the closed door, but his legs were too feeble to support his tottering body. Suddenly Mother threw the door open and rushed out towards him and said: "Baba, you are so full of love for this little daughter of yours that you have almost forgotten all the acute pangs of disease and braved a great risk by coming to your daughter in a taxi in such terrible heat.

She passed Her hands over his head, cheeks and chest and spoke so sweetly and affectionately that he came to forget all about his distressing pain. Tears flooded his eyes. The soothing words and the healing touch of Mother worked like magic upon him and he returned home full of joy and gratitude. Mother whispered a divine name into his ear to contemplate on and the old man found a new joy and peace in life even in the midst of acute suffering.

Up to this day he looks one full of a quiet, satisfying happiness. (Note: this is an eye-witness account by the writer of this sketch.)

It has been said before that Mother has come down to this world with Her supra-physical body in response to the universal call of the human spirit in agony all over the globe, facing a prospective disaster to human civilisation. Fear and hatred stalk over the land; Mother has brought with Her the brightness of an April morning, the joy of an eternal spring and supreme bliss of the Divine.

Only a few years back the writer of this sketch approached Mother with great heaviness of mind due to the crushing poverty of the masses, privations and the mounting tension against the security of peaceful existence, and implored Her to suggest a remedy. She heard the complaint in silence and paused for a few moments; then said with a smile:

"Baba, don't lose heart; these are all His ways, in which He has chosen to appear in these distressful times before man. Don't be afraid, such birth-throes are inevitable for the coming New Social Order, which He is planning". (Note: This interview was at Kishenpur Ashram, Dehra Dun.)

Mother's vision penetrates deeper than mortal eyes; She sees the hands of God everywhere working out His Will for the ultimate good of His creation.

She knows and feels that all that happens to us and around us is the outcome of the Divine Will and that to "attune one's self to the Supreme Reality is the goal of human life and the only way of attaining to a state of natural and everlasting poise, union and harmony."

Bernard Russel says: "Man now needs for his salvation only one thing; to open his heart to joy and leave fear and hatred to gibber through the glimmering darkness of a forgotten past He must lift up his eyes and say:

'I am not a miserable sinner.

I am a being, who by a long and arduous road, have discovered how to make intelligence master of natural obstacles, how to live in freedom and joy, at peace with myself and therefore with all mankind.'

This will happen, if men will choose joy rather than sorrow, fear and hatred. If not, eternal death will bury man in deserved oblivion.' (Note: Bertrand Russell – New Hopes for a Changing World. pp 217-18.)

What Mother said at different times to her bhaktas who desired Her to enlighten them about the path to follow daily for their spiritual progress is very briefly summed up in these lines:

"This daughter of yours implores you all to do one thing, my good fathers and mothers. You are anxious to obtain relief from all the ills you are burdened with. You know when a person is ill he requires both right diet and medicine; your medicine is the repetition of the Divine Name and contemplation of its meaning; your daily diet will be self-control. Practise these two together on one special day in the week, or in a fortnight or at least one day in the month. The more you can the better.

You should observe the following rules during that special day of devotion, *Samyam Vrata*:

- i. Observe Truth in speech, thought and action.
- ii. Extreme simplicity in food and dress.
- iii. Keep the mind serene for that day preferring the eternal to the temporal; with keen devotion dwell constantly on His forms, His messages to man and His glories as revealed in the Gita.
- iv. Try during that day always to bear in mind that God sends all the worries of life for edifying your self.
- v. Keep up a spirit of service for that day believing that your parents, teachers, children, wives, neighbours, are all so many channels through whom your services to them reach Him.
- vi. Strengthen always the conviction that you are dwelling in Truth, growing in the bosom of the Good and losing yourself to find Him more and more from day to day.
- vii. Ever remember that the joys and Sorrows of the world are all fleeting shadows of your own self; playing with the divine forces brings in everlasting peace and happiness.
- viii. Give your mind a long rope to play with Him; rejoice in the beauties of His forms, attributes and graces, and in what is stated about Him in the *shastras* or what has been said about Him by the saints of all lands.
- ix. When you feel you are not progressing spiritually, always think that you alone are responsible for the setback; fortify your will with more and more strength, with a purer or higher ego-sense, i.e. "I must call out His name": "I will worship Him": "I must learn to love Him'. This I-ness pointing to God is better than the self-ego.
- x. Ever remember during the whole day that repetition of His name has enough power to wash away all sins if there be any, whether of this life or of the past one.

(Note: English translation of the Bengali extracts from the printed pamphlets posted on the walls of EKDALIA ASHRAM, Calcutta, containing the words of Mother, for the guidance of devotees. By the

courtesy of Sri Abani Mohan Sharma, a devotee of Mother in charge of the ashram. (This ashram does not exist any more.)

In conclusion, let us pray to Mother to draw down more and more Divine Forces through Her Body Divine upon this perplexed world of doubt and dissension, to shower blessings upon man more abundantly, making him a more worthy receptacle for Divine graces, so that those sheep of His fold that have missed their way, may hear His CALL FROM ABOVE and find the path to a new life and happiness in the developing new world order.

Let us all bow down to Mother in all humility with these words:

"I bow down to the Supreme Shakti of the Eternal, that intensely divine force which holds together the universe in one body, which has given birth to *Brahma*, *Vishnu*, and *Shiva* which has been descending on this earth from above through the hearts of all the Gurus of the world, for human uplift.

O Mother, I bow down to Thee Who art the embodiment of abiding bliss, who dost directly represent the absolute Intelligence and Joy, who art known as PARABRAHMA and whom the Vedas express by the words - THAT ART THOU.

I bow down to Thee, O Mother Divine, who dost guide all the phases of Yoga or Union with the Divine, who art ever the embodiment of Peace and Welfare of the world, every movement of whose lips sheds sweet nectar drops on human life, who art all purity and whose glances remove all fear and dread."

MOTHER - AS I HAVE KNOWN HER

Girija Shankar Bhattacharya, M. A.

Whenever I think of Sri Sri Anandamayi Ma what is uppermost in my mind is Her charming personality the wonderful smile that lights up Her face, the unperturbed sweetness of Her disposition, and the ineffable graciousness of Her speech all combining to bring into everybody's mind the thought of a perfect mother, radiant in her native solicitude for the welfare of her children. It is nothing strange, therefore, that many fortunate persons see in Her an incarnation of the Divine Mother. Thus there are not a few who are prone to identify Her with one of the known manifestations of the Divine Mother Kali, Durga. etc.

Although I cannot, in any way, count myself as one of these devout persons and this is not mere humility I had, at least, two very strange experiences which may well be described here. In 1926, at Shibnibas in the Nadia District (W. Bengal), I was present at a kirtan attended by Mother as well. I was trying to be a little attentive and had closed my eyes. Suddenly I heard almost all people crying "Ma, Ma" simultaneously.

Opening my eyes I was surprised to see a transformation in Mother her natural fair complexion was overlaid, as it were, with a shining dark tinge (the complexion of Goddess Kali). At once my mind formulated the question:

"Is a particular manifestation of the Divine expressing itself through Mother?"

Elsewhere (Note: In my article "Mother, as I have known her," in Ma Anandamayi" by devotees published in 1946.) I have said how one day in 1927 as I was sitting in Mother's room in Shahbagh, Dacca City and She was on Her cot talking to me. I looked away from Her for the fraction of a second. The next

moment when I looked at Her again, instead of the gentle Bengali lady sitting on the cot, there appeared, as it were, a goddess radiant in Her glory! So sudden was the transfiguration and so transcendently appealing was the sight that it left me absolutely mute, only one thought hovering in my brain: "Where is the third eye?" i.e. my identification of Mother was instinctive. (Note: the Divine Mother is usually represented with a third eye between the two eyebrows indicating Divine Wisdom – *Jnana*.)

Notwithstanding these experiences, to me personally, Mother is no whit less great as simple Anandamayi, that is, in Her present form and character.

Indeed She seems even greater as such.

What I say is no mere sentimental effusion. Let me explain. In 1946, during the celebration of Mother's birthday in Calcutta, Sriji Gopal Chandra Chatterjee of Allahabad, Satya Gopal Ashram, repeatedly questioned Her regarding Herself. The only reply that he could bring out was: "There is but one thing in stocks and stones, in trees and animals, as well as in man."

About two years ago one of the devotees of Mother, in Calcutta, said to Her: "Mother, I have been seeking *Dakshina Kali*; Can you tell me how I can find Her? Some say that you yourself are *Dakshina Kali* and if I touch you I shall touch Her." The more he said: "You are *Dakshina Kali*", the more did Mother keep on saying: "You (meaning the devotee himself) are *Dakshina Kali*;"

From similar observations at other times, it has been clearly impressed upon my mind that Mother lives constantly in the truth. - Here in this Universe there is no diversity.

All indeed is Brahma; from the tiniest speck of dust, from the most insignificant blade of grass to the Creator Brahma - there is but one and one spirit only underlying the apparent diversity. "*Insignificant blade of grass ?*" No. Nothing whatsoever is insignificant.

When I saw Mother for the first time twenty-eight years ago at *Shahbagh* (Dacca City), She asked me to come to Her again on the *Ambuvachi day* about a month thence. On that particular day She went to the *Siddheshwari* temple and Bholanath (Note: the late Ramani Mohan Chakravarty, husband of Mother Anandamayi, affectionately called Bholanath by Mother and Her devotees and subsequently known by his *samnyasa* name Tibbatananda Tirtha.) performed puja of the goddess. After that Mother suddenly went to the place nearby, where some time here She had in a trance-like state indicated that it was a holy place and about which subsequently She is said to have given out that in a previous birth of Bholanath, it was his place of *tapasya*. This place as I found it then, was fenced round by the late Rai Bahadur Prangopal Mukherjee and an earthen platform built thereupon. Now a house has been built over it, and the platform is lower than the plinth because according to Mother's directions no more earth was put upon it while the plinth had to be raised. Mother sat upon the platform that *ambuvachi* day and the change that came over Her person was simply astounding. Her whole body seemed afire but it was a fire that emitted the sweetest, the most comfortably cool rays that you could imagine. She shone gloriously, but did not cause any pain to our vision. To this day I have a vivid recollection of this transfiguration and probably to the end of my days I shall have it although I cannot find words to give an accurate idea of it. However, She called, one by one, the four or five persons who had then gathered there, except only one.

(Note: By this one person hangs a tale, which I cannot wholly pass over. This was Professor Atal Behari Bhattacharya, a colleague of mine at the Rajshahi College, whom I had invited to Dacca to see Mother after I had seen Her. The words I had used were unwillingly prophetic: "You will probably find in Her what you seek." And he came and was thus treated with apparent neglect. How strange are the ways of Mother! Atal, since that very moment, began to shed tears profuse tears, indeed. I have hardly seen anybody bathed in tears like that. Throughout the next day these tears continued unabated together with *stotras* uttered in a half smothered voice. Both he and I were stopping with the late Rai Bahadur Prangopal Mukherjee and this saintly friend and elder brother, as it were, of mine was full of joy at Atal's tears. Then came to Atal the abounding grace of Mother - grace that has come to very few. But that is a different story.

She had, I should say here, not yet "come out" and very few people had any knowledge about Her. I remember Mother called Rai Bahadur Mukherjee first and said in an admonishing tone: "You are

publicising me",-Rai Bahadur smiled and replied: "Yes, Mother, I am." She then said something to him, which I cannot remember. The next person to be called was myself and Mother in a deep-toned voice said to me: "I know but One."

Then She launched into a *stotra* the like of which used to gush forth from Her on many an occasion in those days. It was not possible to follow Her in it, so rapid was the stream of words welling forth, but it was clearly understood that She was speaking of the unity of all things, and I seem to remember the word occurring in it. (*abrahamasatmabhapyant.*)

Thus even at the beginning of my acquaintance with Her, Mother spoke of the Unity in Diversity - the truth, which has been so forcibly borne upon me by Her utterances and conduct subsequently. To me it seems now that unless we learn this lesson from Her, we shall have learnt but little. Her conduct and conversation are all eloquent of this truth - the supreme and basic truth. She, to me, seems to be a shutterless window, wide open, through which you can have a glimpse of the Infinite.

From all Her limbs - nay, from every pore of Her skin, as it were, - shines forth the effulgence of the Divine, softened, however, for our mortal eyes by the utter sweetness, utter kindness of Her personality. She calls forth the Divine in us, lying hidden by untruths, inspiring the utmost faith in our mind that it nevertheless is whole and complete, unaffected by our weakness and failings. To be sure this call will be fruitful. But when? In the dim distant future or here and now?

It may pertinently be said that if such a person as Mother calls forth the Divine in us, it cannot but manifest itself even in spite of ourselves. Why should our co-operation be necessary? Indeed some time ago, someone said to Her:

"Mother, if you have grace upon us, illumination may come to us even without any effort by us." Her reply was: "The grace of God can really work wonders, but such unsolicited grace comes upon a very limited few at all times - to one in a crore."

Thus, I presume, most of us must work our way up, aided and encouraged undoubtedly by Mother. I can hardly think that there is anyone like Her, in whose makeup the godly and the human have mingled in such liberal proportions.

Years ago, I saw a child of three or four dancing almost faultlessly and untired to the music of *mridanga* and the gentlemen who were responsible for the music were pleased spectators encouraging him. To Mother's tune are we not all similarly dancing? Unconscious, however, of the fact that this is a dance replete with 'the rhythm eternal? It may not be possible for us to understand the meaning of the different movements just as the child too had no knowledge that he was really executing a dance and not moving at random. She, who has been setting the tune, however, knows what is what. She is ever with us, holding us by the hand, and if we seem to move away from Her - that is only for a short while.

Since She is Mother, our transgressions do not irritate but fill Her with greater pity and She holds us tighter to Her breast.

She is with us always by day and by night in weal and in woe. Let us but turn to Her to see and realize that ours is a blessed existence blessed by Mother. Therefore, to work our way up, as I said before we have but to turn to Her and say: "Mother, take us with you," and fix our gaze upon Her upon the human form before us, effulgent in the Glory Divine always and unceasingly brooding over it, We shall then trim our own lamps unconsciously, as it were, and illumination will come in due course from the lamp eternal that is ablaze in Her.

That is, it seems to me, the significance of the coming of Mother amongst us.

The humblest of the humble, the most sinful of the sinful is also Her child and has, an equal claim

upon Her with the saintliest of the saintly.

I remember once, in my foolishness, to have told Her: "Mother, you surely have just a little more affection for those who are always about you and attend to your physical needs and comforts." Her reply was a simple "No", but in a voice that went to the very depth of my heart, and it left no room for even the finest shred of doubt in me.

I understood that Her eyes were equally upon those, who were physically near Her for all the twenty-four hours of the day as well as upon those, who probably have but rare opportunities of coming in contact with Her. There are many who have dedicated their wealth to Her, that is, who liberally open their purse strings for any work that they think may please Her any work that She blesses.

And there are those who have dedicated their physical strength and manual skill to Her ; that is, those who have dedicated laborious days and wakeful nights to work sanctified by Her. Again, there are those who, lacking in physical strength and having no purse worth the name, cry out in their anguish: "Mother, here is your worthless child unable to be of any service to you I How can your blessing find its way to him?" I wonder if Mother's blessing does not come upon such a child of Hers the moment this query is formulated in his mind.

I think that 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. Everything indeed, is Brahman, but in Her the potential has become kinetic, the latent patent. The manifestation of the Divine in human form, to me, appears to be the greatest, being, as everybody will agree, the sweetest. And Mother, in Her present form of Anandamayi is no whit less great than any other Divine Manifestation.

But what has She done for us? My answer is; "It is enough if She attracts us if by the very sweetness of Her personality our attention is riveted upon Her at first, although it may be but for a short while. For just as admiration for Rabindranath has made hundreds copy his style of handwriting, attraction for Mother is bound to make us follow Her in higher things without much conscious effort."

But She does not merely attract. She sympathises with us in our distress, She soothes us in our pain, and helps us in numberless ways to face the troubles of life. Some say that we ought not to speak to Her about our worldly affairs. I beg to differ. To me, life is not divided into watertight compartments. If religion is something cut off from our ordinary life, the less religion it is.

Why should not Her children, therefore, seek Mother's aid in the perplexing problems of worldly life too? Has Mother told anybody not to trouble Her in that way? To my knowledge She never has. On the contrary, has She not helped many to view these troubles in their proper perspective the perspective of truth, the basic truth - everything in this universe is Brahman?

She does not merely discourse upon high philosophy, but She also brings it down to the earth, to human affairs She lives this high philosophy and teaches how one may live it.

In the Chaitanya Charitamrita Adilila, Chap. 4, we read:

"The purport of the above is: When God Himself is incarnated, (Note: As In Krishna - Krishna is God Himself) all His lesser Powers act through Him, although otherwise they might act as different entities.

Thus the various *asuras* that were killed by Krishna were really destroyed by Vishnu who is the Preservative Power in creation.

To the Vaishnavas God is all-Bliss and no question pertaining to creation, preservation or destruction affects Him in that perfect state.

They are the duty of lesser Powers, which are undoubtedly emanations from Him but do not represent His whole Self and are only partial manifestations. When, however, the Whole incarnates Itself, the parts cannot manifest themselves separately, but act through Him.

This, as I have put it, is in the language of *Bhakti-shastra*. Although the words of the Vedantists will be different, the substance will, I am sure, be the same.

The whole theory of incarnation of Divinity Himself is, undoubtedly, a difficult one; and we must always remember the Gita VII, 24

"It is only the poor in intellect that regard Me as having limited Myself (when I appear thus in the human form as Krishna). They do not know My Supreme Nature, that is never lessened (i.e. is always whole and complete) and transcends everything."

Again in IX, 11

"Only the foolish think little of Me, (thus) incarnated in the human body, ignorant, as they are, of My Supreme Nature as the lord of all creation."

A perfect vehicle like that of the Mother - the body in which She is manifested - fulfils the will of God in many and sundry ways, which cannot all be intelligible to everyone of us. Thus there are incidents, which, although clear enough to some, may not be acceptable to others or the world at large. As an old man with whom the memory of these may die, I should have liked to speak of them; but various considerations, particularly the apprehension that they may be misunderstood, debar me. The conclusion that I draw from these incidents is, however, worth stating here. It is clear to me that even when Mother seems to be in the ordinary wakeful state, like all people around us, She is really merged in the Universal Soul and Her acts therefore are like *lila* - they do not proceed from any *samskara*, nor do they create any. She is eternally free in the only real freedom, that is, in the freedom of the Infinite.

Here, before us, is the limitless ocean. As far as our eyes can travel, we see nothing but the ocean deep, broad, majestic, mysterious, infinite. The sun, the clouds, the wind they come and play with it and are gone! But the ocean is there as ever. The play and interplay of various influences on this ocean too are but on the surface the laughter, the jokes, the sympathy, and yes the tears, responsive to yours, the ocean is ever there with its limpid waters, unaffected in the deep.

Having heard that Mother had said that She had no previous births, I was tempted to ask Her if She had been born this time too. The answer was as could be expected, evasive; but She indicated in clear language that birth and death do not touch Her. (Note: Sri Sri Ram Thakur, also, used to say - he said this to me: "There is but one birth", meaning, as I understood it, that the different incarnations of a person in the material body are but chapters in a single life which continues until the finer bodies are dissolved and he returns to the eternal.

From the "deep" he comes and "to the deep" he travels, now by land (material body) then by water (astral body) and thus probably several times until journeying finally by air (the finest body) he reaches his goal bursts the bonds that separate him from the eternal. Unfortunately I cannot recall the exact words. Her identification with the Infinite is such a reality that nothing else has even the vestige of truth to Her. My question to Her was because I thought that while Sri Krishna said: "O Arjuna, you and I both had many previous births (Note: Gita Ch IV, verse 5) - how was it that Mother said he had no previous birth? She must have been speaking from a different platform viewing the whole question of birth and death from a different angle. Her reply confirmed me in my opinion.

Thus, here we have in Her a manifestation, the like of which must be very rare one who, in every deed and thought, in sleep and wakefulness, never loses touch with the Infinite one, through whom the glory of the Infinite is apparent even to weak, mortal eyes.

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THE DIVINE MOTHER

(The impression of an ordinary mind)

N. R. Das Gupta, M.A., B.L., Bar-at-Law.

It was a summer evening in the month of Vaisakha of the year 1946, when I had the chance of seeing Mother Anandamayi for the first time.

The occasion was her fiftieth birthday. The celebration was taking place in my locality at Ballygunge, Calcutta. I got an invitation letter and I at once thought of taking the opportunity of seeing Mother about whom I had heard for a long time.

I went and found a very large crowd of men, women and children, not only inside the Ashram where Mother was putting up, but also in the street in front, making it almost impossible for anybody to push through. In any case, it was hopeless for me and I decided to go back, when fortunately a friend of mine, a senior advocate of the Calcutta Bar, accosted me and I told him why I had come there. He said that Mother had gone out for an evening drive in the car of a devotee and would be returning soon. Both of us were standing in the street and my friend requested me to wait. I did so and looked at the crowd waiting in eager suspense for the return of the Mother.

Within a few minutes the car came. In the meantime I was wondering what the Mother looked like. I imagined an austere old woman with long matted hair or perhaps with a head clean shaven a samnyasini in 'gairik' dress. I also wondered as to why such a large crowd of different ages had collected. What did they find in Her?

The car came and I was practically pushed near the door of the car by my friend who was a man of influence there. The door opened and to my utter surprise, instead of a rigid samnyasini of the usual type, a very soft and sweet personality in the form of an extraordinarily handsome woman alighted from the car. She was dressed in a clean white dhoti and a silk chadder was wrapped round Her body.

I bowed as many others did from different directions.

I was introduced by my friend who was well known to Her. She seemed to take no notice of me. I looked at Her face and saw a peculiarly distant look in a beautiful pair of dreamy eyes, the like of which I had never seen before. The face and in fact the whole personality was radiating, as it were, with a singular and distinctive glow which it is impossible to describe in words. I was deeply charmed. I realized at once what the people were mad for.

My idea was just to see Her once and perhaps, to talk with Her for a few minutes and finish with it. But after I had seen Her, my attitude changed and during Her short stay in Calcutta for the occasion I went every day, and more often, twice daily, just to have a look at Her from a distance and to hear Her talk if possible.

I heard Her replies to questions put to Her by different members of the crowd. I have heard learned scholars and philosophers asking intricate questions on religion and philosophy as also boys and girls in

their teens asking simple unsophisticated questions. She answers them all and sometimes bursts out into laughter.

Apart from what She says which, as I have been told by experts, reveals the highest philosophical truth in its simplest form though She has never received any education in the ordinary sense of the term, the way She talks fascinates all, and the ring of Her laughter one is bound to bear in mind long after it is heard no more.

During the period I have known Her, I had the good fortune of coming in close contact with Her on more than one occasion.

I have seen, not only in Bengal but all over the northern India, a large number of people of either sex, of different ages, belonging to various strata of society collecting around Her wherever She happens to be, looking at Her for hours and hours in a spirit of deep reverence and, almost without exception, unwilling to move away so long as She can be seen even from a distance.

I have seen many young boys and girls, coming in contact with Mother only for a short while, weeping bitterly at the mere idea of separation. I have seen how She looks at them and how She smiles. I remember an occasion when a young girl of the Matriculation Class, who had been with Mother only for four or five days, started weeping in the evening merely at the prospect of leaving Mother the next day, though she was going back to her own mother and family. What is the secret of this mysterious attraction?

I once asked Mother the question straight. She laughed and said: "I am the nearest and dearest to you all though you may not know it."

I heard later from a very reliable source that Mahatma Gandhi, on an occasion when Mother was with him, asked Her a question, more or less on the same lines to find out the mystery behind it.

I am told by one who knows that the late Sm. Kamala Nehru was a great devotee of Mother. She was always looking for an opportunity to come in close contact with Mother and often took Mother away from the crowd in her car to some solitary place so that she might feel the proximity of Mother's presence all by herself in silence. And on such occasions she often went into a sort of trance and remained like that for a pretty long time. I have been further informed that she wrote a letter to a friend in which she stated that she realized Sri Krishna, her God, in the personality of Mother.

Not only Indians, but I have seen many foreigners too, deeply attracted towards Mother. I shall only cite two or three instances. A young lady from Austria has given up practically everything of her life to be in Mother's company and she is now living the life of Indian Brahmacharini under Mother's care. A doctor from France who, I am told, had a very large practice at Marsailles and who came to India as he became interested in Buddhism and wanted to know more about it, came in contact with Mother and was so deeply touched that he surrendered completely to Mother and is now leading the life of an Indian sadhu under Mother's direction. I have seen him standing for hours with folded hands looking intently and with deep reverence at Mother even though it may be from a great distance, whenever he gets a chance.

The case of a young American engineer is very interesting indeed. He is the only son of his parents and while doing higher studies in Radio Engineering he came in contact with an Indian sadhu who was on a lecture tour in U.S.A. and as such became interested in the spiritual culture of India. He decided to come to India and according to the direction of Mahasiddha Sachchidananda wrote a letter to one of the lady devotees of Maharshi Raman at Maharshi's Ashram.

He booked his passage and started before he got any reply to his letter. He told me that while the ship in which he was sailing was still at sea nearing Bombay, he became very nervous because he had not the slightest idea of where he was going as he hardly knew anything of India or anybody here. Standing on the deck and looking at the sea he was in deep thought when suddenly the image of the face of a woman with long hair and closed eyes appeared before him under the sky. "I was not in a trance or anything of the sort, you know", he said to me: "I was wide awake and fully conscious."

However, he came to Bombay and there got the letter from Maharshi Raman's Ashram. In that letter he was directed to go to Benares to Mother Anandamayi.

"I had never even heard the name of Mother Anandamayi before that", he said.

He went to Benares and saw Mother there and at once recognized the face he had seen. "I want to be with you always", he implored. "Will you be able to do whatever you are asked to do?" was Mother's question. He said: "yes" and he told me later: "I said so before I knew what I was saying as it came from within."

That is what I have seen of Mother Anandamayi. What She is I do not know. What She represents I have not realized.

Swami Vivekananda said:

"There is another set of teachers, Christs of the world. They are the Teachers of all teachers, God Himself coming in the form of man. They can transmit spirituality with a touch, with a wish, which in one second make saints of the lowest."

Does Mother belong to that category?

To me She is Divine as She suggests something eternal, something which inspires in us a sense of the Unknown, which is Beauty, which is Purity, which is Love. An all embracing and unchanging kindness of a mystic character seems to radiate from Her personality and everybody in Her company is fascinated by a peculiar sense of joy which is not to be had in the ordinary pursuits of our mundane life. That is perhaps the reason why She is looked upon by about seven lakhs of devotees all over India as the Incarnation of the Great Power which is nursing and sustaining the entire creation the Divine Mother.

A PAGE FROM MY DIARY

A. K. Datta Gupta, M.A., B.L.

Place: Kishenpur Ashram (Dehradun).

Time: Morning of the 22nd of May, 1941.

Mother was sitting on the eastern veranda of the Ashram. We also were squatting there. Prof. Shyama Charan Babu of Agra College was amongst us. He asked Mother why She had been laughing so excessively the day before.

Mother: "Smiles and tears are indeed such with this body. You saw me laughing only at the time of reading. In the evening also I laughed heartily on hearing the sounds coming out of the water tap in the Ashram yard. You must have noticed that when a water tap is turned, air often comes out of it with a hissing sound.

Yesterday evening the tap of the Ashram yard was emitting a similar sound. When I heard it I was convulsed with laughter. This is because there are some screws loose somewhere in this head. Again, when Swami was reading at night, a slight touch of his hand turned the bookstand upside down. This gave me more convulsions of laughter. But the incident itself was nothing to laugh about. That shows that laughter comes to this body without any apparent reason. Anything may give occasion to a fit of laughter. Any attempt to check it at the time has the effect of only pouring oil on fire."

Once at the Dacca Ashram there was a Kirtan party.

The Kirtaniya was singing in an inspired mood. His face was suffused with tears. The listeners were visibly moved. Though the singer had plenty of emotion, his literary attainments were no better than those of this body.

While thus singing he mispronounced a word.

Though the slip was slight and did not affect the emotional flow either of the singer or of the listeners - it made me laugh.

Khukuni tried hard to compose me.

She whispered to me that it would hurt the feelings of others. But it was all in vain. They then felt compelled to remove me to some other place. Even there I was rolling with laughter. This may give you some idea as to the character of my laughter.

It is not that this body laughs only when there is something comical. It is shaken with laughter even when there is little or no occasion for it. At the sight of people's grief this body has often burst into laughter. Those who are unacquainted with the vagaries of this body may very well be offended. They may think that I simply laugh at them, which would be far from the truth."

Sometimes it so happens that the incident which seems to move this body to laughter is not the real cause at all. Some incidents of the past or future swim into my ken and give occasion to the laughter.

There was a Gujerati lady amongst us named Miss Mani Ben.

She asked: "Mother, you have just referred to your visions of the past and future. How do you have them? Do you see them with your two physical eyes, or (pointing at the space between the two eyebrows) do you see them with the third eye that is here?"

Mother: "How do I see them? Why, the eyes are all over the body.

Don't you know that everything has in it (the essence of) all other things? Hands, legs, hair, in fact every part of the body can be made the instrument of sight. Of course, it is quite possible to see through the two eyes, which all possess; and the existence of a third eye of which you speak is also true. People do possess such eyes. This may sound strange to you, but nonetheless it is true.

Once this body lived on three grains of rice daily for four or five months. Nobody can live for so long on such a meagre diet.

It looks like a miracle.

But it has been so with this body. It has been so, because it can be so. The reason for this is that what we eat is not all necessary for us. The body takes in only the quintessence of the food, the rest is thrown out. As a result of sadhana the body becomes so constituted that though no food is taken physically, it can imbibe from the surroundings whatever is necessary for its maintenance.

In three ways the body can be maintained without food:

One way has just been referred to viz. the body can take from the environment the nourishment necessary for its maintenance.

Secondly, one can live on air alone. For I have just said that in everything there are all other things; so that the properties of other things are in the air in some measure. Therefore by taking in air alone we get the essence of other things.

Again, it may so happen that the body is not taking anything at all, yet it is being maintained unimpaired as in a state of samadhi. Thus you find that as a consequence of sadhana it is quite possible to live without what we call food. In a similar way sadhana can effect such transformation of the body that by virtue of it any part of it can discharge the function of the eye.

Shyama Charan Babu: We hear that sages can take over the sufferings of other people.

Mother: This is true. Sages can mitigate the sufferings other people in three ways: they can take the suffering upon themselves and thus relieve the sufferer; or without taking those sufferings upon themselves, they may distribute and apportion them amongst some other persons. This lightens to some extent the intensity and acuteness of the suffering. Also, it may so happen that sages out of supreme Grace can relieve an individual from all the consequences of his actions and restore him to Life Divine, which is his true Self. But such incidents are rare. Hence it is said that purification comes through suffering.

Myself: Mother, how is it possible to distribute sufferings amongst others? This looks like sheer injustice.

Mother: "No, there is nothing wrong in it. Sages would divide the sufferings only amongst those who are only too willing and anxious to share them."

Shyama Charan Babu: Why should I allow a sage to bear my cross?

Mother: "That is well said. A bhakta would speak in this way. A devotee would not have the object of his devotion share his sufferings.

He would rather bear his own cross. But sometimes such sufferings are too much for him, and his only concern then becomes how to get rid of them. In such cases only the question of mitigation or extenuation arises. With me, however, everything has happened spontaneously. I have seen that this body has taken upon itself the sufferings of others, not purposely, but without an effort of the will. Once I went to see a patient who was attacked by a severe type of dysentery. On my return I found myself attacked by that very disease. I had frequent motions and passed blood and mucus. This went on for twelve hours. Then I was all right again. For some time something like a blizzard passed over this body, then everything was quiet. The man who had the original attack came round as soon as this body had the disease.

At another time this body took upon itself the fever from which another person had been suffering. Every third or fourth day I used to have a violent paroxysm of fever which lasted for three hours.

The temperature shot up to 103 or 104 deg. We were then at Cox's Bazar. The nature of the fever convinced Dina Bandhu Babu that it was nothing but malaria. Bholanath was of the same opinion, and was anxious to administer quinine. But I flatly refused to take the drug. Dina Bandhu Babu had an almost paternal affection for this body, which used to address him as father. He often would humour me by complying with my requests. Though a Brahmin himself, he had given up the Brahminical practice of uttering Gayatri Mantra. But I induced him to resume.

However, when he found me suffering from repeated paroxysms of fever he lost all patience and wrathfully declared:

"These devotees have conspired to kill my daughter.

I won't listen to anybody. I intend to administer by force, if necessary, quinine this very night." I heard all this, but said nothing. In the afternoon this body fell into a trance-like condition. True to his words Dina Bandhu Babu came with quinine at night. Seeing me in a state of unconsciousness he shook me hard. Though his shaking and hustling made me open my eyes, they remained unmoved in a fixed stare. This pricked his curiosity. He examined me by focussing the light of an electric torch on my eyes and even thrusting his finger into them to see whether they would wink. When all his endeavours failed to restore me to a state of consciousness, he gave up the attempt to administer quinine that night. But he could not

abandon the idea of trying the drug on me. Of course I knew how long the fever was to last. So I told him that if the fever persisted beyond a certain period I would take the medicine. But I did not take it, because within the specified period I was all right.

I have just now referred to the incident of my living on three grains of rice per day for four or five months. That is an illustration of how creature comforts can be overcome by renunciation. I have not had that sort of renunciation, which you understand by the term in its ordinary sense. For this body has lived with father, mother, husband, and all. This body has served the husband, so you may call it a wife. It has prepared dishes for all, so you may call it a cook. It has done all sorts of scrubbing and menial work, so you may call it a servant. But if you look at the thing from another standpoint you will realise that this body has served none but God.

For when I served my father, mother, husband and others, I simply considered them as different manifestations of the Almighty and served them as such. When I sat down to prepare food I did so as if it were a ritual, for the food cooked was after all meant for God. Whatever I did, I did in a spirit of Divine service. Hence I was not quite worldly, though always engaged in household affairs. I had but one ideal, - to serve all as God, to do everything for the sake of God.

At that time I lived as one who had taken a vow of silence.

I found enough time at my disposal even after the completion of all my household work. Usha lived near our house. She used to read out the Mahabharat at noon. One day I went to hear it. She handed over the book to me for reading. I took it in my hand but could not read; because at that time God's Name always bubbled out of me as from a spring. Somehow it got itself tacked to my natural respiration. Hence I found that any attempt to read the book only resulted in my suffocation. Moreover, you have some idea as to the range of my literary attainments. In order to read I had to spell through every word. When I attempted to read I found that I could not take in two syllables at a time. Suppose I was to pronounce 'aim. I could pronounce 'a' all right, but when it was time to pronounce "mi" I found that I had cleanly forgotten the 'a' and the effacement was so complete that I could not trace its existence in me. In this condition no intelligent reading was possible. But when I sat down to spin, I found that it was no hindrance to repeating God's Name. Both could go on simultaneously. I have spun a good deal of yarn. When I was at Bajitpur I myself prepared a towel and, with the help of a weaver, a pair of dhotis with my hand-spun yarn.

At this stage a lady remarked: "Mother, once I have seen you singing and weeping."

Mother: "There is nothing uniform with this body. Svabhava (Nature) takes Her unhampered course. The singing and weeping you mention are possible at a certain stage of sadhana. Suppose I sat down to sing. At that time my idea was that it was through God's Grace I was uttering His Name. As I went on repeating the Name, another idea took possession of me, and I thought: "Alas! I am praying so fervently and for such a long time, yet God is not revealing Himself to me!" This sense of frustration created a pang in my heart, and at once tears would trickle down my cheeks. These are, of course, stages of ignorance, for with the dawn of Knowledge prayers and sadhana cease.

When the different stages of sadhana were being manifested through this body, what a variety of experiences I then had! Sometimes I used to hear distinctly: "Repeat this mantra". When I got the mantra a query rose in me: "Whose mantra is this?" At once the reply came: "It is the mantra of Ganesh or Vishnu" or something like that. Again the query came from myself: "How does he look?" A form was revealed in no time. Every question was met by a prompt reply and there was immediate dissolution of all doubts and misgivings.

One day I distinctly got the command: "From today you are not to bow down to anybody." I asked my invisible monitor: "Who are you?" The reply came: "Your Shakti" (Power). I thought that there was a distinct Shakti residing in me and guiding me by issuing commands from time to time. Since all this happened at the stage of sadhana, Jnana (Knowledge) was being revealed in a piecemeal fashion. The integral knowledge which this body was possessed of from the very beginning was broken, as it were,

into parts and there was something like a superimposition of ignorance.

At that time I was *mouni* (observing silence). This was also due to particular commands. The father of this body came to see me at that time. I could not make obeisance to him. Not that I refrained from doing it intentionally, but this body refused to do anything contrary to the commands it received from time to time. When the father of this body saw that I was not doing my duty by him, he took it to heart. But as I was *mouni* at that time I could not explain the situation to him. He came to regard me with suspicion. He argued that if my various moods and experiences had a spiritual origin, there was no reason why I should be disrespectful to those to whom respect was due. This led him to consult different persons regarding my condition.

In the meantime Siva Ratri (auspicious night for the worship of God Siva) came.

On such occasions it was customary with the father of this body to sit up the whole night and worship the God Siva. Corresponding to the four quarters of the night he used to perform puja four times. Each puja was meant for the well-being of a particular individual. This time also he proceeded as usual with the puja; and I sat up with him to make arrangements for it. When after finishing puja three times during the first three quarters of the night, he proceeded to perform the puja for the fourth quarter for the benefit of this body, a curious thing happened. He found that as he was proceeding with the worship, this body was uttering aloud all the relevant mantras and prayers quite automatically. This surprised him very much. Though he said nothing, he could not help looking at me from time to time. However, to proceed with the account of my sadhana.

After some time I again heard the voice within myself which told me:

"Whom do you want to make obeisance to?"

You are everything."

At once I realized that the Universe was all my own manifestation. Partial knowledge then gave place to the integral, and I found myself face to face with the ONE that appears as many. It was then that I understood why I had been forbidden for so long to bow down to anybody."

Myself: How long was the period intervening between these two stages?

Mother: "Quite long.

But in the meantime various Vibhutis were being manifested through this body. These manifestations have again occurred in various ways. Sometimes they have been manifested in ignorance, e.g., I found that as soon as I had touched a particular patient he recovered in no time; but I did not know beforehand that he would be cured in that way. Sometimes the manifestation occurred with knowledge mixed up with ignorance, e.g., on seeing a patient I used to argue in this way:

"I know from my past experience that my touch has a healing effect. If I touch this patient he may also get well."

To verify this I touched him and found that he was cured immediately. Then again manifestations of Vibhuti have taken place with full knowledge and consciousness on my part. Thus I knew for certain that I could cure a disease by a mere touch, and I touched in full confidence of success."

Jiten Babu: In what other ways have your Vibhuti been manifested? And how do they manifest themselves now?

Mother: Vibhutis have now become a part and parcel of Svabhava.

Jiten Babu; I do not quite follow you.

Moiher: Vibhutis becoming a part of Svabhava means that everything is now regulated by Svabhava or the Supreme Self.

Here there is no scope for the play of a limited self. This was so with this body from its very infancy. Such disclosures are not always made by this body. Since they are coming spontaneously now, I give them out. Let me tell you that what I am, I have been from my infancy. But when the different stages of sadhana were being manifested through this body there was something like a superimposition of aja (ignorance). But what sort of *ajnana* was that? It was really *Jnana* masquerading as *ajnana*.

Let me tell you a story relating to my childhood.

In childhood, when this body was at Vidyakut, a woman became pregnant, and her child was born when I was still there. I knew from the beginning that the child was not to live long. He came only to complete his cycle of births and deaths. However, the child became one year old. He was not very nice to look at. His complexion was jet black, but his body was very soft.

That is why he was always seen in the arms of others, who all wanted to have the luxury of the touch. And the child was all smiles. When he was over a year and a few months old, his span of life came to an end; and he became seriously ill.

I went to see him on the day he was to die.

On my way I took with me a hibiscus flower, but rubbed it so that the people might not know what I had in my hand. I left the flower under the child's pillow. Those who were present there thought that I had left some 'nirmalya', seeing that the child was near his end.

I did all this under the urge of *Svabhava*.

At the stage of sadhana, *Vibhuti* first manifests itself as joy which comes from the recitation of God's Name.

When people experience this, they think that they have got everything that sadhana can yield; and their upward progress is thereby arrested. But he who keeps himself always on the move without being overwhelmed by such manifestations of joy, finds himself in possession of various miraculous powers. But those powers are not meant for display. They should be carefully kept under control. He alone can know his true Self, who keeps alive within him an insatiable thirst for the Divine without being contented with the possession of supernormal powers, powers which enable him to cure any disease by a mere touch of the hand or which lead to the instantaneous fulfilment of all his desires.

"MOTHER"

Raja Durga Singh of Baghat (Yogi Bhai)

A mother is the most loving being in this world. When a child starts babbling, the first word that comes out of its mouth is "Ma", i.e. Mother. The affection of a mother is such that the most worthless child is as dear to her as the most worthy one. Her love is as unselfish as it is impartial and deep. It expects no return. Everybody else in the world loves from some selfish motive and in one form or another wants a return for his love or devotion. Looked at in this light, Sri Sri Ma Anandamayi is a true mother. She loves

all of us alike. Some of us may not at all be worthy of it, neither as regards our characters nor our dealings with other people. But this makes no difference to Her attitude towards us. I am an utterly worthless fellow, but still I am not turned out of Her fold. That shows the breadth and greatness of Her heart. Mother knows all that everyone does, but She never despises anyone. She is all powerful and yet behaves like an innocent girl and takes pleasure in calling Herself a little child. This supreme simplicity as well as complete absence of egoism are the most remarkable features of Mother's great personality, not to speak of other qualities which are countless. The infinite can never be described fully.

I had my first darsana of Mother in Solan in the year 1934.

In the preceding winter I had gone to Calcutta with my wife.

It was my first visit to Calcutta and naturally I was full of excitement. I had previously read the life of Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa Deva and had a great desire to visit the Dakshineswar temple.

I consider myself fortunate that this desire was fulfilled. The whole place appeared to me very attractive and charming. The image of Goddess Kali gave rise to feelings in my mind which I cannot fully describe.

I silently prayed for Her Kripa and soon after that I had the darshan of Sri Sri Ma Anandamayi.

I have no doubt that it was by the kindness of Mother Kali that I met Mother Anandamayi.

To me both are one and the same.

When Mother Anandamayi came to our side of the country, She went direct to Salogra where She remained for some time. There is a small cave in Salogra where She stayed. This was built by one Nath Babaji. Salogra is about four miles from Solan. It was there that I had the good fortune of having Mother's darsana for the first time. When Mother was in Salogra, the late Bhajji (J. C. Roy) of blessed memory was with Her.

One day I had to go to Simla for some work. It was raining the whole day. On my way back I stopped at Salogra to see how Mother was faring in that heavy rain.

I found Her sitting in the cave with water running all round Her inside it. Bhajji had made fire in a basin to keep Her warm. As soon as Mother saw me, She asked me to come into the cave and when I did so She laughed heartily. I shall never forget that pleasant and radiant face of Mother. I requested Her to come with me to Solan lest She should catch cold in the cave; but She said that She was quite happy there. I requested Bhajji also to persuade Mother to come to Solan. But he replied that Mother would act only according to Her own inclination. My motive in asking Mother to visit Solan was twofold. First, She would be better protected against rain and cold and secondly, my mother and wife would also have the opportunity of having Her darsana. However, I was not successful in inducing Mother to come to Solan on that day. After this, I visited Mother another day and sought Her permission to bring my mother and wife over there for darsana. But Bhajji said that as Mother Herself would go to Solan, it was not necessary to take the ladies to Her. As far as I can remember, Mother visited Solan the next day and came straight to my place where arrangements had been made for Her stay. She, however, did not enter the house, but preferred to sit in a tennis court, which was near it. There my mother and wife were fortunate enough to have Mataji's darshana. The present Ashram of Mother in Solan is on that tennis court. Mother returned from Solan the same day to Salogra.

It would not be out of place to mention here that when Mother visited Salogra, there was an old saint, known as Sri Shoghi Babaji in Solan.

Many people from different places used to come to him for darsana.

Mother decided one day to visit Shoghi Baba without any previous intimation.

She came in a car and went straight to Shoghi Baba who was staying in an old school building in Solan. To the utter surprise of everyone Shoghi Baba received Mother most cordially and had a very hearty talk with Her. Babaji was known to be a man of a somewhat stern disposition and often of rude behaviour towards those who dared to go to him without first obtaining his permission.

This was the first meeting between Mother and Shoghi Babaji. After this She visited the sadhu often when She came to Solan. When the first meeting between Mother and Babaji took place, I had not yet seen Her. It was after this that I went to Salogra to have Her darshana. I have already referred to Her second visit to Solan when my mother and wife saw Her. We failed to persuade Her to stay overnight. It was on Her third visit that She stayed in Solan for some nights in a small mud house near the Narsingh Temple.

One day I had a memorable vision. Mother was sitting in a crowded room. I was in a corner facing Her.

Suddenly it occurred to me that people said that Mother was an incarnation of Goddess Kali; should I be fortunate enough to have some proof of this fact?

All at once I noticed a fly sitting on Mother's face. Sri Hansa Dutta Tewari, who had come from Dehra Dun with Her, tried to drive the fly away but it was repeatedly trying to sit on Mother's face.

At this Mother started laughing heartily and to my great surprise I noticed that the complexion of Her face was changing. It looked quite dark for a few minutes and then resumed its natural complexion. I silently offered my pranamas and congratulated myself on my good fortune. No doubt it was due to Her kripa; Mother's views are so catholic that men of all shades of religious thought and belief come to Her, and everyone feels satisfied with what he sees and hears. I fully believe, as I have already stated, that our Mother and the great Goddess at Dakhineswar to whom I offered my obeisance as the one frequently invoked by Sri Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa, are one and the same.

She has appeared in the present form for the salvation of all of us.

MOTHER THE GREAT HEALER

Rajmata Anandapriya of Tehri Garhwal

When I first met Ma, in June 1947 only for a few hours at my brother in law Raja Sahib's place at Solan, I had no idea that some day She would mean so much to me and cause such a change in my life.

I remember the scene of that first meeting very clearly. I bowed to Her, just a formal bow it was, and when I sat down to study Her, I found Her gaze on me, so I looked away, but when again trying to look at Her, I still found Her looking at me. I must confess that I did feel a bit uneasy. I had the impression that She could see through and through me. I am only a mortal after all, with many faults and failings, and I did not want to become an open book even to Ma at that time. I do not remember the conversation, as I was busy trying to look at Her, which I was unable to do due to the above reason. After some time I returned to the Raja Sahib's house which is situated a few yards away on a higher level. Just before going in, I turned towards the house where Ma was staying and saw Her standing on the verandah. She had tied Her hair up, as many devotees must have seen it.

It gave me the impression that She was looking like Lord Siva. She appeared much taller also from what I could judge while She was sitting down. Didi sent some prasada of Ma to me through someone else. I did not see Didi at that time, but knew later that the sweets that had been given to me and that we all so much

relished had been prepared by her.

After three years I was fortunate to have Ma's darshana again.

What difference there was between these two meetings!

Then I had been a person of a more or less carefree disposition. Now, my mind was in a tumult that very few may be able to imagine. I had lost my husband in a motor accident and there seemed nothing left for me in this world. I felt that fate had been extra cruel to me, but I believe each sufferer feels the same way as I did. Time is called the great healer. My healer was Ma.

Bhaiji (Raja Sahib, Solan) seeing me in that condition of mind, advised me to call Ma. In fact, it was he who had planned Her whole programme to come to our side. I was looking forward to Her visit and yet I was fearing it also.

My fear was that perhaps She would ask me to forget my husband, since he was dead and gone. Instead of that, She explained to me in such a fine way how I could try and find him everywhere. After seeing Her and knowing Her better, one can never feel the great sting of grief any more. There is nothing more to be felt but a great love for Her. This love is so infectious that you can feel nothing but love for everyone and everything and there cannot exist what is called dislike or hate for anyone. She stayed with us for only a week but that week changed my whole outlook. I began to take interest in life. I started to plan out a small cottage for Her at Ananda Kashi (a place situated on Devaprayag road) when She next came. This kept me busy and cheerful, there was something to look forward to in this life, a life that had, otherwise, become quite useless and empty. There seemed a support extended from Ma, no matter how far She was. I felt a great strength within me, followed by a confidence in whatever I undertook. I didn't feel the need of looking to anyone for any help or decision. I knew that I could do things, things that I would never have believed I was capable of doing. I felt so free, light and almost happy. I believe no one can help this feeling as it is one's birthright. Those seven days of Ma's halt there were a never to be forgotten period in my life. The strength and courage that I felt within me is helping me along the line I have taken in life. The teaching of Ma, 'Jo ho jal', is there with its great and deep meaning.

So, why should anyone worry, when what is to happen will happen. Who is to stop or change the map or programme laid out by a greater hand than ours? All this philosophy, though studied by me long before, unfolded its meaning only when Ma explained it, and I am sure that no great scholar would be able to do it. Now comes the part one may call blind faith or imagination. It may be termed anything but there it is. What does it matter, as long as it can help and save one from the torture I was undergoing? I will now try to disclose to my readers some of the things I experienced, in the form of hearing and seeing, about Mother.

The first instance when Ma visited us at my home: One morning, just as I was finishing my prayers, a thought came to my mind. I wanted from Ma a garment used by Her. After a few minutes I went out to where She was staying. (It was a tent). I greeted Her and to my pleasant surprise She offered me a shawl, which She used to wear every day. She took it from underneath Her pillow and put it into my lap. I know, one may say that She always gives Her things away to the devotees, so this was nothing special. All I can say is that She could have given this shawl to me when She gave things to the rest of the family, the day She left. Why had it to be only a few minutes after my wishing for it?

Once when we were returning from Vindhyachal, where we had gone with Ma to spend a fortnight, I travelled by lorry as something had gone wrong with the car I was in. I was feeling a bit sick as I do not like the smell of petrol. As we arrived before Ma, I went straight to my room to rest. I must have dozed off, all the time thinking that I would like to go to Ma when She arrived. Meanwhile a girl came with some food for me. She woke me up. I looked past her towards the wall in front of me where I had hung a painting of the Goddess. This painting used to be my husband's and I take it with me wherever I go. Just underneath it, there was a carpet on which I used to sit down during the day. My eyes travelled from that carpet upwards.

On that carpet I saw Ma's white sandalled feet and then just as I was thinking as to who could be standing on my carpet with the sandals on, I realized that it was Ma. My eyes travelled up to Ma's face and head. It was touching the lower edge of the painting. It was so very clear that I was attempting to get up, saying to the girl that Ma had come, when the girl replied that Ma was in Her room. I pointed out to her where I could see Ma standing. She turned her head to see and then the scene disappeared.

Some time back it became my habit to think at once of Ma whenever I misplaced or lost something. I just say: "Ma, where can I find it?" and I can rest assured that I will not be disappointed. This has happened not once or twice but many times.

When last April Ma visited me at Ananda Kashi, I used to go to Her room in the mornings and wait near Her bed for Her to get up. She soon used to move and turn towards me. I would ask Her to sing to me and She was kind enough to do so. Now I imagine that I can hear Her sing those songs in the mornings or whenever I come to think of them. They simply vibrate in my mind.

In the end I will close with these words that it is the great fortune or thousands in this world that we find Ma among us to console us and bring peace and happiness to our tortured minds. That She may remain amongst us for a long, long time, is the prayer from my heart, and I feel sure that all Her devotees will join me.

WHAT MOTHER SAYS

Abhaya

In my own humble way I want to try and discuss what Mother generally says. Mother talks of a great variety of subjects. Sometimes she speaks of the Ultimate Reality. She then unravels deep philosophical mysteries, which are beyond the reach of human reason.

When expressed in simple colloquial language, they sound very much like puzzles to common people.

For instance, when She says, "There is motion in rest and rest in motion", or

"Everything is contained in everything", who is able to grasp the meaning of these words unless his vision can penetrate the depths of Truth?

Concerning the different conclusions of philosophy, we get the following from Mother: "Whatever a man thinks, feels or realises about the Supreme is true from his particular standpoint and has its full significance for him."

We have heard from Her of infinite movement, infinite rest and infinite revelation.

Mother talks most often in Bengali, but She speaks Hindi quite fluently. English words also are uttered by Her occasionally.

Sometimes She speaks in a tongue that is not of this world. It gushes out of Her in a fit of inspiration or at times quite normally.

Not infrequently She talks about the affairs of our everyday life, such as the management of the Ashram, details about the performance of pujas, provisions for the entertainment of sadhus, nursing of the sick, the duties of a brahmachari, and so forth.

At times She directs Her attention to things that appear very trivial to us, e.g. what things are to be kept

where, how vegetables are to be cut for the kitchen, and similar topics. Again, in a jocular mood She would relate such funny stories and humorous episodes as would excite peals of laughter from the audience. Nobody can beat Her even in Her lighter moods.

On rare occasions Mother's speech takes a turn which seems both unkind and piercing - soft yet pricking. Needless to say, this mood is not for all.

What else does Mother say? She encourages everybody to aspire to the realm of light. With unerring finger She points to the road that leads to the Goal of human existence, and asks us all to move in that direction, explaining that otherwise our lives would be spent in vain. Mother is very definite in this that if anyone would have true peace and happiness he must take straight to the path of God.

In Mother shines forth the light of ultimate Truth and She sees its presence in every soul though hidden under a cover. Hence rings out Her clarion call: "Awake, arise and turn your gaze towards God who resides within you as your eternal companion, the Goal of all your spiritual endeavour."

Mother's message to the people at large is simply this:

God is. Whatever you behold is nothing but a manifestation of Him. Once you know Him and live in Him, there is an end to all your sorrows and sufferings. You then realize supreme Bliss, eternal Joy. Strive hard, therefore, to realize Him. Remember, there is no peace without God.

How are you to take to that Path? Be desperately eager; sincerely desire to find out. This will make your path easy. Pray to Him who is ever gracious: "My Lord, I want you. Have mercy upon me." Weep for Him.

If you have been initiated by a Guru, well and good. Follow his advice scrupulously. Remember, it is God who manifests Himself as the Guru. Even if you have not been initiated, do not cease to strive.

Take refuge in Truth. At all times engage yourself in such activities as would kindle within you a longing for God. Always try to see that He is in everything and everyone, that all creatures are but manifestations of Him. No matter what you may do, the underlying idea should be that by doing it you are only serving Him, fulfilling His purpose. Your son is nothing but God in the guise of a child.

Who is your daughter? She is Kumari, the primeval Shakti. Your husband is a manifestation of the Lord of the universe. Your wife represents Lakshmi, the goddess presiding over the household. Ideas of this kind should be cherished in the mind. Further let truthfulness, renunciation, continence and patience be always with you as your constant companions.

Rely on God in all circumstances. This is essential. He alone is to be depended upon. He is always with you.

Do you know how to conduct yourself in life? Take your food after offering it first to the Lord, sleep in His Presence - whatever you do, do it for the Lord of your heart. Do you understand?

Are you in trouble? Remember, one is born to experience various kinds of joys and sorrows according to one's desires. For the time being, God has come to you in the guise of suffering. He is purifying you in this manner. You yourself do not know which way lies your salvation, do you? Pray therefore: "My Lord, may Thy Will be done!" He is your Supreme Father, Mother, Friend. Can He ever harm you? Whatever He does is for your ultimate good.

Come what may, your duty is to aspire to Him for His sake only. Once He is realized there will be peace for all times to come. Your cravings are due to the fact that you have not found the One.

Do you follow? Moreover, divine contemplation is the panacea for all ills of life.

God alone is your father, mother, husband, friend and all. Do not consider yourself helpless; God is with those who have none else in this world. In whatever circumstances, the Lord may place you, try to remain calm, feeling God within you.

Contemplate Him and repeat His name to the best of your ability. Keep in mind that there is no difference between Him and His Name. Our heart is cleansed by the constant remembrance of God's Name, just as utensils are cleaned by the application of tamarind.

Dive deep into divine contemplation. Whenever you find any leisure, pray to Him. Engage yourself in kirtana and the study of sacred books. Try to abide in Him heart and soul. He alone should be your constant companion. If you are lost in thought let it be for Him alone. Ever keep Him in remembrance. Do you know what is the duty of every man and woman? To contemplate Him.

What is essential? The contemplation of God. All else is without a solid core. Bear in mind that He is always watching you, no matter what the conditions in which you may be placed. You are ever in His embrace. Every form is His form. Try to see Him everywhere. Do not consider anything your own; everything belongs to God. You have to lose yourself in order to find Him, which means to find your Self. Try to make your own that which is already yours.

Although you may say that you do not feel inclined to meditate, still you should do it. In spite of your reluctance keep your mind turned in that direction. Even if contemplation does not deepen, do not give it up. Though not tasty, medicine has to be taken and will have its effect. Let your determination be adamant that so long as the goal remains unrealized there can be no end to your striving for it. Try to devote your entire energy to Self-Realisation, with the firm faith that God will take care of all else. There the matter ends.

Know for certain that the time you devote to Him is usefully spent. Anything that you do, leaving Him out, is sure to result in sorrow. Time is moving fast. When will you have your provisions for the journey properly packed? How long can your body last? Would you thus spend your life in vain? Time is precious and must be used well.

Is not the world called '*jagat*', which implies coming and going? You have to free yourself from the bonds of this coming and going - the cycle of birth and death.

Mother's spiritual discourses at times find expression in verse. Here is the translation of one:

Relying upon His saving Grace

Back to Home your steps retrace.

Mother calls young boys and girls Her friends. She often addresses children as follows:

"My friends, keep five things in mind:

1. On rising in the morning pronounce or remember God's Name, choose the name you like best. Pray to Him: 'My Lord, please make me a good boy (or girl)'.
2. Always speak the truth
3. Be obedient to your parents and teachers.
4. Learn your school lessons carefully.
5. Having observed those four precepts, you may play and amuse yourselves as much as you please.

Mother's words have consoled the disconsolate, restored peace of mind to many a soul. They have

inspired not a few to advance on the path of truth and spirituality. Men are bewildered by materialism rife in the world. Let them find out the Truth in the light of Mother's teaching and move forward with confidence towards the Supreme Goal.

MOTHER ANANDAMAYIJI LILAMRITA

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It is not without great hesitation, born of the full consciousness of my personal limitations, that I venture to narrate a few of my own experiences by way of a humble tribute to the Divine Shakti of which I believe Mother to be the embodiment in physical form.

It is impossible for me to describe even faintly the infinite Greatness of Mother. She is Perfection itself and any attempt to give an idea of Her glory in any particular aspect would only mean imposing limitation upon the Unlimited and the Perfect.

It was in or about the year 1937 that I heard Mother's name from one of Her bhaktas. It was only a casual mention, but as soon as I heard it I felt convinced that if any person were able to save a fallen creature like me from the clutches of ignorance and worldly attachment, it was Mother and Mother alone.

From that day, I experienced an inner urge for Mother's darsana and grace.

A few years later I learnt, by accident I then thought, but as I now know, by Mother's grace, that Mother had arrived in Vyasji on the bank of the sacred Narbada river. Immediately on receipt of this information my wife and I left Ahmedabad for Vyasji, which is an island a few miles away from Chandod, the railway terminus of this line. We had to go to Vyasji by boat from Chandod, and the journey was to be of about two hours.

We reached Chandod at about seven in the morning and secured accommodation in a dharmasala. At nine o'clock we hired a boat for Vyasji and not being sure of accommodation for a stay in Vyasji, we also bespoke the boat for the return journey. We reached Vyasji at about eleven thirty and made inquiries about Mother. We were sorry to learn that Mother had left only a few hours before for another place, some three miles from Vyasji, on the other bank of the river. It could only be reached by crossing the dry sandy bed of the river on foot. We felt that it was no use returning to Chandod without Mother's darshana and therefore decided to proceed. We had to walk all the way in scorching heat and were naturally tired. When we reached the place we were told that Mother had retired to Her room, which was closed, and Her darshana could not be had for some time.

We waited in the temple nearby longing for Mother's darshana. Hours passed and the doors did not open. To our surprise the boatman had followed us and requested us to leave the place immediately as it was necessary for us to cross from the island of Vyasji before dark. He also demanded the fare for the return journey as originally fixed, in case we did not like to come away with him forthwith. We decided not to leave the place without Mother's darsana and paid the boatman his fare. After he had gone away, the doors of the room opened and we were graced with Mother's darshana. We were so thrilled that we sat near Mother with tears of joy in our eyes. Mother cast Her glance at us full of overwhelming love and said: "So you have come. Do you know why I kept you waiting so long? You came with a return ticket. This habit of taking a return ticket must be given up. Even when a person dies he goes with a return ticket in the expectation of coming back soon to the world."

We felt positive that Mother was not different from the Mother of the World who is all-knowing.

Mother's method of teaching is unique. Her voice is the Voice of Silence, Her advice most practical. Surrender to Mother becomes a spontaneous act as soon as a disciple realizes that Mother is ever watching him wherever he may be and that everything in him or concerning him takes place at the will of Mother. Mother is often heard to say that everything in Nature happens by the Will of the Divine.

As an instance of the above the following may be mentioned. Once in Ahmedabad I had a strong urge for Mother's darsana. I went near the photo of Mother, bowed at Her feet and prayed for Her darsana. Suddenly, as I was engaged in this, I received a wire informing me that Mother was reaching Ahmedabad that very night.

All of us were overjoyed to receive the news. On Her arrival at the station we were surprised to find Mother as fresh and cheerful as ever. We inquired if Mother had not felt the strain of the railway journey of nearly twenty-four hours. Mother replied laughingly that She was always at rest (in Atma) and that strain was unknown to Her.

The next morning I saw a devotee cleaning Mother's teeth. Mother was casting Her glance at the devotee. There were rays of powerful blue light emanating from Mother's eyes. I do not even to this day understand the significance of this, though I have seen such blue light emanating from the eyes of saints. After a few days' stay in Ahmedabad Mother left for Vyasji. By Mother's grace I could go to Vyasji and enjoy Her blissful company. One day we received a wire from a devotee, announcing his family's arrival at Vyasji for Mother's darsana the next day.

We tried to arrange for a room in the dharmasala. Mother laughed heartily at this and stated that nobody could come unless the Divine so willed. Such wires have no meaning. To our surprise the devotee did not turn up and Mother's utterance, as usual, proved true.

A lady devotee desired to celebrate New Year's eve at Vyasji by presenting to Mother a garland of fresh roses and also desired that Mother should be dressed in a new silk sari which she had kept in a trunk in Chandod, a few miles away from Vyasji. As roses were not available in Vyasji, she requested some of Mother's devotees to go to Chandod by boat and to bring back roses as well as her trunk with the silk sari. No disciple was ready to do this as it meant wasting the whole day and it was also uncertain if roses could be had in Chandod in sufficient numbers for making a garland. In despair the lady approached me and requested me to go to Chandod. I was reluctant to do so. I told her, however, that Mother was "Kalpataru" and whatever one willed in Her presence was bound to be fulfilled, if only one had faith.

The lady protested and said: "I do not know how anyone except myself can know where I have kept my trunk at Chandod and how the person in whose custody I have left it can hand it over to anybody without my instructions."

At about seven o'clock in the evening a few of Mother's devotees came to Vyasji via Chandod and brought with them from Baroda a bucketful of roses. They also handed over to the lady her trunk stating that when they were engaging a boat for Vyasji some passer-by overheard them and requested them to carry that trunk to Vyasji to be handed over to the owner whose name and address was given. As the trunk had been in his care for some days, the custodian was anxious to return it to the owner and was making inquiries about Vyasji. All of us had a very agreeable surprise at this and the celebrations were held as desired by the lady devotee.

"Behave as if the Mother is always looking at you, because she is, indeed, always present." (Sri Aurobindo).

I can now say from personal experience that the aforesaid statement is literally true. Once in Almora I was graced with Mother's darsana. Mother was then in the Pataldevi Ashram. There was a natural spring below it where we used to go for bathing. Once when I was bathing I heard someone shouting my name from the Ashram above. He said that Mother had been presented with a bottle of jasmine hair oil and was

distributing the contents amongst the bhaktas as prasada.

On bearing this I returned to the Ashram as soon as I could, but when I reached there about ten minutes later I found that the contents of the bottle were exhausted and nothing was left for me. Mother however called me near Her and showed me Her palms, which were smeared with oil. I bowed down before Mother and immediately Mother placed both Her palms on my head and applied the oil to my hair saying, "Have you understood?"

For a moment I could not grasp the meaning of Mother's words, but the idea soon crossed my mind that Mother wanted to convey to me that She had been watching what I did during my hour of worship. It is my usual practice to apply sandal paste to Mother's head on the photo during puja each day just in the same way as Mother had done to mine. With Mother distance does not matter. Mother's watchful eye is ever on those who remember Her.

Here is another incident, which took place in Vrindaban. I had been to Delhi for some work and hearing that Mother was in Vrindaban, I went there after completing my work in Delhi. As soon as I bowed down, Mother laughed and inquired if all were well at my home. I replied with tears in my eyes that Mother knew it much better than myself. I had left Ahmedabad about a week before and could not give the information Mother desired. Mother gazed at me and in a few minutes spoke, 'It is all right'.

I did not understand the meaning of this at the time. On my return home I learnt that just at the time Mother was making the above inquiry my nearest relative had been to a surgeon for a very minor operation. As chloroform was being given the heart suddenly stopped working and the surgeon believed that the patient had expired. However, artificial breathing was resorted to and the patient began to breathe again in a few seconds. The life, which was regarded as extinct, revived. I could then understand the meaning of Mother's words, 'It is all right'.

It is well said: 'Nothing is secret from Nature'. So also from Mother who is not only in tune with the Infinite? But is the Infinite personified. A disciple prayed before Mother for blessings. Mother simply laughed in Her usual Divine way. The disciple went on repeating his prayers, whereupon Mother said: "That you are alive today is due to a saint's blessings and grace. His blessings are ever on you. Remember him and be conscious of his grace. Your mother knows all about this. Ask her." The disciple on his return home inquired from his mother as to the real import of Mataji's words and was surprised to learn that once when he had been eighteen years old he had had an attack of typhoid, being in a very serious condition. The doctors had given up all hope, whereupon his mother, being devoted to saints, hurried to one of them, bowed before him and prayed for her son's life.

The saint was very compassionate and his heart was moved by the heart-rending weeping and wailing of a mother praying for the life of her only son, and he gave her some Vibhuti prasada saying: 'God is giving new life to your son'. It was really surprising how Mother could know all about this, particularly when the disciple himself knew nothing.

To Mother all are alike, whether living or dead. Once when Mother was sitting among Her bhaktas She put a question to one of them as to when his father had died. He replied that his father had died many years ago. When all the other bhaktas had left, he sought a private interview with Mother and inquired as to why She had been inquiring about his deceased father. Mother said that just at the time the inquiry was made, his father had come and given some message to Her to be conveyed to his son. The bhakta in all humility stated to Mother that he wanted definite proof that it was his father who had come and not an imposter, whereupon Mother with Her usual laugh replied: "There was a black spot on the back of your father's body just near the end of the spinal cord. You can verify this fact by asking your mother."

The bhakta was thoroughly satisfied on inquiry that what Mother had said was absolute truth and he carried out the instructions conveyed by the deceased through Mother.

It is not an exaggeration to say that even Divine Personages come near Mother for Her darsana. Once, in Dehra Dun, we were seated round Mother in Her room on the first floor near Lord Siva's temple adjacent

to the terrace. Mother was seen to be gazing into the distance and making some signs. After some time Mother explained that Sri Yogini Kumari had come with her disciples and was talking to Mother.

On another occasion when we were sitting round Mother on the open terrace, a child who was amongst us gazing at a tree nearby, suddenly screamed and cried loudly. Mother explained saying that a Brahma Rakshasa was sitting on the tree and the child could see him. He had assumed a terrific form, but could do no harm to anybody. Mother is often heard to say that all that we see around us is nothing but the Lila of Caitanya (Play of Supreme Consciousness). In this Lila even time and space are spontaneous expressions of Cit Shakti. Mother gave to a bhakta a practical demonstration of the workings of Maha Shakti.

This incident happened in Bombay. Mother was staying in Sion, a suburb of Bombay. A devotee went to Mother at about midnight and asked Her permission to go to Khar, where he was staying with a friend of his. That place at Khar was very familiar to him as he used to stay there often. Mother was just free from the influx of visitors and laughingly replied to the devotee:

"I am not going to rest till 2 a. m. Why not wait till then?" The bhakta not being able to understand the real import of Mother's words left the place in a car. Khar is a few miles away from Sion. The car reached Khar in a few minutes time, but to the surprise of the bhakta he could not locate the residence of his friend. He searched in vain for some time and then went to the Police station to seek information. He was told that the place was nearby. So he searched again and again. All his efforts were useless. He moved about for an hour and a half when suddenly the owner of a building lighted a lamp just near the entrance of his building. As soon as the lamp was lit the devotee discovered that that was the very house he was searching for. On entering the place he looked at his watch and found that it was two o'clock.

Next day he went for Mother's darsana, Mother laughed and said: "Do you know how maya works? She puts a veil of ignorance over the knowledge you possess and makes you roam round the object which is very familiar to you, but she does not allow you to be conscious of the object you are searching for until her appointed time and this too in spite of all your efforts."

A bhakta went for darshana of Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi and after having stayed in the Ashram for a few days begged leave of Sri Bhagawan to go, saying: "I do not know if Sri Bhagawan's contact has brought about any change in my nature." Bhagawan, on hearing this, replied: "The influence of a saint works into you in silence."

Mother's influence also works in silence, most effectively. In some the effect is produced immediately, in others after a lapse of time. Mother's influence brings about a wonderful transformation of the entire being of an individual. Mysterious indeed is the working of Nature and equally mysterious this process of transformation. It takes place even though the individual may not be in the least conscious of it. It is for this reason that some of the devotees even feel that instead of progressing they are deteriorating.

To such a mentality Mother's words are very encouraging. Mother often says that a pool, which is full of filth, gives out the most offensive odour when it is being cleared. Many a filthy thing, which is lying undetected in deep waters, on being brought to light, presents a most offensive appearance. The extent and depth of dirt can only be judged in the cleansing process.

Mother also says : "Once a child is in his mother's grasp there is no danger of a fall. It may be that the Divine Shakti in Her Infinite Play may allow the child to fall, but in such a case She always prepares the ground for it and never allows the child to sustain any injury."

All the actions of Mother are easy, natural and spontaneous manifestations of divine Ananda. Hers is a miracle working influence. But for Mother's Presence many who are now living would have been dead long ago.

Once I had the good fortune to accompany Mother to Morvi. To go there from Ahmedabad, we had either to go by train and change at Viramgam and then again at Vankaner or to go up to Viramgam by car and then catch the train to Morvi via Vankaner.

As Mother was leaving for Morvi, a few other bhaktas thought of going to Dwaraka. To go to Dwaraka also it was necessary to change at Viramgam and Rajkot via Vankaner. To go to both the places one had to pass through Vankaner. A party of about seven devotees left by train for Dwaraka and five of us, went with Mother to Viramgam by car. Mother was to stay in Morvi only for a day and to return to Ahmedabad the next night at about nine o'clock.

We met the Dwaraka party at the Viramgam station. They were expected to reach Dwaraka late at night that day, so there was no possibility of darsana on that day for them. The train by which Mother was to return to Ahmedabad the next day was scheduled to leave Dwaraka early in the morning at about seven o'clock and as *darshana* could not ordinarily be had before eight, there was no possibility of the party returning by the same train with Mother to Ahmedabad the next day.

We reached Morvi at about two o'clock that very day. The Ex-Maharaja was overjoyed at Mother's darshana. The Maharanis also spared no pains to provide full opportunity for all those who desired Mother's darsana. They personally rendered all kinds of services to Mother.

The Maharaja and the Maharanis requested Mother to prolong Her stay in Morvi by at least a couple of days more, but Mother in Her usual pleasing manner persuaded the Maharaja to consent to Her leaving Morvi the next day at noon to catch the train for Ahmedabad from Vankaner. The Maharanis went with Mother by car to Vankaner station.

On arriving there, Mother told me that the Dwaraka party would come from Rajkot by the same train by which we had to go to Ahmedabad. I was surprised at this statement as it was not possible for the Dwaraka party to catch the train early in the morning after darsana of Sri Dwarakadhish.

Mother further said that amongst the members of the Dwaraka party there would be a lady bhakta whose name She gave me, whom I should request to go with Mother by car from Viramgam to Ahmedabad and not by train along with the others. At Viramgam station Mother caught hold of the bhakta's hand and made her sit in the car with Her. I was seated in front. After the car had left Viramgam station, we saw a cart full of grass standing on the road in the direction in which the car was proceeding. The driver too saw the cart, but for some unknown reason the mudguard of the car came in contact with the cart and we were all shaken. The owner on seeing this got angry with the driver. Thereupon Mother again repeated that it was not his fault and the proper explanation could only be had from the lady disciple who was made to sit near Mother. On enquiry from her we learnt that just at the time the accident had happened, she had felt that she was dying and someone was carrying away her life substance. But Mother intervened and snatched away her life substance from the hold of that being and placed it in her body which appeared to her to be a new one, because Mother had thrown away the old body in the form of a piece of steel on the road. The broken piece of mudguard was in place of her corpse. That is why Mother did not allow any of us to know what had happened lest we should bring with us the said broken piece representing her corpse. Miraculous indeed was the working of Mother and a new lease of life was given by Her to this lady disciple. When asked, Mother stated laughingly:

"After all, is not divine play but the infusion into and the withdrawing from the so called material forms?"

Another instance of a similar nature took place when Mother was being taken for a drive in a car. Mother was sitting in the car with a surgeon who had come from Calcutta for Her *darsana*. As the car was proceeding, those who were accompanying Mother saw a human body lying on the road. They stopped the car, and the owner and the doctor went to make inquiries about the person lying on the road. The doctor, on examination found that the man was dead, having been run over by some car. He came and reported this fact to Mother, whereupon Mother said that She wanted to see the person Herself. On going near, Mother said that he was saved, and asked for a cup of hot milk to be administered to him. The milk was brought from a neighbouring house, and to the surprise of all, the life which had been regarded as extinct, revived. Mother stated that the spirit had been leaving the body and soaring high but it had been brought again into contact with the body.

A disciple in Ahmedabad requested Mother to go to Dakore with him for a darsana of Sri Ranchhodji

(Lord Vishnu). Mother agreed, if the disciple took Her with him. The disciple arranged for a new car and it was decided that Mother would leave for Dakore early morning on a fixed day. I went to have Mother's *darsana* prior to Her departure. Mother inquired if there was room for me in the car and on receiving an answer in the affirmative, asked me to occupy one of the front seats. The owner was himself driving the car. The owner's wife was seated in one of the back seats above the left wheel. Mother sat near her. After the car had gone a few miles, Mother inquired if the drive was comfortable for all. I replied saying that since the owner was an expert in the art of driving, the journey was bound to be comfortable. Just as I was saying this, the tyre of the left wheel of the car burst into pieces and the owner lost his hold over the car. On both sides were fields on a much lower level than the road, and our escape was miraculous due to Mother's presence. The car had a spare wheel and it was soon fitted to the car. For the second time, after we had gone a few miles, Mother put the question as before, inquiring if the journey was comfortable. I replied in the affirmative when the same incident repeated itself and the tyre of the new wheel burst into pieces. The owner was naturally perplexed. An idea dawned in his mind to borrow a spare wheel from one of the buses that were plying on hire on the road. Fortunately the driver of a bus consented and the new wheel was fitted in place of the old. For the third time after the car had been driven a few miles, Mother repeated Her question, and on an answer being given in the affirmative, exactly the same thing occurred once more; the tyre again burst into pieces. The pieces in all cases were so numerous that even car repairers expressed surprise as to how the tyre could have burst into such small fragments.

The tyres were irreparable. The owner was nonplussed and did not know what to do. Mother suggested that we should go for a walk. So, three of us, Mother, Sri Gurupriya Devi and myself went on foot for some time. It was a most pleasant walk in the company of Mother. After we had covered a certain distance, I inquired of Mother as to what these incidents signified. Mother did not speak, but Her silence suggested what Lord Krishna had said, viz. "Every action of mine is Divine."

We returned after the walk and were resting by the side of the road when some fruits were offered to Mother and She distributed them amongst us all. The owner of the car appeared much worried, because it was at his instance that Mother had consented to go to Dakore.

Mother pacified him saying that a vacant car might possibly pass by and all of us be accommodated in it. Soon after, we saw an empty car coming near us and the driver was good enough to give us a lift up to Nadiad. When repeatedly requested to explain the reasons for those strange happenings, Mother stated that the life of one of the inmates of the car had been in danger, which could only be averted by warding the evil forces off on to the wheel of the car.

Another lady devotee once narrated to me that her husband had suddenly fallen ill and the illness had lasted for a very long time. The disease was regarded as incurable by the doctor. So she left with her husband for a change of air at a place in Saurashtra. Mother was then in the U. P. One night she saw, as in a vision, that Mother was seated near her husband's bed and was drawing out the intestines from his body. After the intestines were brought out, the lady disciple heard Mother say:

"See how these intestines are full of dirt, mucus and the like. How can a cure be effected unless these injurious substances are removed?"

So saying Mother removed all those substances from the intestines and then said: "Bring your husband to the Ashram soon." The man quickly recovered after this and went for Mother's darshana.

Those who know how the goshala (Dairy Farm) had spontaneously come into existence for supplying pure *ghi* at the time of the *havana* ceremony (Note: this refers to the great *yajna* that was performed in the Vranasi Ashram from 1947-50.), how and under what circumstances a regular supply of *ghi* and other articles was sent for that purpose in spite of so many restrictions and obstacles, and how wonderfully and miraculously the *puṇahuti* ceremony took place, can only say without hesitation that Mother's workings are all Divine. The miraculous cure of the leper at Ambala by Mother's touch also bears testimony to this.

To Mother, physical distance does not matter. Her healing and merciful influence is ever working for the well-being of Her children.

By Mother's grace we were fortunate enough to purchase a building for our residence. When we completed the negotiations, my wife prayed to Mother that She should bless our home by Her visit during Her sojourn at Ahmedabad and should enter the room on the first floor meant for worship and remain there till at least five Garba dances were performed in Her presence.

A few months after this, Mother was good enough to come to Ahmedabad and readily consented to come to our residence. On the day of Mother's visit, we arranged Mother's seat in the open Chowk. After we had finished our *pranama* and the *prasada* had been distributed, Mother of Her own accord went to the prayer room and sat there for some time. She then called upon the ladies to perform Garba dances to the tune of devotional songs and after five dances were over She said to my wife : "Are your wishes fulfilled?"

Mother is a great transforming influence. By a mere touch or look Mother can rouse the inner shakti and bring about awakening in any being. Once Mother decided to go to Dwaraka from Ahmedabad. The reason for this, as stated by Her, was that some of the devotees who had come with Her, were anxious to visit Dwaraka. One morning Mother started for Dwaraka by train and reached there at night. Early next morning, She requested the bhaktas to go for darshana while She herself went to a place close by where sannyasins were residing. The Head of the Math was bedridden. Mother went to see him. He felt so overjoyed at the new experience that he shouted for his disciples to come and have Mother's darsana, saying: "A Divine Person has come. Do not miss this opportunity." Before the disciples could arrive, Mother left the place and went straight to the station to catch the train. We learnt that the Head of the Math soon gave up his body in a state of ecstasy.

It is indeed rare for such Divine Personages to assume human form. It is equally rare to have the good fortune of their *darshana* and personal contact.

Blessed indeed are those who are favoured by Mother's darsana even once. To those who have not had this rare and unique good fortune, I pray in all earnestness and with all strength at my command to seize the very first opportunity that offers itself.

My pranamas over and over again at the sacred feet of Mother. When will the day dawn when we shall understand and know Mother in all Her Infinite Greatness, Power and Love? All depends on Her Will alone.

ANANDAMAYI MA

S.C. Sarkar, J. C. S.

I write this for a man, the unsophisticated and unbiased one, who does not scoff at and scout all that cannot be turned into logical propositions and tested through scientific experimentation in a laboratory.

I ask such a man: - have you met Anandamayi Ma? No?

Well then, let me see if I can give you some idea.

Can you conjure up the vision of an angel in flesh and blood, without a pair of wings, a fair-skinned elderly lady who looks ten years younger than her actual age and who is gracefully and immaculately attired in a spotless, white and narrow-bordered "dhoti" and in a baggy blouse, the like of which will be found only on her person?

Again, can you imagine a lady whose intelligent, responsive face effulges against a silhouetted background of flowing silky-black hair, a face adorned by a pair of shining grey eyes, the gaze of which will dive deep into the innermost regions of your heart and, to crown all, a face which is highlighted by a pair of thinly carved lips which will quite unexpectedly break into ripples of gentle smiles or loud laughter, exposing a string of lustrous ivory beads which constitute her teeth?

If your imagination has traversed so far, you may take it that you have had a prevision of Anandamayi Ma as She will appear to you when you meet Her.

And, when you actually meet Her, you will make the amazing discovery that Anandamayi Ma has a compelling attraction. Although judged by the accepted standard She can hardly be called beautiful, yet you will feel that She is a most interesting and fascinating personality, who like a flame, which attracts flies, will draw you closer and closer to Her, the more you come in contact with Her.

As a matter of fact, Her powers to attract are almost irresistible. Not only is She the centre of a surging throng, all agog to have Her *darsana* wherever She goes or stays, She exercises a strange fascination over people of the most diverse sorts, characters, creeds and occupations. Caste, creed or religion are no barriers, for amongst Her devotees and admirers, I have met Parsis, Muslims, Christians, Hindus, Sikhs and Jains, Arya-Samajists, Brahmos and Atheists.

I have met in the crowd round Her Englishmen, Frenchmen and Austrians, as well as people of other nationalities. I have seen Punjabis, Sindhis and Gujeratis, Marhattas, Madrasis and Unyas, Kashmiris, Beharis and Bengalis. At the same time I have noticed philosophers, scientists and professors, authors, doctors and legal luminaries, business people, artists and sadhus rubbing shoulders, engrossed in Her talks or Her songs. To mention a few names only of those who have visited Her again and again, eminent sadhus and religious leaders like the late: Oriya Babaji, Hari Babaji, Avadhutji, Prabhudatta Brahmachariji, Gopal Thakur, etc.; also the Rajas and Ranies of Solan, Mandi, Tehri Garhwal, the late Jamunalal Bajaj, the late Kamala Nehru, Himmat Singhji, Dr. Pannalal, Mahamahopadhyaya Gopinath Kaviraj, etc. Mahatma Gandhi had expressed a keen desire to meet Her and actually did meet Her twice. That he felt attracted and immensely interested in Her is known to all who know about these meetings. The mighty magnet which draws people in this way is a simple and dignified being, who is the very essence of purity and all that is good and noble in human conception.

Anandamayi Ma is what may be called a *crux criticorum*, a puzzle for critics, because judged by common yard sticks, She appears to be a bundle of contradictions!

Since Her marriage when almost a child, Anandamayi Ma lived and shared the same room with Her husband. During the earlier part of Her married life, She performed the usual household duties, to wit, cooking, drawing water, sweeping, cleaning utensils, etc.

She prepared Her husband's hooka for smoking and even massaged his feet and limbs to induce sleep. And yet, She has remained all throughout a pure virgin in body and soul!

She never received formal initiation from a preceptor and yet She had all that a disciple could ever expect to have from a Guru and more.

Asanas, mudras and samadhis came to Her automatically, without any effort on Her part.

She is practically illiterate and yet She is the repository of all wisdom. The wisest of the wise sit mute at Her feet, drinking through rapt ears the nectar, which flows from Her, lips when She talks. And She does not talk of anything else but '*Hari-Katha*', talks only of the Supreme Being. She often reminds her hearers, "If talk you must, talk about Hari only; all other talk is useless and leads to sorrow."

She was never taught music and yet, when She sings, Her sweet melodious voice fills the heavens with harmony.

She is a simple village maiden and yet She embodies a culture, the fringe of which is never touched by the highly cultured people.

In spite of what is stated above, there are no real contradictions in Her. She is endowed with a perfect balance of mind, is ever cool, collected and unruffled. Nothing can upset Her nor sway Her. She has a perfect sense of proportion and propriety, a strong common sense, which never errs, a high sense of decency and decorum which moulds Her ideal manners. Her sense of humour is highly developed and Her intelligent; witty and quick repartees and Her talks full of effortless alliterations are matters of genuine enjoyment.

Correct to a fault in Her relationship with people with whom She has contact, She easily becomes an innocent little child to the grown-ups and friend to the young ones. She never deviates, even by a hair's breadth, from the strictest path of verity. She never touches money nor is She interested in the numerous presents and offerings She receives from Her admirers, including amongst other things, lands, buildings and motor cars. Her attendants have a constant headache to prevent Her from making presents of everything She gets.

She has an astounding memory and never fails to locate a person whom She has once met. And yet, She is unattached in the strictest sense of the term. Quite a large number of Ashrams have grown up bearing Her name and for Her use, but She leads a nomadic life travelling ceaselessly throughout the length and breadth of the country, with short breaks here and there.

She often describes Herself as a bird on the mast of a moving boat, free to fly across to another mast at any time. She is surroundings. She is absolutely indifferent to physical needs and comforts.

She is the soul of purity and harmony and Her mighty influence is silently working wonders in all who come in contact with Her. She interprets Her teachings through Her life. Her acts speak louder than Her words. She is poised in Her inner Self and it is no exaggeration to say that She is the personification of the teachings of the Gita. There are no pretensions, no affectations, no window dressings and no 'isms', including 'I-ism'. If you want to meet a '*Sthitaprajna*', go and meet Her.

One thing about Her which you may not like (at least I do not) is Her pronounced partiality for sadhus and sanniyasis and Her indomitable iron will which She has playfully nicknamed as *kheyala*. If she has a *kheyala* to do - a thing, no one can make Her give it up.

I shall now narrate some of my personal experiences. It was in Solan, near Simla, where we had been invited to take part in a *Nama Yajna* in the presence of Anandamayi Ma. We went in a batch from Simla on a Saturday and did our best till about 9 o'clock at night. We felt tired and moved into a room situated at some distance from the temple of Siva where the ceremony was being held.

There we spread ourselves to rest our aching limbs. It was a dark night and the sky was overcast with clouds. Soon a very heavy downpour followed. We were smoking and talking and our talks naturally centred round Anandamayi Ma. One of our party wanted to convince us that She had supernatural powers. A disbeliever in miracles, I sneered at him and blurted out: 'Better keep your cock and bull story to yourself. If your Anandamayi Ma is anywhere near about the position you ascribe to Her, let Her appear before us here and now and I shall then believe your stories'.

I had hardly finished when we heard a bang from outside.

The door, which we had shut to prevent rain water coming in, went ajar and, believe it or not, there appeared before us a figure robed in white, thoroughly drenched from head to foot. We were startled by a loud laughter, which we knew to be Anandamayi Ma's. Before we could collect our wits, the figure had vanished into darkness!

It was still raining cats and dogs, but we did not mind.

We sprang to our feet and ran out in the torrential rain to the temple, to be told that Anandamayi Ma had gone unnoticed and had just returned thoroughly drenched.

Another story: Once, while slaving away in office, I had a ring on the phone telling me that Anandamayi Ma had just come. This was unexpected and I immediately rang up my wife to say that I was coming home to take her along with me. Before long, I was driving along Baird Road, New Delhi.

My wife said if we had had some time we could have purchased a garland for Anandamayi Ma. By then we were passing through the Baird Square. All on a sudden something struck the windscreen of the car and the steering wheel in my hand became unsteady! I curbed the speed and looked out. To our utter astonishment we found a garland of marigold flowers hanging on the screen as if invisibly nailed! It was not a Tuesday when garlands of marigold abound in and near the Hanuman Temple and our anxious gaze did not discover a pedestrian anywhere near about us!

We caught hold of the garland, which was fresh and wet and felt that it was meant for Anandamayi Ma. We took it to Her and told Her the story. She smiled and said, such things did happen!

During Anandamayi Ma's first stay in my house at 27, Asoka Road, New Delhi, a Kirtan had been arranged by me under a Shamiana on a bright sunny day. Sadhus like Hari Babaji and Chakrapaniji were there along with a big crowd. Rain came all of a sudden and it became so heavy that someone proposed that Anandamayi Ma should be seated in my car to avoid getting drenched. This was suggested, as She does not enter anyone's house, but stays under canvas or in temples, ashrams or dharmasalas. I felt miserable, as there was a risk of the Kirtan being stopped. I did not know why, but I suddenly started offering fervent prayers to Anandamayi Ma begging of Her to stop the rain!

She smiled and suddenly joined us in singing. In a trice Her face became flushed and Her voice loud and She became oblivious of Her surroundings. Within a couple of minutes, the source of that torrential rain dried up and the hot sun came out again in the sky!

I could go on multiplying instances but that may be tiresome.

A pall of gloom sits heavily over the world at present and humanity is heading towards a crisis. At this juncture it may be wise for us all to meet and keep in touch with the living phenomenon of peace and bliss, which is Anandamayi Ma.

MOTHER ANANDAMAYI

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1

It was on a fine autumn morning in 1928 that I first came to know the name of Mother Anandamayi.

I was getting ready to go to College.

I had not then retired when the late Mahamahopadhyaya Pt. Padmanath Vidyavinoda, M.A., came and met me in my house and informed me that Mother Anandamayi of Dacca had come to Benares. He presented me with a pamphlet written by the late Mr. Kunja Mohan Mukherji alias Swami Turiyananda on Mother and on the miraculous deliverance of his son from an impending snakebite through Her grace. He said to me that the sight of Mother absorbed in samadhi was really an ennobling one and he asked me to go and see Her, if possible. This commendation from the lips of a person who was known to be a fastidious critic of men and things and who spared none from his attacks, seemed to me to carry special weight.

Mother was staying then in the house of Kunja Babu at Ramapura. I made up my mind to see Her there. Accordingly, that same evening I went to Kunja Babu's place where both he and his elder brother Sasanka Babu (the late Swami Akhandananda) very kindly undertook to help me in having Mother's darsana.

They introduced me to Bholanathji immediately and the latter took me to a small room on the ground floor where I found Mother absorbed in samadhi, surrounded by a number of bhaktas. Bholanathji was anxious to see Her come back to Her senses soon and made various unsuccessful attempts to that end.

Knowing that a trance must be allowed to run its full natural course and that every artificial method of breaking it up was fraught with grave risks, I asked him to desist from doing anything calculated to interrupt it. I was waiting for Her return to normal consciousness, but noting that even in two or three hours Her condition did not come down to normal, and apprehending that it might take an indefinitely long time, I returned home with the intention of coming back and seeing Her the next day.

It was on the 6th of September that I paid my first visit to Mother. I came to learn that She had come a day or two earlier and also that this was Her second visit to Benares, Her first was in 1927 on Her way to Hardwar on the occasion of the Great Kumbha Fair.

I came back to Mother's place on the 7th as already arranged. In fact I came twice every day during Her short stay at Benares till the 12th of September. I remember I did not miss a single day on that occasion. It is difficult to analyse after a lapse of over 17 years my first impressions of Mother and to explain in words what exactly I then felt.

I can only say that what I actually saw with my own eyes far exceeded anything of a like nature I had ever seen before; it was a dream, as it were, realized in life. During the few days that Mother was at Benares, Kunja Babu's house presented a spectacle of festive jubilation where an unending stream of visitors continued to flow in every day from before sunrise till after midnight. The doors of the house were kept open all the time and everybody was always welcome. High officials, pandits, university students, shopkeepers, sadhus, samnyasis, priests, laymen and men in the street - all flocked in numbers, each at his own convenient hour; to have a glimpse of Her darsana, to pay their respects to Her and if possible, to exchange with Her a few words. People of both sexes, of all ages and of all ranks, were to be found in the crowd.

Some came to have Her *darshana* only, a few to have their doubts solved, while others still were there out of mere curiosity. The beauty of it was that all felt a sort of magnetic charm in Mother's personality, so that those who had come once out of curiosity could not resist the temptation of coming back again, no longer out of curiosity which had been satisfied but owing to some mysterious attraction.

The fact is that all felt that they were like little children in the presence of their own mother. The bleakness of cold formalities was replaced by the warmth of familiarity and intimacy. Mother behaved with them as if they were Her own children dear, affectionate and very familiar. There was not the least reserve in Her look nor any note of constraint in Her expression. The whole atmosphere was one of a friendly gathering imbued with vivacity and joyousness.

Every evening a sort of informal meeting would be arranged in the courtyard where the visitors would be seated round Mother and ply Her with questions. She used to reply to each question resolving the doubts of the inquirers with a few short sentences in Her sweet and inimitable manner. As the enquirers hailed

from different cultural levels and represented different intellectual and spiritual points of view, it is only natural that the questions should range over many different topics, and be of varying interest and value. It was wonderful how Mother tackled all these questions with the same ease and spontaneity and without requiring a moment's reflection to deal with even the most abstruse and knotty problems brought before Her. Her replies were as a rule very pertinent, going straight to the heart of the questioner, couched in a language remarkable for its terseness and expressiveness.

Every word that fell from Her lips carried weight; and humour too was not wanting when occasion demanded it. Mother as a conversationalist was seen at Her best in those days it was a quality to which everybody who has had the privilege of talking with Her in later years is in a position to testify. It was interesting to observe that She maintained an attitude of strict reticence in regard to questions, which were not bona fide in nature but were either academical or intended to elicit opinions likely to hurt the feelings of others.

Different *kirtan* parties vied with one another in singing daily before Her the glories of the Divine and His Name. Individual devotees with a melodious voice considered it a distinct honour to themselves to be permitted to regale Her with their songs.

On such occasions generally, when the music flowed spontaneously out of the deeper feelings of the singer's heart, and also on other occasions when in the course of conversations a crucial point was reached, it was observed that Mother's appearance became aglow with *bhava* and the normal gave way to the supernormal. It seemed as if Her usual personality with which Her bhaktas were familiar was replaced for a while by an altogether different one. At such moments various unusual phenomena were observed. Stotras and mantras of an extraordinary kind used to gush from Her lips with a rapidity that made it practically impossible for anyone to record them. (Note: In subsequent years attempts were sometimes made to record these spontaneous utterances, which were held to be as valuable as the srutis revealed to the rishis. In Mother as Revealed to Me (P45-47) some illustrations are found. The difficulty experienced in recording these was two-fold: firstly they were generally of a sudden emergence; and there was no knowing when they would come. Even Mother Herself did not know. Secondly, it was really impossible to reproduce them exactly, except through some mechanical device. There was also the fear lest some letters might be missed or alteration or corruption made in their transcription as Her utterances deserved to be treated as mantras, in which, besides other considerations, the constancy of the phonetic value of each sound had to be maintained.)

The language of these utterances was unique ; it was not, strictly speaking, Sanskrit nor even any of its derivative vernaculars, though there were a few Sanskrit words here and there. Several words were unfamiliar and even the so called Sanskrit words did not perhaps convey their usual sense. Besides, very often - monosyllabic '*bijas*', known or unknown, were interspersed. The pronunciation was so perfect that even a conjunct sound, made up of several consonants without any inter-vocalic linking, was distinctly audible. Sometimes on these occasions Mother melted into tears or ejaculations, or even would become rigid and pass into a trance-like condition.

The trance-like state was also induced in those days when bhaktas offered flowers at Her feet or in other ways tried to propitiate her. The response was immediate.

There was a difference of opinion at that time concerning the precise status of Mother. Some held that She was a Goddess in human form - Kali according to some, Durga according to others, Sarasvati or Radha according to others still. Some thought that She was a human aspirant, who had attained perfection in this life, after a series of births during which Her spiritual progress had been continued. Others again entertained the view that she was a *Brahmavadini* as of yore or perhaps an Incarnation of the Divine come down to earth to relieve its sufferings. She was identified with Sukadeva by some and with Sri Krishna Himself by others.

People of worldly nature used to think that some higher spiritual entity, human or celestial, was in possession of Her body and utilised it as an instrument to serve its own ends. A certain gentleman, then living in a house adjacent to my own and working in one of the local High Schools, went to the length of telling me that Her case was clearly one of obsession, though by a good spirit and that it was desirable to bring back the soul from the control of the spirit. This gentleman, who was old and had the reputation of being a practical Tantrik of long standing, claimed to have the power of restoring Her to her normal

condition, provided that Her husband and lather were agreeable.

He was under the impression that the appointed course or evolution of Her life was being impeded in this way and that in the interest of Her own spiritual welfare this setback should be removed. It goes without saying that nobody cared to attach any importance to these words. One day, the great speaker, the late Swami Dayananda of the Bharat Dharma Mahamandal, came to see Mother and had a personal talk with Her. Though the interview of Swamiji was intended to be more or less of a private character, it was arranged that the late Sasanka Babu and myself should be allowed to be present on the occasion. Swamiji put several questions to Mother, which She answered. Thus:-

Swamiji: Mother, what are you in fact? People hold different views regarding you and no agreement seems to exist. What have you to say of yourself?

Mother: You want to know what I am. Well, I am what you consider me to be - not more not less.

Swamiji: What is the nature of your samadhi? Is it Savikalpa or Nirvikalpa? Does mind then persist?

Mother: Well, it is for you to decide this question. All that I can say is that in the midst of all apparent changes of state in body and mind, I feel, I am aware, that I am always the same. I feel that in me there is no change of states. Call it by any name you like. Is it samadhi?

Several such questions were put and answered.

Those few days of Mother's stay at Benares sufficed to convince me of the greatness of Her personality and the unusual sanctity of Her life. I learnt Her past history from those around Her, including Bholanathji, Sister Gurupriya, Sasanka Babu and others, and I still remember with delight those happy occasions when Mother Herself condescended to narrate the story of Her early life and its development at Bajitpur and Dacca. In was a story of gripping interest to us all.

This story which relates to Her earlier life at Astagram, Bajitpur and Dacca, much of which has since been recorded by Her admirers and devoted followers and the story of Her later life (Note: Matri Darshan (Hindi), Matri Darshan Bengali 1938), Mother as Revealed to Me (English translation of Bhajiji's Matri Darshan,) by G, Das Gupta (1952), Sri Sri Ma Anandamayi by Gurupriya Devi in 16 volumes, (Bengali) and 19 volumes (Hindi), Sri Sri Anandamayi Prasanga, by Amulya Kumar Datta Gupta, Part 1 (1938) Part 2 (1942) (Bengali,) From the Life of Sri Anandamayi Ma by Bithika Mukerji, Vol 1 (1970), Ma Anandamayi Lila, Memoirs of Hari Ram Joshi (1974) A Mystic Sage Anandamayi, Shyamananda Banerjee (1973).) throw a flood of light on Her unique personality.

The greatest thing that struck me in those days in Her was Her personality. Her physical features were magnetic. Her smiling countenance, the sweetness of Her expression, the simplicity of Her life and behaviour, Her unassuming and genial manners, the cordiality and warmth of Her relationship with all, coupled with Her extraordinary holy life and wisdom, made Her an object of universal attraction and adoration.

2

During succeeding years I was privileged to come in closer touch with Mother and to know Her more intimately. But it is not possible for me to state what Her exact role is or what particular rank she occupies in the spiritual hierarchy of this country.

That different persons should hold different opinions regarding Her personality is of course natural. For in a matter like this, a correct analysis on an intellectual basis is not possible, nor can ordinary human judgement yield any useful result.

Still however, an attempt is being made here at the request of friends to discuss briefly some of the most prominent features of Her life and character. It is expected that this discussion will not be taken as amounting to a final solution of the problem, for it offers no solution at all. It is intended rather to serve as a possible aid to a clearer appreciation of Her or as a suggestion in that direction. The basis of this

discussion is furnished by the data in Her own utterances, whether embodied in books, already published or awaiting publication, or otherwise.

Firstly, it is well known that Mother received no *diksha* or initiation of any kind from an external Guru and also that She herself does not give *diksha* to anybody. In other words, in the technical language of the shastras She claims to be neither a Guru nor a *sisya*.

But an informal *diksha*, not one taken from an outside agency, She certainly had. We know that this informal *diksha* took place in the month of August in the year 1922 when She was twenty-six years of age. Mother Herself admitted this fact shortly afterwards to one of Her cousins. This *diksha* was not of the usual type known to us, but it did represent the initiation of a certain spiritual activity within Her body, an activity which did not owe its origin to any source other than Her own self. In the conventional language of the world it may not be termed *diksha* at all, but it is recognized as such in the traditional teachings of the mystical Science.

That a systematic course of *sadhana*, including physical and psychical disciplinary exercises, followed this event in Her life is well known. In the Tantrik literature it has been made abundantly clear that *diksha* is a spiritual necessity, though it is true that in every case external ceremonials or other forms of activity may not be needed.

Inner *diksha* consists in an act of self-purification. The kind of *diksha* is determined by the intensity of the Divine Power of Grace descending upon the soul. So far as the fundamental variety of this purification process is concerned, we have to recognise four ultimate types Viz. *anupaya*, *sambhavopaya*, *saktopaya* and *anavopaya*. When the descending grace is extremely powerful the first type of *diksha* follows as a natural sequence. With diminishing power the others are employed.

In *anupaya* *diksha* perfection is realized at once. In *sambhavi diksha* or even in *Shakti diksha* the necessity for external *kriyas* as an aid to inner purification is not recognized.

In the history of mysticism it is recognized everywhere that in exceptional cases illumination is possible, and this takes place, even when an external source is lacking. We know of the Pratyekabuddha who neither received his wisdom from any previous Buddha nor communicated it to others. He was a Buddha no doubt, having attained to Enlightenment, but he was neither a *sisya* in relation to an earlier Buddha nor a Guru in relation to a future Bodhisattva or Buddha. Had he been a Guru he would have been a perfect Buddha. The illumination in this case had its source within.

In the Vedic literature we come across cases of Rishis who, having been blessed with spontaneous illumination, were the seers of mantras which are associated with their names. This self-generated wisdom is really an example of the so called *Pratibha Jnana* of which we read so much in the Patanjali and other Yoga systems and in the Tantrik literature. The origin of *Pratibha Jnana* is explicable as the result of Divine Grace descending on the soul of a man.

The Grace or *Shakti*, which comes down on the matured soul, is of different degrees of intensity. These degrees belong in the main to three categories - intense, mild and dull. Each of these three varieties is again subdivided into three classes, so that there are nine degrees in all. If Grace of the second degree (counted from the beginning) descends on the soul, one is not required to have recourse to a Guru for illumination and one gets the Light from within. This Light is spontaneous and does not come from an external source. In such cases the necessity of an external Guru is dispensed with.

But the *prarabdha karma* remains and the body which is an outcome of this karma persists till the karma is worked out through *bhoga*. When however Grace of the first degree descends, the *prarabdha* itself is destroyed. And with the exhaustion of *prarabdha* the impure body also falls off. The question of an external Guru does not at all arise in this case, as it does not in the case of the second degree of Grace.

In Sant literature we hear of *Swayam Siddha* Sants or persons who are saints from their very birth and not due to the accident of knowledge from an external source. These men take no *diksha* from others, but they

are in a position to give *diksha* to deserving candidates. These great Souls descend from transcendent regions, especially from the Divine World, beyond the Cosmic Mind and the Great Void. And when embodied, their centres of consciousness never come down below the middle of the two eyebrows. In the literature of other countries also the record of similar cases is not altogether wanting.

I do not know if any of the above types of self-generated illumination is analogous to the nature of Mother's personality. It seems that Mother is not comparable to a Pratyekabuddha, for, while a Pratyekabuddha is exclusive and isolated in his blissful seclusion, indifferent to the fact of Universal misery, Mother is too keenly sensitive to the sorrows of the world to remain contented with an isolated existence, even if it were possible. All Her thoughts and activities have their bearing on the transformation of the world. And as a matter of fact She has always the Cosmic and Trans-cosmic Consciousness precluding any possible exclusiveness of outlook.

We know of cases of souls which are always perfect and which dwell permanently on the Divine Plane as eternal associates of the Divine Person to whom they are related as inalienable aspects of the integral whole. These souls are very similar in nature to the *Svayam Siddha* type mentioned above. As a matter of fact they are not subject to the action of Ignorance or Time Spirit and are never required to come down to earth except in company with the Supreme Lord during His descent or otherwise as directed by Him in regard to the time, place and manner of descent. Such souls considered from the standpoint of spiritual status and attitude are varied in nature. It would be unfair to place Mother under this category, for the simple reason, that while these souls are characterised by a sense of intimacy with the Divine which seldom encroaches on identity, Mother represents an integral self-awareness which never tolerates even in the slightest degree an idea of separation or distinction from the integral Central Being. Her confession concerning Her consciousness of identity with the Cosmic and the Super-cosmic existence and with all the powers and attributes associated with it, is a clear argument against the inclusion of Mother in this category.

The view which accepts Mother's personality as a case of *Avatara* may be dismissed with a few words of comment. The question of *Amsa* or *Kala* may be left aside, but it seems to me that even the possibility of a Plenary *Avatara* is excluded in Her case. The fact is that every *Avatara* unless he is of the plenary type, represents an aspect of the Divine Power and can never represent the Divine Essence or even the Divine Person *in toto*.

In several cases *Avatars* are self-forgetful Divine emanations, whereas in others in which self-consciousness is retained, integral consciousness seems to be always lacking. In case of the Plenary *Avatara* also, if there be any, unbroken consciousness of his plenary nature does not appear to exist. A careful study of Mother's utterances and a critical attitude towards Her life and activities would perhaps reveal the fact that Her case is altogether different. She Herself has confessed to some that She never loses her Supreme Self-consciousness, *Samadhi* or no *Samadhi*, She is where She always has been; She knows no change, no modification, no alteration: She is always poised in the selfsame awareness as a Supreme and Integral University, transcending all limitations of time, space and personality and yet comprehending them all in a great harmony.

She has said times without number that Her body is not like that of an ordinary person generated through *prarabdha karma* under the dominating influence of Ignorance and that She has had no previous life to account for Her present existence; nor will She have a future life in continuation of and for the adjustment of Her activities in the present life. The fact that She was aware of Herself and conscious of what was happening around Her immediately after Her birth is an illustration to show that Her self-awareness was born with Her and was not the effect of either Her so-called *diksha* or Her so-called sadhana in Bajitpur.

Mother says that all Her activities are really spontaneous and not prompted by will or purpose, nor influenced and coloured by desires. Willpower is not the spring of Her actions. The untrained will of the layman and the trained will of the yogi are equally absent in Her and what appears like will is only an expression of the Great Power beyond the will working from within.

She distinguishes between *MahaShakti* and *Ichchashakti*, saying that while the former is like the fire, the

latter is like the smoke that issues out of it.

Ichchhashakti, or will-power cannot exist in a person who, whether considered as an individual or as the Universal, is essentially impersonal. The power of the Impersonal or the Power which is impersonal expresses itself in the Cosmic Mind as the universal will and in the individual will, but in itself it can hardly be described as will of any kind. It is pure, ineffable and absolute. Of course, there is such a thing as Divine Will, but we have to interpret it as identical with the Supreme Power rather than as will analogous to the human will, though it must be admitted that the human will and the Divine Will are in a sense the same Power.

Will implies self-limitation to a certain extent, even though that limitation is an imposition by itself on itself. What is technically known as *karma* is really an outcome of the individual will of man with an egoistic background and functioning under ignorance. Freedom of will implies a removal of this limitation. If the limitation is self-made its disappearance is equally self-initiated. In the Self, which is really free from all limitations, the will is absolutely free. In other words, it is not will in the ordinary sense of the term but is an expression of the Divine Power, free and unobstructed in its functioning. That Mother has no will of Her own as distinguished from the so-called Divine Will shows that all Her movements take place spontaneously and that we cannot hold Her separately responsible for any of them. Her movements are guided neither by the predispositions of the past nor by any considerations of the future. They are confined to the present and they rest there as in the heart of Eternity.

From this it might be inferred that She is always in a state of purity and that what comes to pass in Her life is determined not by Herself as She appears to us but by the forces working from above. Her system is like a stringed instrument giving out notes, not of its own initiative but in response to shocks or vibrations received from outside.

It is very difficult for a man to conceive a personality, which is so impersonal or the Impersonal actually embodied in such a Person. In Mother we have a curious combination of these contradictory elements, for which reason one finds it so hard to form an estimate of the truth of Her Being.

Willpower being really absent, the absence of karma as a moral force becomes intelligible. That Mother is untouched by *karma* of any kind need not therefore be an enigma. There being no previous karma, the origin of Her body is to be explained by the play of the Supreme Power, either in itself or as reacting to the collective aspirations of humanity. As to why the Supreme Power should have expressed itself in a particular human body is a question to which an ordinary man is not in a position to reply.

The experience of *Sarvatmabhava*, to which all mystics look forward after their realization of the Self, is found to be a normal experience with Mother even in Her earliest days. The fact is so patent to all acquainted with Her life that no illustration is needed to substantiate it.

The true ideal of *samadhi* which Mother has held out before Her admirers is intended to show that She does not attach undue importance to the Static Brahman realization or to the Dynamic one. She views the Supreme Truth as consisting of and yet exceeding both these lower truths.

The gradual evolution of the human soul in the direction of this Absolute Reality is represented by Her as an integral spiritual movement in which there are certain relative poises. *Chitta Samadhana*, *Bhava Samadhana* and *Vyakta Samadhana* are the three successive stages of inward development leading to its culmination in what is called by Her Purna *Samadhana*. The first stage stands for the incipient condition of the evolutionary movement in which the mind is dried up and rendered light and combustible, owing to the elimination from it of the waters of worldly desires and passions under the influence of inner culture in the form of meditation or otherwise. Just as dry fuel, free from all moisture, takes fire easily and burns, in the same way the mind thus purified catches easily the fire of knowledge and becomes aglow. This spiritual condition, usually known as *Bhavasuddhi* or purity of *Bhava*, is called *Chittasamadhana*.

It arises under the influence of the Supreme Reality through different channels of expression. Human nature being divergent, it is not strange that in some cases this state should represent an overpowering of

the mental structure of the aspirant under the pressure of divine sentiment.

The second stage, called *Bhava Samadhana*, represents a more advanced condition than the first one. In this state the seeker remains immersed in the integral *bhava*, insensible to the stimuli of outer nature. The body becomes, as it were, paralysed under the domination of this *bhava*. Outwardly speaking, the body loses its mobility and power of responsiveness and becomes more or less like an inert clod, though inwardly the *bhava* which has influenced it, begins to flow on in an uninterrupted stream. When this state matures into perfection what is left behind is only the play of the Integral Idea having unified the outer and inner elements of human nature. In this stage the individual being is charged and permeated with integral *bhava* and there is an overflowing of it into outer nature. In other words, the integral *bhava* fills up the entire mind of the *sadhaka* and flows over into the world outside him.

The third state is called *Vyakta Samadhana*. In this condition the fire of knowledge burns as fully within the individual as it does outside. The soul is then absorbed in one undivided Universal Being. Even in this state the duality of Form and Formless persists.

But in the next stage which represents perfection and is called *Purna Samadhana* all sorts of dualities melt away, having been for ever transcended in Supreme Unity of Absolute Truth. This state is transcendent and yet immanent, is *Nirguna* as well as *Saguna*, *Sakara* as well as *Nirakara* at one and the same time, and yet it transcends both. This is really the so-called - *Bhavatita* condition free from the ripples of thought vibrations. This is *Samadhi* in the proper sense of the word, for it signifies *Samadhana* or completion of every sort of activity and thought, a state beyond ignorance as well as beyond knowledge. The stability of the body and the mind is based upon concentration on a particular principle or vision which, in the end, universalises itself, dissolves the egoistic sense remnant within it and stands out in its unique splendour.

In course of time, this sense of basic unity also disappears. What is left behind is beyond the power of mind to grasp or of words to describe. This appears to be the highest perfection of *Nirvikalpa Samadhana*. Mother says that in this state all the activities of the body, even the vibrations of the cells, are stopped and that if the condition continues for a long time the body is likely to be destroyed. But one whose descent has for its object the welfare of the world continues in the body as long as such continuance is necessary in the interest of humanity. This is a state of *Mahayoga* and is to be sharply distinguished from the yoga of the ordinary class. While an ordinary yogi retains his sense of physical identity to the last moment of his life and is subject to action, a Mahayogi is above such limitations and is immune from the necessity of any action initiated by himself.

It is evident from the above that the state of *Mahayoga* bears a faint resemblance to Mother's own condition, with this difference that while *Mahayoga* is the logical culmination of a series of prior *sadhanas*, Mother's state, as such, was not evolved in that way. It has appeared with Her and will disappear with Her.

There is a tendency in some quarters to consider Mother as belonging to the category of a *Devata*. Those people are inclined to think, each according to his own point of view, that She is not a normal human being but is celestial in origin. In reply to the contention of these persons it may be said that there is no specific ground to regard Her in this light. That different devotees see in Her Person different heavenly manifestations is easily explicable on the hypothesis of their unconscious predispositions crystallized into visions of the gods and goddesses associated with their subliminal mind and may also be interpreted as due to the action of the Supreme Power functioning as Will through Her body. That She Herself as an individual did not exercise any willpower is to be assumed on Her explicit disowning of the use of such a power.

It is the intensity of *bhakti* in a worshipper which visualises its object in a concrete form. The foundation of the Supreme Power is of course assumed. We know of three layers of beings one connected with the earth plane, the other with the intermediate plane and the third with the heavenly plane known respectively as *Men*, *Siddhas*, and *Devas*. Knowing Mother as one does at present, one cannot pretend to say that from the standpoint of *Brahmavidya*; the distinction of the three classes counts for much. The

phenomena attributed to Mother are easily intelligible on the assumption of Her being endowed with *Brahmajnana* irrespective of the fact that She is Human or *Siddha* or *Divya*.

As regards the question of Her descent as a *Siddha* or as a *Devata* it may be studied on the analogy of the problem of Her descent as a *Nitya Siddha* or *Svayam Siddha* mentioned above.

There is another point, which needs elucidation in connection with the question of Mother's identity.

We always find that in spite of apparently diverse attitudes or poises in Her mind and body, She always feels Herself as one and the same. This awareness of unity in the Self is not affected in the least by *Samadhi* or by *Vyutthana*, which means the three normal states of waking, dream and dreamless sleep. *Samadhi* and its effects on the system are not minimised nor is undue weight attached to Her playful outer movements. Underlying both, the same self-vision persists, neither clouded by the many sided activities relating to the outer world, nor clarified by the withdrawal of the senses and the mind inwards.

In the midst of tumultuous uproar She maintains an unbroken silence and in the depth of Her silence She speaks out eloquently. This shows that in judging of Her we should not allow ourselves to be led by considerations of *Samadhi* or *Vyutthana*. This being so, we cannot explain the whole story of Her *diksha sadhana* and *upasana* and even of Her illumination and attainment of Supreme Knowledge except as mere play, intended probably to serve as an example to ordinary humanity. One would thus find in Her a dual personality representing on the one hand the luminous peace of the Silent Self and on the other a self-imposed playful attitude displaying like a kaleidoscope the shifting visions of a series of dramatic pictures bound together by certain bonds of affinity or sequence, the secret of which is hidden from the view of ordinary men.

We know very well that in every stage of Her life Mother played Her part admirably well, consistently with the laws of propriety befitting Her role, and that behind all these appearance She has retained the selfsame and eternally self-revealed consciousness. It is therefore a very difficult task to try to describe Mother as She really is. She has appeared differently to different persons and even if these differences are contradictory we can quietly accept them knowing full well that in a higher synthesis even contradictories may meet together. These differences need not be obliterated in the interest of a particular viewpoint. Naturally we do not, and cannot, know all the phases of Mother's life; and the little we know of a particular phase we know imperfectly. She is too near us to be seen in Her proper perspective and as for ourselves we too shall have to rise up to the height and attain to the broad outlook in which an attempt may be made to study Her properly. What is really needed is to feel that She is the Mother and we are Her children and that as mere children we cannot be expected to know Her as She is, but only as She shows Herself to us in response to our cravings. It really becomes us to behave as infants crying out in the night and to invoke Mother with an inarticulate language for Her actual descent and benediction.