

MA ANANDAMAYEE AMRIT VARTA

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with the divine life and sayings of
Sri Anandamayi Ma

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MATRI-VANI

The Infinite is contained in the finite, and the finite in the Infinite, the whole in the part and the part in the whole. This is so, when one has entered the great stream. He who attains and that which is attained are one and the same.

* * *

Divine Happiness — that which you call *Parama Sukhadam* — is pure, unalloyed bliss, happiness in its own right.

* * *

On the journey through life in this world nobody remains happy. The pilgrimage to the Goal of human existence is the only path to Supreme happiness.

* * *

One who serves God can never be helpless. The more ardently one seeks communion by engaging in Japa, His service and contemplation, the fuller will be His revelation.

* * *

Do not feel distressed because you are deprived of his physical presence. It is the duty of the nearest and dearest of the departed to pray that he may progress on his upward path. However, if tears rush into your eyes because he has left his body, then cry invoking God. To weep for God is everybody's one and only hope. Also perform as perfectly as possible the duties prescribed by the Sastras for the wife and son of the deceased,

* * *

What can be expected from this world, whose very nature is constant flux: times are ever changing. To live in time is to be bound by it — by death. If you do not rise above time, how can you escape the clutches of death? Had time not borne away the moment that brought you such acute distress and agony, would any life be left in your body? This is the way of the world.

* * *

Abandon yourself to God in all matters without exception. "May he do as He pleases with me; who am I but a creature in His hands" — this should be your attitude of mind.

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It is the pure, undefiled flower that finds a place at the feet of the Lord and nowhere else.

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Take great care to spend your life in spotless purity, worthy to be dedicated in worship to the Lord. Speak about Him, meditate on His glory, try to see Him in everyone, Him who is the salt, the breath in life, the heart of hearts.

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You feel lonely? In very truth you are not alone. Does the Supreme Friend ever forsake His friends?

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The beauty of it is that man's very nature is to long for Reality, Supreme Wisdom, Divine Joy; as it is his nature to return home when the play is over. The stage of the play is His, the play is His as well, and so are those who take part in it, friends and fellow-beings — everything is He alone.

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CONTRIBUTION OF MA TO THE CULTURAL & SPIRITUAL HERITAGE OF INDIA

II

—Amiya Kumar Majumdar

Before we proceed to consider the nature of spirituality, we will do well to settle another problem, viz. the problem of truth. Do we mean the same thing when we use such expressions as truth of history, truth of science, truth of poetry and truth of religion? Certainly we do not use the same paradigm when such expressions are used. It is widely believed that religious truths belong to an order different from that of scientific truth. Even if one does not agree to such a view, one may consider what Cartwell-Smith has to say in this respect. Cartwell Smith, an eminent scholar devoted to Islamic theology, observes. "Religious statements are not truth claims in the ordinary sense of the expression, they only indicate how truly a religious man lives his life according to religious tradition which he has accepted." As he puts it, "religious statements at their best have been expressions of personal or corporate involvements, tentative but joyous, inadequate but exuberant, human but transcendence-oriented. To approach them with sympathy is to hear them not as claims but as echoes, to see them not as the moon but as fingers pointing to the moon."

We have seen that in his commentary on Brahma Sutras (IV. I. 15) Sankara asserts that whether a person has unerring *anubhava* or not is to be judged from the person's own conviction.

कथं हि एकस्य सहृदय प्रत्ययं ब्रह्मवेदनं देहधारणं च अपरेण प्रतिक्षेप्तुं शक्यते ?

Before assessing Sri Ma's contribution to the cultural and spiritual heritage of India, it is imperative that we explain the terms 'Culture' and 'Spirituality'. The word 'culture' is derived from the latin root 'Cult', which means filling, care, refinement and worship. In course of time the original meaning has been extended and it signifies the quality in a person or society that arises from an interest in and acquaintance with what is generally regarded as excellence in arts, letters, manners, scholarly pursuits etc. In regard to an individual, 'culture' means refinement of taste. While the same term signifies a system of ideas and ideals embodying an entire theory of life, when one speaks of a nation's culture. The most important cultural trait of India is "unity in diversity." Despite diverse languages which people

of different parts of India speak and the different religious sects they belong to. India is one and indivisible. This unity, is not geographical, but spiritual.

The term 'spirituality' is a much abused term. At the outset, this is to be borne in mind that spirituality does not mean clairvoyance, nor does it signify the art of communicating through a medium heavenly messages. Spirituality is not anything supernatural or mysterious. The term has been used by thinkers in diverse ways, of which the following may be noted:

- (a) Spirituality means that spirit (Soul, Self or *Caitanya*) should rule matter and not viceversa;
- (b) Man is not a mere physico-chemical organism, but spirit or *Caitanya* is his essential nature.
- (c) Man is not an isolated entity living apart from Nature. Rather, man is organic to Nature. In one sense, man is a part of Nature, in another sense man has the capacity to transcend Nature.
- (d) Spirituality signifies reverence for Life. A person is said to be spiritual in outlook when he engages himself in doing good to all sentient beings.
- (e) A person who has developed a spiritual outlook does not look upon the universe as a mechanical aggregate of parts, but as a harmonious whole of parts, where parts contribute significantly to the growth and well-being of the whole.
- (f) A person is said to have developed a spiritual outlook when he feels that his life is not to be considered as ego-centred, but his life will have meaning and purpose in the lives of others.
- (g) One can realize the meaning and significance of spirituality when one attunes one's life to the twin principle of renunciation and service. Renunciation does not mean world-renunciation but ego-renunciation. As it appears in Vivek Chudamani.

सन्त्यन्ये प्रतिबन्धाः पुंसः संसार हेतवो दृष्टाः
तेषामेव मूलं प्रथमो विकारो भवत्यहंकारः

There are many causes leading to the bondage of the *purusha* or *jiva* to the phenomenal world. The foremost of them is egoism. Unless one succeeds in shaking off the sense of 'I' and 'mine' one cannot have a passport to the realm of *sadhana* (spiritual enlightenment). Sri Ma never recommends the same path of realization to all the aspirants. She recommends different paths to different devotees, according to their capacity, temperament and liking. She may lead some even along the path of enjoyment until they reach the saturation point, while for others she recommends the path of renunciation. In the perception of Sri Ma, peace

and satisfaction arising out of renunciation is also a kind of enjoyment and that is why she urges that one must go beyond enjoyment and renunciation.

Saints down the ages, belonging to different orders, have urged unequivocally that all paths of spiritual discipline lead to the same goal, viz. God - realization. What, however, is of utmost importance in Sri Ma's teaching is that *sampradaya* (sect) means *sampradāna* (giving away). Which ever order or sect one may belong to, he must give away one and all in order to realize one's true self. To know oneself is to know God.

It has already been stated that Sri Ma has been eagerly looking forward to those who have none to guide them in their religious pursuits, who are helpless, frustrated and have lost their moorings of life. Thus is indeed the ideal of a realized person. A *dharmika* is one who is constantly engaged in doing good to all creatures (*Sarva Bhuta hite ratah*).

Dharma has been likened to a bridge (*setu*) which takes man to God. We have it in the Sukla Yajurveda : अन्ताद्याद्यै संविभागो भूम्यतश्च यथार्हतः— You have to equitably distribute to all people of the country according to their need, whatever is produced in the country. There is, however, a qualifying clause मित्रस्य चक्षुषा समीक्षामहे— You must look upon every being of the world with the eye of a friend. For the Indian thinkers detachment is the end of life, but it is affirmed, at the same time, that detachment does not presuppose an inactive, indifferent and asocial life. Detachment can be achieved only through living an active life taking care to see that activities of a person are not carried with an eye to one's own advantage. It is not enough that a detached person rises above self-interest, he should, at the same time, give up the notion that he is the doer. As the Mahabharata (Santiparva) affirms : We should first renounce all selfishness and then renounce that by which we do so.

त्यज धर्मम् अधर्मञ्च उभे सत्यानृते त्यज
उभे सत्यानृते त्यक्त्वा येन त्यजसि तत् त्यज ।

Sri Ma has always been fully alive to the significance of this saying of the Mahabharata and translated this ideal into action; in consonance with the spirit of the Indian ideal. The salient features of Sri Ma's contribution to the cultural and spiritual heritage of India may be described thus : instead of looking upon religion as a doctrinaire belief, She made religion coeval with life itself; she removed all barriers between the sacred and the secular and the secular. She urged that the main purpose of human life is to live for other, she harmonised contemplation with action and recommended *japa* of the holy name of God as the most practical religious discipline, and advised an aspirant to go beyond both enjoyment and renunciation.

*

N. B. : The sayings of Sri Ma quoted in this paper are taken from "Matrilila Darshan" by Debaprasad Mukhopadhyaya, Calcutta, 1989.

CONVERSATIONS WITH WESTERN DEVOTEES

[ONE]

—Vijayananda

MA AND SPIRITUAL TRANSMISSION

Q.- It is usually said that a spiritual teacher should wait for the awakening of a real spiritual need in the disciple. But does a sage not have the power to induce this awakening?

V - True, a teacher should wait for the real questions to arise in the disciple. Preaching or teaching to those who are not receptive equals to sowing on a rocky soil; but the sage is able to transform this rocky soil in a fertile one. For some, he can do it all of a sudden, for others he will go progressively; but he usually does not do that with words or oral teachings. A single look from a sage is sufficient to change an atheist into a religious man, a libertine into a yogi. That was the daily miracle that Ma was able to do, but this transformation was by the awakening of the divine power which is latent in everyone. Once this awakening is realised, there will be a fertile soil for verbal teaching, if this is still needed.

Q : Does the awakening of the inner energy given in some cases by the guru lead sometimes to an increase of ordinary desires?

V : When inner energy, that is the power of Kundalini, is awakened by the power of the guru or by yoga exercises, or even spontaneously, the first effect is indeed an intensification of desires and even of the basic desires. Ma one day told me : *Kama* (sexual desire), *Krodha* (anger) and *Bhagavan ki Shakti* (Divine energy, the term by which Ma used to designate the power of Kundalini) move side by side. And with both fingers, she showed me how both movements were intimately intertwined, but going in different directions. What we are looking for in reality is the satisfaction of our desires, is the bliss of the Self; but by trying to obtain this bliss in the sense objects, we are going in the wrong direction, because these objects are only a reflection of this bliss. This is similar to a child who is ready to embrace his own image which he is seeing in a mirror. Then, what is necessary is to reverse the dynamic of the process and to bring it back to its source which is within ourselves.

When the guru awakens the inner energy, he gives intensity to this double movement. It is up to the disciple to choose its own direction. Towards the top or towards the bottom. But the guru will only awaken Kundalini when he has tested

