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The ONE who is the Eternal, the Atman,
He Himself is the traveller on the path of Immortality,
He is all in all, He alone is.

MATRI VANI

(Replies to letters from different people at different times.)

63.

If the body is well, all is well.*

64.

This exactly is what the world is like : life is full of worries and anxiety. Without the remembrance of God there cannot be even a prospect of peace in this world ; such is its very nature. It is always the parents who have to suffer in all respects on account of their children. Like a hero you will have to remain unperturbed and persevere in patience. Appeal to God for His own sake, then only may you hope for peace.

65.

The vessels used for puja and one's own vessels should always be scrubbed by oneself. Moreover for one who lives the life of a sadhu it is only fitting so to do. The other day I met a young man who told me that when it was for the Lord's service he enjoyed doing any kind

* Every spiritual effort is based on the physical body, for only as long as man continues in the physical body it is possible for him to make real spiritual progress.

of manual labour, such as going shopping, cutting vegetables, cooking, performing the puja, cleaning the vessels and so forth. Even if someone offered to relieve him he would decline, saying that he wanted single-handed to attend to everything necessary for the service of the Lord. He delighted in carrying out all these tasks. At the same time he looked healthy and fit. In this way one keeps happy and contented, for one is working for the Lord, and it is work performed as service that purifies heart and mind. To live in this manner promotes well-being of body and mind.

Furthermore use your leisure to read religious books, to listen to discourses on spiritual subjects, or seek *Satsang* and so forth. Do not give the mind any chance of indulging in impure thoughts. The young man mentioned above had hardly enough to eat. If someone gave him a fruit he would be exceedingly pleased. Shri Gopinath Kaviraj was saying in this connection that through need and poverty one could learn what was favourable for one's *Sadhana*, such as dependence on God and so on. For those who have dedicated their lives entirely to the Supreme Quest it is good to live in this spirit; although among householders there are many who enjoy affluence and plenty. Anger, pride and the like are not helpful on the path. Reliance on God is that which is of real assistance and to feel at all times that whatever He arranges is for one's true welfare. For you yourself do not know by what means God will draw you nearer to Him.

Drink half a pint of milk a day and eat rice or roti with dal and vegetables twice daily. For so many days you have lived on a pint of milk or fresh cheese without specially benefiting by this diet. Therefore try now for a time to take normal diet and exercise, do not strain yourself unduly and see how you feel as a result.

You will have to strive earnestly to remain ever centred in God, no matter in what way He may keep you. If the mind is fixed on God the question of material wants or complaints, of honour or disgrace does not arise. The more you let your thoughts dwell on Him the more you will find yourself improving in health of body and mind. By discussions on Divine things and by a simple, frugal life you will have to prepare yourself. You must become calm and healthy. When thinking think of Him, when working let it be His service only. You are by nature good and kind-hearted, but you will have to become good in every respect. On no account allow your

thoughts to dwell on wants and complaints. Learn to adapt yourself to circumstances as they arise—then only can there be hope of peace and tranquillity.

Mataji expressed joy on hearing of your daily programme and your collective time-table, your observing silence at fixed hours, etc. She also said: "Really, it would be a matter of rejoicing if, like good boys, they could pass day and night in Divine thoughts and occupations. What is required of a pilgrim on the Supreme Path is that he should ever keep on walking. To spend one's time in the remembrance of the Eternal does indeed mean to be a traveller on this Path."

66.

In your sorrows and troubles address your prayers and petitions to Him. To Him you should confide all your difficulties, for He is the Fountain of Goodness.

If you say : He is immutable, although action is attributed to Him by man, why call Him the 'Actor' when in reality He is free from all action ? It is because your ego sees itself as the actor that you think of Him as equally performing action.

Of course, He is whatever you take Him to be. On the other hand where THAT is, just think, who is to become the doer of what action and upon what is he to act ? Without feet He walks, without eyes He sees, without ears He hears and without mouth He eats — in whatever way you may describe Him, He is thus.

When a *sadhaka* starts worshipping an image (*vigraha*) representing his Beloved, he will in the course of his practice reach a state where he actually beholds the form of his Beloved in whatever he looks at. Next he comes to realize that all other deities are contained in his Beloved; that everyone's Lord — in fact everything is contained in his own *Ishta* and that He dwells in all of them, as indeed in everything. The *sadhaka* comes to feel : As my Lord resides within me, so He who resides within everyone else is truly the same Lord. In water and on land, in trees, shrubs and creepers — everywhere in the whole universe abides my Beloved. Further, all the various forms and modes of being that we behold, are they not expressions of my Beloved ? For there is none other save Him. He is smaller than the smallest and greater than the greatest.

Actuated by your various inborn tendencies you each worship a different deity. The true progress in one's spiritual experience depends on the sincerity and intensity of one's aspiration. The measure of a person's spiritual advance will be reflected in the manifestations that are vouchsafed to him of his *Ishta*, who will by no means remain inaccessible or separate from His devotee, but let Himself be contacted in an infinite variety of ways. Conditioned though you be, you will find the All within you and on the other hand be able to grasp that your own innate tendencies are also part of this All. What has been said here represents one point of view. You cannot dissociate yourself from the Whole.

The multifarious kinds of beasts, birds, men etc. — what are they all ? What are these varieties of shapes and modes of being, what is the essence within them ? What really are these everchanging forms ? Gradually, slowly,

MATAJI'S AMARA VANI

(17)

Mataji : You want to know whether Grace* is without cause or reason ? Certainly, for Grace is by its very nature beyond cause or reason. When working one reaps the fruits of one's actions. If, for instance, you serve your father and he, being pleased with your service, gives you a present, this would be called the fruit of action. One does something and receives something in return. But the eternal relationship which by nature exists between father and son does surely not depend on any action. The Supreme Father, the Supreme Mother and the Supreme Friend — verily, God is all of these. Consequently how can there be a cause or reason for His Grace ? You are His and in whatever way He may draw you to Him, it is for the sake of revealing Himself to you. The desire to find Him that awakens in man — who has instilled it into you ? Who is it that makes you work for its fulfilment ?

This is why you should try to arrive at the understanding that everything originates from Him. Whatever power, whatever skill you possess, why, even you yourself, from where do they arise ? And do they not all have for purpose the finding of Him, the destroying of the veil of ignorance ? Everything that exists has its origin from Him alone. For all that you must try to realize yourself. Are you master even of a single breath ? To whatever small degree He makes you feel that you have freedom of action, if you understand that this freedom has to be used to aspire after the realization of Him, it will be for your good. But if you regard yourself as the doer and God as far away and owing to His apparent remoteness you work for the gratification of your desires, it is wrong action. You should look upon all things as manifestations of Him. When you recognize the existence of God as such, He will reveal Himself to you as compassionate or gracious or merciful in accordance with your attitude towards Him at the time. Just as for example to the humble He becomes the Lord of the Humble.

* *Ahetuka Kripa* — Grace without sufficient reason.

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because you are rapt in the contemplation of your Beloved. He becomes revealed to you in every one of them ; not even a grain of sand is excluded. You realize that water, earth, plants, animals, birds, human beings are nothing but forms of your Beloved. Some experience it in this manner ; realization does not come to everyone in the same way. There are infinite possibilities and consequently, which for any particular person is the specific path along which the Universal will reveal itself in its boundlessness, remains concealed from the average individual.

What you have just heard in the discourse on the *Srimad Bhagavata* about the universal body of the Lord comprising all things — trees, flowers, leaves, hills, mountains, rivers, oceans and so forth — a time will come, must come, when one actually perceives this all-pervading universal form of the One.

The variety of His shapes and guises is infinite, uncountable, without end. So then, 'He who is multishaped, who constantly creates and destroys these forms of His, He is the One whom I adore.' To the degree that one grows in the ever wider and fuller recognition of this truth one will realize one's oneness with each one of these numberless forms. In this immensity there are diverse shapes, diverse modes, manifested in diverse ways, without end, without number — and yet there is end and number. When a *sadhaka* enters this state he becomes conscious of the perpetual transformation of all forms and moods and awakens to true understanding, which is the comprehension that the Supreme Himself manifests as the power of understanding. Now as to 'skill': when the current of one's thinking that was directed towards worldly matters is reversed and turned inwards, the One Himself becomes revealed as this 'secret skill'. Look at the everchanging world, where what exists at one moment is non-existent the next, where being is continually entering into non-being — who is there in the form of this non-being ? Even the non-existent exists .

In this connexion it must be said that if you want to find Truth you will have to realize everything as it is in its own place without choosing one thing rather than another. It is a Kingdom without end, in which even what you discern as non-existence is equally an expression of the ONE. In the purely spiritual (*chinmayi*) world all forms, whatever they be, are ever

eternal. Therefore simultaneously and in the same place there is non-existence as well as existence and also neither non-existence nor existence and more of the kind (if one can proceed further).

Very well, the Beloved is thus comparable to ice, which is nothing but water, and consequently He is without form, without quality and the question of manifestation does not arise. This is a state of Self-realization. For to find the Beloved is to find one's Self, to discover that God is one's Self, wholly identical with Oneself, one's innermost Self, the Self of one's Self. Then according to the exigence of time and circumstances various possibilities may take effect as for example the peculiar modes of revelation of *mantras* by the ancient Rishis. In such cases *mantras* or the whole of the *Vedas* were revealed to them. All this cannot but occur in consonance with the individual Karma and the inner dispositions of the person concerned. When a *sadhaka* realizes what form and formlessness essentially are, it is indeed a consummate realization. He realizes what *Bhava* is, its connexion with the *Shabda Brahma**, numerous types of languages, language without end and also language in the form of *Shabda Brahma*.

Sounds of infinite varieties and kinds manifest themselves to him in concrete forms ; this occurs on the plane where sounds appear as visible forms, (similar to forms known to us.) Well, yes, form is really void ; one sees that freedom from form means that form itself is the void. In this way the world reveals itself as void, before it merges into the Great Void (*Mahashunya*), because the void that is perceived within the world is a part of *Prakriti* (nature) and therefore still form. From this void one will have to proceed to the *Great Void*.

It is the perception of the world based upon the identification of yourself with your body and mind that has all along been the source of your bondage. A time will come when this kind of perception will give place to a knowledge founded on your oneness with the whole universe, which will reveal itself as an aspect of Supreme Knowledge. When this knowledge of the Essence of Things, when universal consciousness has awakened, what happens to the Essence Itself ? Ponder over this ! When insight into form and the formless

* The eternal sound which is the first manifestation of the Supreme Reality and lies at the root of all subsequent creation.

dawns in its boundlessness everything will be uprooted. On transcending the level where form, diversity and manifestation exist one enters into a state of formlessness. What can this be called? Godhood, the *Paramatma* Himself. As the individual self becomes gradually freed from all fetters, which are nothing but the veil of ignorance, it realizes its oneness with the Supreme Spirit (*Paramatma*) and becomes established in its own Essential Being.

Now to another aspect of the matter. Everyone has his own path. Some advance along the line of Vedanta, but as they progress they find the path of a Rishi opening out for them. To others also whose spiritual practice, worship or yoga proceed with the help of images and other intermediary aids, the same path of a Rishi may become disclosed. Yet others, who are guided by voices and locutions from the Unseen, at first hear these voices as audible sounds, but gradually in perfect language which conveys the full significance of the thoughts and ideas it expresses. By and by it becomes evident that these voices emerge from one's own Self and that they are He Himself manifesting in that particular way. No matter what be your line of approach, in due course the path of a Rishi or a similar path may open out for you in some form or manner. But at what time this will occur and to whom is beyond the ken of the ordinary person's knowledge.

Well, now suppose a man follows his own specific path which happens to be the worship of a concrete form. When he has a vision of it, is it only of the particular deity it represents or does it not also refer to the abstract form of the Self? It thus becomes clear that the Supreme is present as much in the abstract form of the Self as in the concrete form of the deity. Someone who by the method of Vedanta has in a natural way (*Sahaja Bhava*) become fully merged in the Self, will realize that as water is contained in ice so the Supreme Reality can be found in the image. He will then come to see that all images are really the spiritual forms of the ONE. For what is hidden in ice? Water of course. Therefore when we speak of the All, the Universal, there are obscurations, veils, grades of un veiling etc. like solid and melting ice. Whereas in the pure Self there can be no question of stages. With ice, even though it may be melting, there is potentially the possibility of its existing as such again here or elsewhere in future. Consequently for Him, who Himself manifests in the form of ice, there can be no question of the eternal or the non-eternal.

Hence when one speaks of *Dvaitadvaita*, (monism and dualism at one and the same time), both are facts. Just as you are father, son and husband all at once. How can there be a son without a husband or a father without a son ? This shows that none of the three is less important than the others and that in this case there can be no question of higher and lower states ; there is only equality, sameness (*sama*). However there is a place where one can actually speak of higher and lower states. Each of the two standpoints is complete in itself. No simile can be applicable in every detail, therefore take note only of that much for which it is intended. To sum up : water and ice exist eternally. Likewise He is as indubitably with form as He is without form. When with form which can be compared to ice, He appears clad in limitless different shapes and modes of being — which are actually spiritual in nature. Depending on one's avenue of approach prominence is given to one particular form.

Through every religious sect He gives Himself to Himself and the value of each of these sects for the individual is that they each indicate a different method to Self-Knowledge. He alone is water as well as ice. What is there in ice ? Nothing but water. On the plane where *Dvaitadvaita* exists, both duality and non-duality are facts ; expressed from this position there is form as well as freedom from form. Again when saying there are both duality and non-duality, to which level of consciousness does this kind of statement correspond ? There is certainly a state where both difference and non-difference exist simultaneously — in very truth He is as much in difference as He is in non-difference. Do you not see that from the worldly point of view you quite obviously assume that there are differences ? The very fact that you are endeavouring to find your Self evinces that there must be the feeling of separateness in you, that in agreement with the manner of the world you think of yourself as apart. From this point of view difference undoubtedly exists. But then the world is heading towards destruction (*nasha*) inevitably, since it is not the Self (*na sva*), not He (*na sha*). It cannot last for ever. Yet who is even in this guise ? Ponder over this ! Well then, what goes and what comes ? Behold, it is movement as that of the sea (*samudra**), He expressing Himself (*sva mudra*). The waves are but the rising and the falling, the undulation of the water, and it is the water that forms into waves (*taranga*)* — limbs of His own body (*tar anga*) —

* Here Mataji plays upon words : *samudra* = sea, *sva mudra* = His own expression ; *taranga* = wave, *tar anga* = His limbs.

water in essence. What is it that makes the same substance appear in different forms as water, ice, waves? This again is the problem of a particular plane of consciousness. Reflect and see how much of it you can grasp! No simile is ever valid in all respects. Yet it has helped you to view this with reference to the world. What lesson have you actually derived from it? Find out! What you thought of as with form you have discovered to be formless. Further that the realization of Truth cannot come through this process of speculation you will also have to understand.

The aforesaid implies that He eternally manifests displaying desire and quality; but also without form and quality; and still further it infers that there can be no question of attributes and attributelessness, since there is solely the ONE without-a-second. You speak of the Absolute as Truth, Knowledge, Infinity. In pure *Advaita* no question of form, quality, or predication — be it affirmative or negative — can possibly arise. When you say: "He is only this" and then "He is *also* this," you have confined yourself within the limits of the word "also" and as a result assume the separateness of the thing referred to. In the ONE there can be no "also." The state of Supreme Oneness cannot be described as THAT and also as something other than THAT. In the attributeless *Brahman* there can be no such thing as quality or absence of quality, there is only the One Self and nothing but the Self.

Suppose you believe that He is with quality, embodied and you become wholly centred on this aspect of Him, then formlessness does not exist for you — this is one state (*sthiti*). There is another state where He appears with attributes as well as without. There is yet another state—(these states are not progressive but each complete in itself) — where difference as well as non-difference exist, both being impenetrable, where He is quite beyond expression. Besides one can take the stand of the *Vedic Karmakhandā*. This and all that has been said above is within the Supreme State of which it is said that even though the Whole is taken from the Whole, the Whole remains the Whole. There can be no additions and no subtractions, the wholeness of the Whole remains unimpaired. Whatever line you may follow represents a particular aspect of it. Each method has its own *mantras*, its own ideas and states, its beliefs and rejections—to what purpose? To realize Him — your own Self. Who or what is this Self? Depending on your orientation you

find Him—which is your own Self—as a perfect servant in relation to his master, as a part in relation to the Whole or simply as the One Self (*Atma*).

Look, if one believes in God (*Bhagavan*) His Divine Power (*Shakti*) is already taken for granted. It is in this connexion that the distinction of gender appears, namely God as male and His Power as female. Yet there is no question of male or female—from one standpoint; whereas from another the Divinity is conceived as divided into male and female. The Eternal Virgin (*Kumari*) does not depend on anyone, She Herself is the ONE as Power. Where everything is perceived as Power it is Power in the form of Being (*Satta*): with form or as the formless everywhere it is Power as such which constitutes His form. When idea (*bhava*) and action manifest then only can form emerge. Further if you think of *Bhagavati* Herself as the Supreme, there are untold manifestations of Her Power. Again *Maha Shakti* (Supreme Power) which is the root-cause of everything -- of Creation, Preservation, Dissolution -- just as with a tree boughs and branches spring forth from its root, so all kinds and orders of deities, angels, archangels, etc. are generated as the manifestations of that Power.

The specific character of Shiva is a transcendence from all change and mutation which is symbolized by a *Shava** and denotes that in the death of death lies Immortality, namely *Shiva*. On the plane of Creation, Preservation, Dissolution He is in the form of Creation, and as what is called *Maha Vishnu* in the form of Preservation. As regards the various positions He is indeed in all of them, manifesting in diverse ways and as the formless. In each one of them all the rest are contained and in this multiformity behold the ONE. When you gaze at one form you cannot see any other, but in each one of them the All is present and all forms are of the ONE. In the void there is fulness, and in fulness the void. There are possibilities of every sort and description, but the root is the ONE, the GREAT LIGHT. Even when speaking merely of one line — how can the end of it be found? Yet when the individual is unable to proceed any further then there seems to be an end.

What is in the form of Being (*satta*)? The Self (*Atma*), the Supreme (*Paramatma*), call it what you will. That which you variously style God (*Bhagavan*), Divine Power (*Bhagavat Shakti*), the Lord of the world, Divine

* *Shava* ordinarily means corpse, but in the case of Shiva the transcendence of Supreme Power which has withdrawn from Shiva's body so that it remains corpse-like.

Majesty, Glory, Splendour etc. is only He, the ONE. Very well, God is immutable, the non-actor (*akarta*) since He is free from all activity. Only one who engages in action may be described as the actor in respect to that action. Since He Himself is in the form of all causes and effects, how can one speak of Him as controlling or not controlling them? Hence here He is not the actor. But where His *Maya* is, where the display of His Divine Power and Majesty is to be found, and where nature functions mechanically, who manifests there? The ONE of course. The static and the dynamic, these one-sided points of view of yours belong to the veil of ignorance. You speak of Him as the Actor or Non-actor, trying to limit Him to the one or the other. These distinctions are but natural on account of the angle from which you regard them. He is whatever you take Him to be; you see Him according to your way of thinking and as you portray Him so He is.

As long as the curtain, the veil of ignorance exists you are bound to see and hear in this restricted way; until the obscuration is removed how can you expect the revelation of Truth to occur in its totality? When the veil is rent asunder the fact will be disclosed that all the diverse forms are none but He Himself.

Very well, the many creeds and sects serve the purpose that He may bestow Himself on Himself along various channels — each has its own beauty — and that He may be discovered expressed in countless ways in all shapes and in the formless. In the form of the Path He attracts each person to the particular line that will guide him in harmony with his inner dispositions and tendencies. The One is present in each sect, even though outwardly there appears to be abiding conflict among them, which is due to your ego-nature being full of doubt. This body however does not exclude anything. If you follow one particular creed or sect you will have to go right up to the point where all its characteristics will be known to you. When advancing along one line, in other words when adhering to one particular religion, faith or creed, which you conceive as distinct and as conflicting with all the others you will first of all have to realize the perfection to which its Founder points, and then beyond that the Universal will of itself become revealed to you.

What has just been explained is applicable in the case of each of the various sects; yet it is of course true that if one stops short at whatever can be achieved by following one line, the Goal of human life has not been reached. What is required is a realization that will uproot conflict and

divergence of opinion, that is complete and free from inherent antagonism. If it be anything less than that it means that one's inner experience is partial and incomplete. In true Realization one can have no quarrel with anyone — one is fully enlightened as to all creeds, faiths, doctrines and sects and sees all paths as equally good. This is absolute and perfect Realization. So long as there is dissension one cannot speak of attainment. Nevertheless one should undoubtedly have firm faith in one's *Ishta* and perseue with constancy and single-mindedness one's chosen path.

Now as to the fruit of action : just consider, if one's action is continuous, without a break and one remains ever conscious of the Goal — who will be revealed by such action ? The Indivisible One. But even in every action as such the Perfect one stands Self-revealed — this is the true significance of each action; to strive is the distinctive characteristic of the individual. It is natural for man to perform actions which are the expression of his true being and it is natural for him to feel the urge to engage in actions of this type. Man's true nature is *Sva*, *Svayam*, *Atma*, call it by any name, He, the Supreme — I myself.

SOME OF MOTHER'S WAYS

By

Vijayananda (Dr. Adolphe Weintrob)

(Translated from the French)

I certainly am not so presumptuous as to claim to understand Sri Ma's methods. In this short article I should merely like to give some idea of my impressions concerning this subject. These impressions must of necessity be limited and, as it is with everything personal, are not to be entirely relied upon. For to really understand Sri Ma would mean to have had the vision of the *Paramatma*; this is why one's words are like arrows that fall back having missed the target.

What has particularly struck me is Sri Ma's extraordinary mastery in dealing with human beings and their feelings. She gives me the impression of a great magician who knows thoroughly all the strings that cause the marionettes that we all are to move, and which She pulls with consummate skill.

When I use the word "magician" it is only for the sake of simplicity of expression, for Sri Ma never imposes

on anyone any point of view or way of thinking. She leaves everybody absolutely free and does not give orders, only suggestions, and even what She suggests is always what is most suitable for us. If we do not accept Her advice, She does not insist, but very often proposes another solution. In our blindness She guides us where, from the very depths of our being we really want to go—towards the Great Illumination. Only under exceptional circumstances, when it is Her 'Kheyal' She may give what seems to us a definite order and then we feel compelled to obey.

But what I wish to refer to here is not a guidance expressed in words, but one which emerges from our inner being. We ourselves choose our path, prompted by the Dweller in the human heart, the *Antaryamin*, the *Hridayavasini*, of whom Sri Ma is the visible aspect which we perceive through the veil of our ignorance. Our destiny, our *Prarabdha Karma** comprises a number of possibilities, the total of

* **Prarabdha Karma** is that portion of one's past actions which is bound to fructify in the present life and cannot be averted.

which cannot be changed, yet may be utilized in various different ways. Just as for instance when several brothers inherit equal shares of their father's property, each one of them may use his heritage in his own way. The first might squander it on riotous living, the second use it parsimoniously and the third make it the basis of a huge fortune. Mataji teaches us how to manipulate wisely the share of wealth that destiny has bestowed on us, namely to transform it into *Paramdhan*, Supreme Wealth.

In order to cure us from the disease of ignorance and delusion and to direct us to our Supreme Goal, the great healer of souls whom we call Sri Anandamayi Ma employs innumerable remedies and techniques which vary according to the needs of each individual.

Perfect and lasting happiness is what all of us seek, consciously or unconsciously. Our discontent is the result of our feeling that we are incomplete, that we lack something. The happiness we hope to find in family life, friends and possessions is nothing else but Reality Itself, viewed through the distorting prism of words and emotions; we look for it in the wrong direction. (I am repeating here, possibly not quite faithfully, an idea that I have heard expressed by Sri Ma.) We chase our own shadow

that can never be caught. It is by looking within that the solution of our problem is to be found. But this great pilgrimage can only start from the point at which we happen to be. Here, I feel, lies the incomparable universality of the message of Sri Anandamayi Ma. Most sages address themselves only to those who already are aspirants on the spiritual path, whereas Sri Ma can help anyone at any stage or level provided he possesses a spark of good-will. She Herself is free from ego or individuality. Divinity and Love Eternal flow from Her in great abundance. She radiates the happiness which we seek in vain in the objective world and which in fact is nothing else but our own essential being, our own true nature. Thus She is able to alter the course of our feelings and thoughts, focussing them entirely on Her own person. The psychiatrists would call this an emotional transference. But this is only the first phase of the operation She performs on us. For to limit the Divine to one form, however inspiring, however noble, is not the ultimate goal. Love for one particular form can never be real 'Love', it is *moha*, attraction through delusion, attachment. So long as the idea of duality persists there must always be a mixture of attraction and repulsion. True Love is the realization of the Oneness of all things.

Once I heard Sri Ma use the following simile : (Again I am only giving the gist of what She said, not Her own words) : ‘In order to wash one’s face one has first to use soap, but afterwards it has to be rinsed away with pure water.’ In a similar way She cleanses us from our attachment to the world by attachment to Her own person and later teaches us how to divert this love towards the source of all Love.

Let us now consider the second phase of the operation. By Her radiation of Love Divine and by Her Grace She awakens in us a taste for Divine things. According to the temperament of each individual seeker She greatly intensifies his *sadhana*, be it Kirtan, Japa, meditation or any other practice.

Finally, at a third phase, when we have become sufficiently engrossed in the path that leads to Self-realization, She gradually breaks the bonds of our personal attachment that bind us to Her. She makes us understand that the joy that we feel in Her presence has its opposite, the pain of separation when She is far away, and that this is the same with all things belonging to the objective world : whenever one has a taste of pleasure or happiness it will inevitably be followed by pain or suffering. She makes us see that these joys as well as sorrows are

impermanent and as fleeting as a puff of air. Mataji often says that enjoyment derived from sense objects (*vishaya*) is like poison (*vish hai*). Certain very exceptional bhaktas may avoid this painful breaking of their attachment to Sri Ma’s person by transmuting it directly into the Divine Love that is revealed through Her. But such bhaktas are of a rare type.

The way to the Knowledge of Reality leads through the jungle of our innumerable desires. One by one they have to be uprooted and it is ourselves who have to do this work, who have to recognize our errors and abandon them. Nevertheless Mataji gives us powerful help in this. I should like to draw the attention to one special point in Her way of dealing with a situation. It resembles very much the use of vaccination or inoculation by doctors. If for instance virulent bacilli of cholera are absorbed into one’s system, one is almost certain to catch the disease, which might possibly prove fatal. But if these bacilli are modified in a certain manner by a laboratorial product that is then injected into the human body under favourable conditions one will most probably develop a little fever, in fact cholera on a very reduced scale, which however will render one immune from this particular disease. In a very

similar way Sri Ma sometimes arranges circumstances for us so that we may reap the fruits of a desire already conceived, but under conditions that will not harm us, only to make us conscious of our error and thereby cure us from it.

I shall now describe a personal experience that will elucidate this point. Last summer I travelled to Solan to spend some time in Sri Ma's presence, after having lived for a whole year in Her Ashram in Almora. At the end of that year it seemed to me that there was nothing left to justify my staying on in India and that to renew my contact with my family, my race, etc., would prove a definite aid to fresh spiritual progress. I had decided either to return to France or else to visit Jerusalem, the holy city of the Western people. Soon after my arrival at Solan I solicited a private interview with Sri Ma so as to learn Her opinion on the matter and to obtain Her permission to undertake the journey. But She does not only read our thoughts even before we have clearly formulated them in our own minds, She also understands our hidden motives of which we ourselves are unconscious. Usually when asked for an interview, She grants it almost at once or at any rate very soon. In this case however She postponed it from day to day and when

finally, two months later, at Dehradun I got the chance to talk to Her, the sweetness of Her presence had in the meanwhile melted completely the crust of ice that had held me enclosed and I had quite forgotten my intention to leave India.

Nevertheless my desire had been intense and according to the psychological laws it would have sooner or later had to bear its fruit in action. When Mataji left Dehradun for Vrindaban She advised me to remain for a time in one of Her ashrams near Dehradun. There I found myself among a group of people who treated me with great kindness and affection. Their friendliness, conditions in the Ashram in general, the whole setting, friends, neighbours, the climate—everything co-operated to give me a taste of my home in France. I came to understand the futility and perhaps even the harm from a spiritual point of view that a confrontation with my home atmosphere might have meant. I therefore finally gave up the whole idea. After a time I left Dehradun and stayed in the Ashram at Banaras. There I became friends with a young man from Israel, a fine and serious type of person. He seemed to me to represent the people of Israel and the Holy Land. Through this friendship I came to realize that a visit to his country would have been entirely

different from what I had imagined. I then understood that the Guru is the true father and mother, the *Dharmapita* and the *Dharmamata*, that all those who have chosen the Path of Immortality are my brothers and sisters; that the dwelling-place of the Supreme is my real motherland and whatever helps towards Self-realization my *Svadharmā*.

This is how by Sri Ma's Grace I learnt to recognize and renounce my mistake at very little cost, whereas according to the ordinary laws of nature I should have had to undertake a long and tedious journey, beset with all sorts of snares and dangers, inimical to the spiritual life.

It is well-known that Mataji neither gives *Mantra Diksha* nor claims to be a Guru or to have disciples. One day I asked Her what I should reply when people wanted to know, as they often did, whether I had received *Diksha* and who was my Guru. She told me that I might reply in the affirmative to the first question. As to the Guru I should say "God alone can give *Diksha*; there is only one Guru, namely God Himself". (Whenever I quote Sri Ma it must be remembered that I usually do not recall Her exact words but am only giving the meaning of what She said).

On various occasions I asked Sri Ma whether I might regard Her as my Guru. Once She said: "God Himself is the only Guru". On another occasion when I was very insistent, She replied: "I am what you think me to be". Yet thousands revere Her as their Guru.

What underlies the apparent contradiction between what Sri Ma says and what seems to be a fact to us? What exactly is a Guru? Surely the One who opens up the path that leads to Self-realization and guides the disciple till the final Goal has been reached. Initiation by Mantra has real value only if it is instrumental in opening up that path. The opening is really a communion with the Divine and it is the Divine Itself, the Supreme Guru who brings about this communion. The physical Guru acts as a focus, a channel for the Divine Power. But in the case of Sri Ma there is no difference between the physical Guru and the Supreme Guru. I once heard Mataji say: "The Guru is not a human being. It is a sin to look upon him or her as a human being. One must have the same attitude towards the Guru as towards God (*Ishwara Bhava*)".

It is the illusion in which we are caught that makes us limit Mataji to the physical form we perceive. The

perfect sage is by no means confined to what we see and call his body.

If in these few pages I have attempted to describe some aspects of Sri Ma's methods, it must be taken

as entirely from my own limited and unenlightened angle of vision. For only one who has direct knowledge of the Supreme Reality which functions in the body which we call Sri Sri Anandamayi Ma will be able to understand Her.

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MY FIRST VISIT

By

U. C. Dutt, M. A., P. E. S. (Retd.)

I think it was in May, 1929. In the summer vacation I was going to Mussoorie, the queen of the Hill Stations as a guest of a military officer. I was in high spirits.

I halted at Hardwar at the foot of the Shivalak hills — quite a modernized town in the lap of nature. The long ranges of hills on one side contrast with the everflowing Ganga and the canal on the other. I heard the call of the Himalayas — a clear call it was, I could not resist. I took a different route and moved towards the North. Crossing the Ganga I spent about a week at some Chattis on the way leading to the holy shrine of Badrinath.

Against my wishes I had to return to Hardwar for the sake of a friend of mine who was accompanying me. In the evening I went to Har-ki-pairi and there on the platform met Mahamahopadhyaya Pt. Gopinath Kaviraj, Principal, Government Sanskrit College, Banaras. My joy knew no bounds to see him there quite unexpectedly and I enquired of him if there was any real Mahatma in that locality. Kavirajji told me that

Mother Anandamayi had been at Hardwar a few days back, but suddenly had left for Ajodhya. Her father and Kunja Babu (Swami Turiyananda) were waiting for Her at a Dharamshala at Bhimgora. He advised me to make further enquiries about Her return at Bhimgora next morning.

As the day dawned I went to the place where the party had stayed. The Mother did not turn up. Her father and the Sannyasi too were reported to have gone to Brahmakunda. I left the place in despair, wandered about at Brahma Kunda and then came down almost exhausted to sit on a ghat in front of the Bhola-giri Dharamshala where we were putting up.

Someone came to me and told me that Mother was calling me. "Which mother?" said I. The reply was 'Mother Anandamayi'. I was taken aback. How was it that one so far could be so near? She did not know me. How could she call me? I followed the messenger and went upstairs. Entering a room I saw an exquisitely beautiful lady sitting cross-legged on the floor together with some other

persons. She appeared to be divinely inspired. At once She greeted me with a smile and talked to me as if I had been known to Her for a long time. Respected Kavirajji was there. I sat beside him close to the Mother. Someone requested Her to sing a song. Without a moment's hesitation She started singing, "O Mother, be gracious and make me like a child. Do not allow me to grow old leaving the charms of childhood behind." In a few minutes She was transported to another sphere, Her face was illumined. She lost outer consciousness and plunged into Samadhi. We felt a divine Presence. One was reminded of Sri Rama Krishna who, while singing or talking, passed into the superconscious state at ease and often. After some time in that state some Vedic hymns in a regular rhythm of rise and fall found expression through Her tongue. It appeared that She was an expert in Vedic lore. Kavirajji whispered to me, "Mantras like those of the Vedas are being revealed once more." I was struck dumb with wonder.

Pt. Gopinath Kaviraj and his family put up in the Bholagiri Dharamshala, I too was there. At our request Mother agreed to stay there and the party shifted from Bhimgora. I felt very happy to be in close touch with such an exalted being. Mother was

extremely human and at the same time supremely divine — a meeting ground of heaven and earth.

That same evening Mother was sitting on the terrace of the Dharamshala. Just below the Ganga Canal flowed steadily to an unknown destination. The moon shone brightly creating thousands of silver ripples on the running stream. The yonder Shivalak sent occasional sighs to dull the smiling Ganga. The sight was charming. Mother's presence elevated the entire surroundings to a level above the earth. I felt a child at the feet of the Mother. She began to tell me about Her life — how as a girl of three She appeared to lose consciousness on hearing kirtan at a neighbour's house, how this kind of thing repeated itself often, so that Her family became apprehensive and consulted some doctors and Vaidis; and how a distinguished physician Dr. Mahendra Ch. Nandy of Kalikutch told Her parents that She needed no treatment, since the symptoms indicated a highly spiritual state. What resembled fainting fits were by no means attacks of epilepsy or due to any disorder of body or mind. They were signs of God-intoxication. People who knew Dr. Mahendra Nandy had great faith in him. Since then Mother was looked upon differently.

A word must here be said about Dr. Nandy. Being a resident of the same village I knew him personally. I have travelled from Assam to the Punjab, but I do not remember having seen the like of him anywhere. A unique personality with a giant figure, a flowing beard and hair all white, of serene appearance, with large, penetrating eyes, dressed in dhoti, chadar and a pair of slippers, he was universally respected. To see him was to touch his feet. Late Bepin Chandra Pal, the great political leader, orator and savant, called him the Tolstoy of Bengal. Though an eminent physician and surgeon he was considered to be a *Siddha Mahatma* (a man of realization). So was his father, the late Ananda Babu, known as Ananda Swami to his numerous Hindu and Muslim disciples. He was an intimate friend of the Brahma-leader Keshav Chandra Sen and of Mahatma Vijay Krishna Goswami. His grandfather, the late Ram Dulal Dewan, minister of Tripura State, was no less distinguished. Even his son, Ashok, who died in prison during the Swadeshi days, is described by Sri Aurobindo in his *Karakahiny* as *Yogabhrasta* (fallen from divine union). A word from a saint like Dr. Nandy was enough to convince people of Mother's greatness.

I asked Mother if She had commi-

tted to memory some of the Vedic hymns which She had recited in the morning. She answered calmly: "Here there is no question of committing anything to memory. Whatever comes, comes of itself. People say it resembles Vedic Hymns." I thought with Carlyle of the great Unconscious through which Truth is revealed to mankind. I got the impression that Mother's mental states were of two kinds: The one of a state of overwhelming, uninterrupted bliss (*Ananda*) and the other even more sublime state of *Samadhi*.

I think Mother derives Her name 'Anandamayi' from the first state which was almost a constant phase of Her life at that time. A feeling of unbroken joy becomes natural for one who lives on the plane of bliss or reaches the *Anandamaya Kosha* (sheath of bliss). The other state dawns on transcending all the five sheaths—the physical, the vital, the mental, the psychic and the spiritual. It is a supramental and highly exalted state, comparable to *Nirvikalpa Samadhi*—a state without modifications, without pleasure-pain tone. Words and thoughts stop short and come back suffocated so to speak, from that unusual height. Blessed are those who attain to that state. They become one with the Supreme Reality. They become omniscient and omnipotent.

