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Just as there is a veil of ignorance for the individual,  
so there is also a door to Knowledge.

## MĀTRI VĀNI

*Samsāra* (the world) means the abode of uncertainty and doubt. The clown who mistakes his role for reality—yet is only dressed up as a clown. This is why it is called '*Sang-sāra*'.\*

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The whole of Manifestation is but a display of God's divine power—He Himself as *vibhūti*. The non-dualists speak of the one Self ( *Ātmā* ) again who manifests as duality? None but He—the One. It is impossible that some realization or other should not occur while treading the spiritual path.

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Forgetting that God is the one Beloved ( *Ishṭa* ) men give their love to sense objects. To love anything that is not God means to divide one's devotion between two (*do-ishta*) and this makes one wicked (*dushta*).

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To be born as a human being is a rare boon. If, in spite of having obtained this great opportunity one does not give time to the contemplation of one Beloved, one will have

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\* A play upon words that cannot be rendered into English. *Samsāra* the world, the round of births and deaths. *Sang* clown, *sāra* essence. Man thinks of himself as a separate individual ( *jīva* ) actually he is *Siva* disguised as a *jīva*. So long as he does not wake up to this fact the round of births and deaths continues for him,

to ask oneself : What have I been doing ? To neglect the contemplation of Reality means to take the road of death.

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Who is called a friend ? He who makes you turn your mind towards the Beloved, he is your supreme friend. But a person who diverts your thoughts away from Him and tempts you to progress in the direction of death, he is your enemy, not your friend. Try to correct yourself. The man who makes no effort to improve himself is in fact committing suicide. The enjoyment of sense objects acts as a slow poison that opens out the path leading towards death. This is why, as a human being, it is man's duty to tread the path of Immortality.

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What does *Ātmā darśana*, the direct perception of the Self mean ? The seer, the seen and vision—where these three are realized as modifications created by the mind, superimposed on the one all-pervading Consciousness, this realization is called *Brāhmīsthiti*. Where there is no question of action, there is *Ātmasthiti* (one is established in the Self). And for those who worship God with Form, *Ātmadarśana* means to perceive Him everywhere. Just as it is said : "Wherever my glance falls there Krishna appears." If anything is perceived that is not Krishna, one cannot speak of true vision. In perfect all-embracing *darśana* the Beloved stands revealed.

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Knowing the Mother means realizing Her, becoming the Mother. 'Ma' means *Ātmā*, Ma means 'maya' all permeating. Pervading Himself by Himself, reposing in Itself —this verily is THAT.

# Conversations with Sri Sri Anandamayi Ma

RECORDED BY PROF. B. GANGULY

*Translated from Bengali*

*Ranchi Ashram, 1st June 1965.*

*Question :* What is the advantage and the special result of meditating in a cave ? Does a cave represent the mother's womb or the cave in the human heart ?

*Mataji :* Meditating in a cave enhances single-mindedness. The outer cave is a symbol for the inner cave. The home of the householder should be provided with a retreat like a shrine room to be used as a cave. In order to destroy the curtain of ignorance, a place that is curtained off to serve as a cave will have to be set apart in every home. Behind the curtain one should meditate and outside of the curtain perform service. *Grihastha Ashram\** signifies a condition in which the householder is not aware of strain or toil. He must serve his family, regarding every member as a manifestation of the One. Work for your little daughter with the idea that she represents *Kumārī*, the Virgin Mother of the Universe and for your son looking upon him as Gopal, the child Krishna. By taking care of his wife the husband serves but Lakshmi, the Goddess presiding over home and hearth; and the wife should worship the Lord of the world in her husband. One's parents are to be revered as spiritual preceptors, one's younger brothers as Gopalas, one's younger sisters as Gouris, the big brothers to be respected as fathers and one's elder sisters as mothers. If one is able to serve everyone with this attitude of mind, how can family life be an impediment to *sādhana* ? Wherever you may find yourself, acts of service will help you to fulfil yourself, to attain to perfection. And

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\* A play upon words : *shrama* means strain, toil, labour. *Ashrama* absence of these.

in addition to engaging in service, a special place and time should be reserved for the worship and contemplation of God in solitude. All the rest of the day try to sustain the remembrance of His Name or of a *mantra*. Wherever you may be, the way to the revelation of God lies there itself. For the *brahmachāri* and *sannyāsi* it is most congenial to practise meditation in seclusion in a cave. Depending on one's capacity and stage the place of practice, the *sādhana* and the state of achievement vary.

*Question* : Are the *Vānaprastha*\* and *Sannyāsa Ashrams* appropriate under modern conditions ?

*Mataji* : One should try to live every *Ashrama* (stage of life ) according to the injunctions of the *Sāstras*. The *Vānaprastha* and *Sannyāsa Ashrams* are difficult ones. Everyone should do as much as he can.

*Question* : The *Sāstras* prescribe that a man should retire to the forest and adopt the *Vānaprastha Ashram* after he has completed 50. How can this rule be followed in our times ?

*Mataji* : When do people retire nowadays ? At 55 or 58 or 60. Well, then at least at the age of 60 they should abandon their worldly life and, freeing themselves from their ties, live in an Ashram. Why be attached to what has been left behind ? If at 55 the spirit of renunciation comes over you, retire and become a *Vānaprasthi*.

*Question* : What is the path of a *Rishi* (*Riṣipanthā*) ?

*Mataji* : For the offspring of a *Rishi*—his sons and daughters—for them is the path of a *Rishi*. The wife of a *Rishi* is called *Riṣi patnī* and his son *Riṣi bālaka*. What is meant by *Rishi* you can find out from the *Sāstras*. You should study and perform the duties of a *Rishi*. The founder

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\* *Vānaprastha Ashram*, the third stage of life, in which the householder is expected to leave his family and retire to the forest for meditation in solitude. *Sannyāsa* is the fourth stage of complete renunciation.

and ancestor of every family ( *gotra* ) was a Rishi. You are all descendants of Rishis. The *Grihasthāshram* should be lived in accordance with the rules of the path of a Rishi, in obedience to the *Śāstras* and to *Dharma*. If a householder abides by the laws of conduct laid down in the *Śāstras*, then by the grace of God he will automatically reach the goal of life. Where action is not spontaneous there is trouble and friction. Whatever action or event comes about without difficulty, should be understood as happening spontaneously. In this there is no toil or strain, no craving, it happens by God's Will.

*Question* : What do you mean when you say 'Ashram is a condition in which there is absence of strain or toil?'

*Mataji* : Where restlessness, desire and trouble are, there is strain and toil. If the Ashram is lived in keeping with its innate rules, there will be none of these. The strenuous striving towards Self-realization is not felt as strain, it is *tapasyā*. Strain implies the awareness of discomfort. Even if by *tapasyā* the body is subjected to discomfort, mind and heart are full of enthusiasm and joy. To realize God means to realize one's Self. How can there be strain while engaging in the essential thing for oneself? The *sādhana* that is practised so that the *Ātmā* may be revealed will not be felt as strain or toil. To do *tapasyā* is your self-expression ; in order that this may become evident, the *tapasyā* must be free from strain, must be easy and natural. If I work at the bidding of another, it may seem a drudgery to me, but if I do my own work, prompted by my own desire, how can this be wearisome? Self-realization, in other words, God-realization is one's own work, the endeavour to find one's Self is one's own natural endeavour. The states of a *tapasvi*, *sādhaka* or *yogi* are states of the effortless play of the Self.

*Question* : Can the action of the *Sushumna* be compared to pumping air into a tube ?

*Mataji* : You are referring to our talk about the tube the other day.\* According to the line along which a person practises *sādhana* will be his realization ; by attending to the work of one's true nature one attains to eternal union. The man who becomes united to Him is styled a yogi. To prepare oneself for that Sublime Touch is the purpose of *sādhana*. By practising or listening to the name of Hari or doing *japa*, the rhythm of one's breath is regulated, *prāṇāyāma*† comes about spontaneously, there is repose, natural ease, no difficulty, no illness. The rhythm by which mundane work is achieved causes disease, sickness, worry ; it does not bring about rest, ease and equilibrium. If you remain steeped in the current of worldly activity there will be physical creation, worldly knowledge and worldly interest. This is the current of constant wanting, not the current that leads to God-realization. In a life full of desires there is no room for Him, no current that leads to God. Passion and craving provide man with a 'return-ticket'—that is to say, he is bound to come back to this world of misery. Desire for sense objects—for that which is full of poison—leads to death. The rhythm of breathing that it produces causes coming and going, one is forced to be reborn. The man who does not want this, drops the misconception that God is far away and finds his Self to be nearer than the nearest—he indeed is extremely fortunate. The rhythm of the breath must be changed. If one practises *sādhana* following the Guru's instructions, the breathing changes of itself. Be it the name of Krishna or Kali or any other of God's names, its constant repetition will transform the breath. When this has been achieved the *mantra* becomes alive effortlessly.

Once Prangopal Babu took a photo of this body and showed it to Balananda Brahmachari. Afterwards he took this body to Deogarh to the Brahmachari's Ashram.

\* See November 1966 issue of Ananda Varta, PP. 103-104.

† Breath control.

Wherever this body was taken it made no difference to the states that manifested at all times. Didi and others observed that this body was uttering *mantras* quite distinctly. Whether it was sitting or conversing with someone, the 'Sivoham' *mantra* was spontaneously repeated clearly. For a long time this went on secretly. Only later it was noticed. The reason why this is disclosed here is to illustrate that this body being pure notwithstanding its living in the *Grihasthāshrama*, the rhythm of the breath being in perfect harmony with the movement of the mind, *prānāyāma* and spiritual experience (*anubhūti*) occurred of themselves. By effort real *sādhanā* cannot be done. Through the action of the lifeforce, light, *mantras* and so forth manifest. Depending on the tendency of anyone's mind he will proceed in a certain direction and live his life in the world accordingly. The vibration of the lifeforce is conditioned by the *saṁskāras* of every particular person. Everyone's *prānāyāma* is different. The man who is fortunate, whose *saṁskāras* are excellent, does not require a 'return ticket' any more. In order to change the rhythm of the breath one has to resort to sustained practise. One should begin by the repetition of any one of God's names that one prefers. By treading the path that the Guru points out, the breath will be altered and thereby also the bent of one's mind. The moment this is achieved the *sushumnā* will become active in the twinkling of an eye, just as when air is suddenly pumped into a tyre (tube). So long as these things do not happen of themselves, one will have to go on striving. Everyone will understand what refers to the specific line of approach along which he proceeds. The type of meditation that suits a particular person may also reveal itself. So long as this does not occur there are difficulties, struggle, the impression that one is not getting anywhere, that one is incapable of achieving. The exact path one has to take is recognized when the time is ripe. Just as when water is poured out somewhere and finds the proper way to descend and join a stream. So long

as the water does not mix with other water one will have to keep on pouring. If in between it dries up, no harm has been done. Who can tell at what moment a flood will burst forth? At some time or other one is bound to be blessed by a touch of one's true being. How union is achieved is full of mystery. The current that leads to it is fourfold. One part is unmanifest and three parts are manifest. By the action of *prānāyāma* and by *dhyāna* ( meditation ) the three manifest parts will have to be joined to the unmanifest. By one's own particular *kriyā*, by the repetition of a name, by *prānāyāma* one will have to unite with that current. By selfless service done with the conviction that all are but manifestations of the One, man may also become united to Him. One has to proceed with great regularity and constancy. So long as that spontaneous revelation does not occur, one will have to apply oneself. There was One. He divided Himself in order to create the world. He has always been within you. What is in the microcosm is also in the macrocosm. Thus you have to exert yourself in order to realise your Self. The Lord is manifested in every creature. To find God means but to find one's own Self. Therefore one has to tread the path with steadfastness. All spiritual paths are right and open out towards liberation. HE is free and thus the road to him leads to freedom. You have grasped, haven't you, that all are contained in the One and the One is present in all.

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## From the Diary of a European

MELITA MASCHMANN

( VII )

( *Translated from German* )

*Varanasi, November 1963.*

By the end of this week we are to go to Bombay. This must have become known to Mataji's devotees, for the rush of those who are asking for private interviews is growing from day to day. I cannot imagine how Mataji is able to cope with it. When I leave the Ashram late at night, so many are still waiting that she cannot possibly attend to them all, even if she does not rest for a minute. And when I arrive early morning, thirty or fifty are sitting there again.

Moreover, Mataji's health seems to be anything but stable. One should like to save her from exertion. But though there be a hundred people who are ready to put back their own wishes, there are still more demanding her attention. I do not believe that Mataji is immune against suffering, at least not against physical pain. Some people declare that she is—but so many things are said about her. Perhaps she does not suffer in the sense that no suffering can interrupt her consciousness of absolute Oneness with Supreme Reality. Once she told me: "There is only one evil, and that also is not real but an illusion of *māyā*: to be without God." Thus she is convinced that nobody and nothing can in point of fact be without God. Yet our ignorance makes us think that we are apart from him and this is how we suffer from the only existing evil: presumed absence of God. This suffering Mataji certainly does not share with us. But we see her body grow older and sometimes in pain.

