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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

God is complete. Thus for full revelation one has to go to Him. Only because of the notion of God's absence is there sorrow in the world. Where God is manifest there are no 'two'—sorrow has no place.

* * *

Go forth to realize God—try at least. This is the genuine madman.† Madman (*paḡol*) means *pawa gol, peye gele*†† achieved; signifying unlimited enlightenment. When one becomes obsessed by this madness, the madness after the world of duality takes flight. Some people are crazy over another's body. By this sort of insanity, falling a prey to infatuation (*moha*) and delusion (*māyā*), one ruins one's body. Turning into a maniac after God will not spoil one's body.

* * *

If, instead of being consecrated to God's work, divine power is employed for worldly ends, it is wasted. By using spiritual energy for worldly pursuits, the current of this energy will be broken. When by sustained *sādhana* one has been blessed with power, it is not right to squander it.

* * *

† Madman in the sense of otherworldly, visionary, seer. Siva for instance is also called "*Pagla*" (madman).

†† A play upon words that cannot be translated. Being mad after something implies intense concentration and one-pointedness and therefore achievement is bound to follow.

Everything is God's *vibhūti*,† His *māyā*,†† His *līlā*, His very own play. To spend for worldly purposes what one has received spiritually in the course of that play is not correct.

* * *

Mahāmāyā is one thing and *viśaya māyā*, the delusion of sense objects—sense enjoyment—quite another. For you, a pilgrim to the Eternal, it is detrimental not to tread the path to Him. Having left aside sense objects, do not remain entangled in supernormal powers. Supernormal powers are but a stage. They may be beneficial, they may also be harmful. But through them you will not attain to the Supreme, the Ultimate. Having obtained power it must not be dissipated. Aspire to Self-realization. Otherwise there will be obstacles—decline.

* * *

Using power is a very different matter from coming about spontaneously, of its own. If power is used deliberately, the 'I' remains and consequently a downfall may result from it. Whereas in the case of a spontaneous occurrence this is not so.

* * *

Infatuation (*moha*) causes entanglement while the love of God (*prema*) leads to Self-revelation. Having become involved in *moha*, weeping and regret is bound to follow.

* * *

He who is the Supreme Friend never deceives. From the worldly point of view, a son may be disowned, but that Friend can never be given up.

† *Vibhūti* The one Supreme Form revealed in all objects of the senses.

†† The Supreme Divine Power by which the One conceals. Itself and appears as the many.

About Sri Anandamayi Ma*

DR. BITHIKA MUKERJI, M.A., D. PHIL.

June 1966. Satsang Hall of the Sri Anandamayi Ashram in Kishenpur, Dehradun. Kirtan is just over. It is the time for conversation with Mataji. The hall is quite crowded with the inmates of the Ashram, guests from outside who have come to spend some time with Mataji, and visitors from the town. An old gentleman who is occupying a front seat asks permission to put a question to Mataji. She smilingly nods assent.

“What have you achieved by your *sādhana* ?” he asks.

“Here the question of achievement or *sādhana* does not arise. I am what I have always been.”

The gentleman consults a paper and then says :

“What is your message to the world ?”

“What message can one give who has not achieved or learnt anything ?”

The gentleman does not share the general appreciation of this prompt rejoinder. He is in earnest.

“Ma, I have travelled a long distance to see you. When I go back, my friends will ask : ‘What is she like ? What did she say ?’ and then what am I to tell them ? I want to understand your message !”

“Very well, tell them ‘I have a small daughter ; she prattles of whatever occurs to her.’ You said, ‘When others ask’, therefore, I said ‘I am your child’, but actually you and I are one, aren’t we ? There is only one all-pervading *Ātmā*, naught else except the ONE. You yourself are a barrier unto yourself in the form of *samskāras*. The destiny of

* Reprinted from “The Mountain Path,” vol. XI 3, July 1968.

every human being is to destroy the veil that hides his own Self. To realize the Self means to realize God and to realize God is to realize one's Self."

"There are good as well as bad *samskāras*. Do good *samskāras* also act as barriers?"

"The bad-ones do not allow the good-ones to be effective. However, from the ultimate point of view there is no such thing as good and evil."

The gentleman professes himself pleased and satisfied with this answer.

He no doubt would have been extremely surprised to hear Mataji on other occasions advocate the ritualistic worship of deities. She also countenances forms of worship which relegate ritualism to a bare minimum. It cannot be said that Mataji has any religion, doctrine or method of her own because she accepts and approves of all of them. She would in effect say: "How can you impose limitations on the Infinite by declaring: 'This is the only true way'?"

* "Why should there be so many different religions and sects? Because through every one of them He gives Himself to Himself, so that each person may advance according to his individual uniqueness..."

Mataji's teachings are mainly for the individual and as such it would be as futile to enumerate her words of guidance as to pinpoint the radiating flashes of a diamond. To each questioning person she generally replies according to his cultural background, his capacity to understand and also the degree of his conviction. However, some generalizations may be attempted without fear of misrepresentation.

Mataji has been guiding people away from the ways which lead to religious frenzy or extreme rigorisms. Mataji

* "Words of Sri Anandamayi Ma" (Published in 1961 by the Shree Shree Anandamayee Sangha, Varanasi).

never delivers a talk. Neither does she herself perform any ritual whatever. She usually encourages the singing of *Nāma Kirtana* and sometimes takes active part in it. Mataji is easily able to establish rapport between herself and people of all countries, age groups and coming from various walks of life.

Now that she is quite well known, many foreign seekers after Truth, artists, journalists and tourists visiting India make it a point to meet her. Mataji receives them as she receives thousands of others. The writer of this article, as one of the interpreters has had numerous opportunities to watch Mataji with foreigners. She gives them the same individual treatment as to persons well known to her. To superficial questions her answers consist of two or three words and the interview is terminated before it has well begun. To a few she gives detailed instructions about many things.

In a particular case the interpreter had a strong feeling that the translation was superfluous. Mataji hardly waited for it to be over before she would start speaking again. The man, looking at her face, would nod understandingly, as if the meaning, which was already clear to him, was being confirmed by the translator. Indeed, many foreigners have experienced no difficulty in communicating with Mataji although she speaks only Bengali and Hindi.

The variety of the advice she gives would explain to a large extent the difference of opinion amongs her devotees about Mataji's teachings. Some will claim that she upholds orthodoxy: "She told me not to eat food cooked by a non-brahmin." Another will say: "Mataji never believed in the caste system. Did she not have the temple doors in the Ashram at Dacca opened for all, many years before such a movement started elsewhere in India?"

We may hear such contradictory statements as: "She believes in education. She has asked me to study hard and

finish my educational career before I think of doing anything else," and : "Education is not important. She told me : 'This education will help you to earn material wealth only. You must strive for spiritual wealth.'" Or : "Mataji so strongly advises against the breaking up of a home : it is no use arguing that my difficulties can be solved only by going away. She always exhorts me to have patience and forgive again and again." And "She has told me that no duty is binding for one who goes forth in quest of God."

Some will assert that she upholds the ideal of social service, others that she advocates renunciation of the world for the sake of God, and each person will be correct.

It must be understood that all these teachings are the variations of just one theme : The supreme duty of every human being is to strive for the realization of THAT WHICH IS. She knows no compromise in this. All other obligations, namely towards family, country, humanity have their places in the hierarchy of human values but they are all subsumed under the supreme duty towards God :* "To aspire for the realization of Truth is alone worthy of man." "It is man's duty to bear in mind that he exists for God alone—for His service and for the realization of Him."

But it cannot be said that Mataji recommends renunciation of the world. To the oft-repeated question : "Should I renounce the world because this would be helpful to a life of *sādhana*," she has variously replied : "The time has not come for you to do so since the question arises in your mind whether you should or not."

"The call of the Divine must be felt as a compulsion. A man who hears this call leaves all behind even as a dry leaf falls from its branch."

* Quoted from "Matri Vani", a collection of Mataji's replies to letters.

"If renunciation does not purge one clean of every sense of duty and obligation it is merely of a flight into another world."

"A man does not debate whether he should escape from a holocaust."

Mataji generally maintains that so long as duties are meaningful they should be carried out meticulously and as a service to God.

She repeats this again and again to statesmen, businessmen, intellectuals, ignorant, rich, poor, old and young. "The Ashram of the householder is a field of service and every service should be performed as a worship of God".

*"Abide by your duty. To live in the home that he has created for himself is surely fitting for a householder. Do not, however, neglect the search for your real Home. Only when this has been found has one truly come home."

"There are various modes of living : one is the Ashram of the householder; another to do service, regarding whom-ever one serves as a manifestation of the Supreme Being; a third way is to fix Self-realization as the one and only goal and advance towards it with uninterrupted speed and determination. In keeping with his inclination and bent of mind everyone chooses one of these modes of living. God Himself will take care of everything that concerns a man who puts his whole trust in Him."

To children Mataji sometimes says something like this : "You are my friends, aren't you ? Will you do something for this friend of yours ? (1) As soon as you wake up in the morning bow down to God and pray to Him to make you a good boy or girl. Say : 'Lord, I don't know where you are. Grant that I may find you.' At night, do *pranāma* again and if you have done anything wrong, ask God to let you do

better the next day. (2) Try to obey your parents and elders. (3) Study well. (4) Always speak the truth. (5) Laugh and play, run and jump to your heart's content and if you can do the first four things you may be naughty and mischievous as well."

To a busy housewife she said: "You have no time during the day but the nights are your own. It does not matter when or how you remember God. Divine Grace is all-pervasive. Everyone should constantly endeavour to be in readiness to receive this ever-present Grace."

A religious life does not mean a life of idleness. What is required is to live constantly in the presence of God. Nobody need neglect any duty to practise *sādhana*. Admittedly, there are conditions that are not conducive to a religious atmosphere. But Mataji's counsel in general would be to make the best of the existing circumstances. It is only she who can devise ways and means out of seemingly unsurmountable difficulties.

Mataji is rather strict about the quality and purity of food for persons engaged in spiritual discipline. The general rules of orthodoxy are maintained in her ashrams because this seems a desirable arrangement for all concerned. She sometimes says: "You have come here for the purpose of serious *sādhana*. Everyone lives within an aura of his own creation. The comingling of natures is not conducive to progress on this path." Such advice is for the inmates of the ashrams and for other serious minded devotees. She does not seek to change the customs ordinarily followed by people.

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Mataji was born in 1896 in the village of Kheora, now in East Pakistan. Her parents, devout Brahmins, named her Nirmala Sundari.

By all accounts she was an extremely obedient, helpful and radiantly happy child. Her mother does not recall that Nirmala Sundari ever expressed a wish of her own. From her infancy she exercised unusual attraction on all who met her. For a short time only she was a pupil of the local village school. She was ever ready to help with the chores, not only at home but at all the neighbouring houses. Mataji has always approved of physical work. She herself was untiringly engaged in household work till the years 1923-24. She was able even to combine the life of a hard-working housewife with that of the ascetic engaged in rigorous *sādhana*.

Before completing her thirteenth year, Mataji was married to Ramani Mohan Chakravarti, known as 'Bholanath'. In accordance with village customs, she stayed with husband's family for the first few years after marriage. When she was about 18 years old, she went to keep house for Bholanath at his place of employment.

The question of leading a conventional married life just did not arise for this unusual couple. Mataji has said : "My parents told me that I should respect and obey Bholanath and look upon him as my guardian. Consequently I gave him the respect and obedience due to my father. He was always like a father to me." Bholanath, by all accounts, was a remarkable man himself. When the time came for them to stay together, the young husband found that he had a most extraordinary wife to look after. She was gentle, hard-working and of a joyous nature, but without a trace of worldly feelings and desires. Her innocence and unquestioning trust in him made him the devoted guardian he was to her throughout his life. Mataji has a delightful sense of humour. The anecdotes of her life with her relatives by marriage and also with Bholanath are full of penetrating observations. About her marriage Mataji has once said : "In the beginning Bholanath used to say : 'You are very immature and childlike..... It will be all right when you

