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

## MATRI VANI

“With this body it is like this : it does not talk to anyone, nor go to see anyone, nor eat at anyone’s house.”

• • •

“What is *Satsang*? *Sva*\* means He, God, Being-Consciousness-Bliss (*Saccidānanda*), the *Ātma*—call it what you will. *Sva* is *Svayang*—THAT ITSELF, He in Person. *Sva-ang*† signifies that God is eternally revealed in every part of Creation. This is why it is said : Seek *Satsang*‡ so that you may know yourself to be *Sva-ang* (His own limb), know that He is ever revealed in every atom of Creation.”

• • •

“If one can love God there is no more sorrow. Even *viraha*, the deep yearning towards Him is happiness, for only

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\* *Sva* = self, own and *Sa* = He are pronounced alike in Bengali.

† *Ang* = part, limb.

‡ *Satsang* = the company of sages, saints and seekers after Truth ; also a religious meeting and in its widest sense the practice of the presence of God.

when one loves God is one able to feel that burning longing for Him. What does 'viraha' signify? *Viraha*,\* the intense pining for the Beloved can awaken in him alone in whom God dwells in a very special way."

\* \* \*

"It is obvious that doubt lies at the root of the desire to know. If you had the firm conviction that God does everything, the desire to find out why things happen as they do, would not arise in you."

\* \* \*

"That you are making an effort to arrange for medical treatment is also the expression of His Will. Verily, He, the One is everything. Thou in truth art the disease, Thou art the remedy and the power to heal—in all shapes and forms art Thou alone."

"So far as this body is concerned nobody ever commits an offence against it and therefore there can be no question of asking this body's forgiveness. Nevertheless, you will most certainly have to reap the fruits of what you have done."

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\* A play upon words: *viraha* literally means separation, *vi*=apart, *raha*=dwelling. But *vishesh*=special, *rahna*=to dwell; thus '*vishesh rahna*'=to dwell in a special way.

But this body does not feel even the faintest shadow of anger concerning it."

\* \* \*

"The performance of *japa* has a beneficent result of its own. When a person practises *japa* and dedicates its fruit to God, this fruit can never be destroyed or lost. When the time is ripe God will return it to the aspirant. When the latter begins to notice that his desires and passions are growing weaker and weaker, he should understand that God is in this way bestowing upon him the fruits of his practice. This is what is meant by *japa samarpana*. (offering one's *japa* to one's *Iṣṭa*)."

\* \* \*

"Whether happiness or pain is experienced depends upon what one believes and how one views whatever happens. If one wishes to go beyond beliefs and points of view, one must have faith in God."

\* \* \*

"The ceaseless, never-ending current of Divine Mercy and Compassion ever flows forth : in that current one should bathe."

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There is no doubt that Ma Anandamayi is the greatest living saint. In fact her devotees look upon her as Divine, God incarnate. To Western readers this may sound sacrilegious and difficult to understand. Ma herself is never tired of reiterating that there is only one God and no second ( एकं ब्रह्म द्वितीयो नास्ति ). That is also the basic tenet of Vedanta philosophy and the essence of Hindu religion. The popular belief in Ma's Divinity may seem inconsistent with this conception of one God and Ma's own utterances. Vedanta however, also holds that God, who has created everything exists in all His creation and to a greater degree in the human being. Man is not the body but the soul within, and that soul in its pure state can be like God himself. The spiritual aim should be to purify the soul which has got contaminated by its associations and to elevate it again to the level of God. Once it has reached that stage there is no difference and it acquires the state of God—becomes one with God ( ब्रह्मी स्थिति ) Therefore there is no profanity involved in looking upon a saint who has attained to "Self-realisation" as God. Hindu philosophy is also based on the theory of *Karma*, according to which the soul, which never dies, is born in new bodies in accordance with its actions in previous births so that spiritual development is not arrested by death but continues from where it had reached in a previous births. Thus the *Karma* theory explains not only the ordinary inequalities in life but also why some people are born spiritually advanced and can make further rapid progress. So we get saints like *Tukaram* and *Ramdas* and more recently, *Ramana Maharshi* and *Sri Aurobindo* who, having started life in the ordinary way, blossomed forth as great spiritual

forces and came to be looked on as Divinities. But there is even a higher category of saints who are "realised" beings almost from their birth. *Gauranga Mahaprabhu & Ramakrishna Paramahansa* were of this type and *Ma Anandamayi* belongs to this class. Those who have read her life know that she gave indications of divinity from her childhood and though she outwardly seemed to lead the ordinary family life, she was constantly going into trance. Though she was married at an early age and at that time did all the household chores, her husband, realising her godliness, respected her, treated her as his mother and became her first disciple. Though she has had only elementary school education, she is wiser than the greatest scholars in religion and philosophy. Though she herself always stresses the need of a spiritual guide, (गुरु) she never had any such preceptor and all her knowledge is spontaneous. True to her name, Anandamayi, which was given to her by one of her early devotees, she is the embodiment of joy and happiness. She leads a pure, unruffled, serene life and radiates peace and divine love. When she is listening to prayers sung by her devotees her eyes are either glistening with tears or closed in meditation but, when she speaks or looks at you they are smiling and appear to be giving you hope and encouragement. She is full of mirth and by her frequent sweet and hearty laughter she creates an atmosphere of cheer and happiness about her. There is such an aura of love, light and laughter about her, she moves in such a rarified atmosphere, surcharged with goodness and godliness, that one instinctively and involuntarily feels that one is in the presence of Divinity. It is not therefore blind faith that brings devotees to her, but some inner urge, an inner compulsion

like that of a child to go to its mother. Not only to her followers but to all those who come near her, she does appear like the Divine Mother.

For those who have not yet had the good fortune of seeing Mataji, I think it will be best if I give a brief account of how her sixty-fourth birth-day was recently celebrated in the first fortnight of May in Bombay. A big *shamiana* was erected in the compound of a school in Vile Parle. A large concourse of people of all types gathered there every day. Great spiritual leaders came to pay homage to her and to give discourses to the people. Princes, big business magnates, intellectuals, rich and poor, young and old, women and children, all used to flock to the *shamiana*. In spite of the best efforts of the organisers to prevent people from going up to the dais where Mataji sat along with the saints, people would rush up to fall at her feet and offer her flowers. Everyone approached her with great reverence and I have seen one lady so overcome with emotion that she swooned. When Mataji was leaving, everybody would crowd round her. She was followed everywhere by people wanting to worship her, to talk to her or even to have merely her sight or be near her and she had hardly any time to herself. From early morning till late at night there were Bhajans and Kirtans (singing of hymns and prayers), reading of holy books, discourses by *Mahatmas*. Once there was even an all night session of Bhajans by women and another day the name of God was sung continuously for twelve hours. Mataji spent a lot of time attending these various programmes. A constant feature were the Bhajans and talks on the lives of saints given in the evenings by Sri Haribabaji



Maharaj, an intensely holy man, who is devoted to Mataji and to whom She gives great respect. The most popular session was from about 8-30 to 10 every night, which Mataji regularly attended. Punctually at 8-45 the lights were put off and everyone was expected to observe complete silence for 15 minutes. It was an inspiring sight to behold night after night hundreds of people sitting motionless and solemnly, in silent meditation. Anyone who has tried to practise meditation, knows how difficult it is to concentrate on God even for a minute or two without the mind wandering off to all sorts of irrelevant and irreverent thoughts. But here in the presence of Mataji, some of us at least were hardly conscious of the passage of time and heard the bell announcing the end of the quarter hour almost with a shock. After the silence or *Mauno*, as it is called, there would be *Arati*, the waving of lights, incense etc. and then for half an hour Mataji answered questions asked by anyone in the audience. These ranged over a wide field, from simple queries by women and children about how to approach God, to metaphysical problems posed by savants. To all Ma gave the simplest and most satisfying answers and every night one learnt something about God and the way to reach Him. Very often, some questions, you had thought of, got answered by what Ma said in reply to somebody else. At the end there would usually be devotional singing and music by some great musician who had of his own accord come to sing before Ma.

On the 13th night when Ma's birthday was observed, there was a ceremonial worship of Ma in the most elaborate and orthodox style from 3 A.M. to 5 A.M. which was witnessed by a large crowd. We in the audience could only see that

she was lying covered and absolutely still on a Divan and it was only when the worship was over and we were allowed to go up to the dais to pay our obeisance that we realised that she had all the time been in deep trance. I learnt from her devotees that she does not like to be worshipped like a God and goes off into a trance before the ceremony starts. In that state she seemed to have grown in size and looked so sublime and majestic as to be almost awe-inspiring, though her face bore an expression of bliss and peace. To me, looking at her seemed like having a peep at Divinity.

People have often asked Mataji who and what she is and her usual answer is, "whatever you imagine". She never says "I" but refers to herself as "this body" (यह शरीर) or "this little girl" (यह छोटीसी बालिका), while she calls all men "father" (पिताजी). And yet, let alone the ignorant mass, great saints and scholars feel the deepest reverence for her. They listen eagerly to every word that falls from her lips and her speech sounds like sweet music. She does not preach sermons or deliver discourses but by her mere presence she leads people's thoughts to God. And this is her mission in life, to make people God-minded. If we look upon her as an *Avatar* I think we are justified, because she does fulfil the criterion laid down in the Gita—

यदा यदा हि धर्मस्य ग्लानिर्भवति भारत ।

अभ्युत्थानमधर्मस्य तदात्मानं सृजाम्यहम् ॥

धर्मसंस्थापनार्थाय संभवामि युगे युगे ।

(The Lord says, "When religion (righteousness) declines

and irreligion (wickedness) gathers strength, I create myself. I take birth in every age to establish religion)."

I would say unhesitatingly that it is the Divinity in her which draws people to her and through her to God. Even those who may not believe in the Hindu philosophy and even those who are sceptical about notions of God, find that she has something in her which makes them revere her. My own experience is that in her presence all impurities in one's mind get washed away. A little girl whom I asked what she felt in Ma's presence told me that she obtained great peace. An intellectual said that he had felt something like an electric current passing through him when he first saw Mataji. Mataji's very presence has this effect, but when she speaks or sings Bhajans in her most melodious voice one literally feels transported.

The account I have given of the birth-day celebrations in Bombay may give an idea of the way in which Mataji leads people to God, because wherever she goes she leads a similar kind of life. Mataji has more than 20 regular *Ashrams* all over India but she visits many other places as the spirit moves her. During her stay there are always Bhajans and Kirtans, recitation of the *Gita* and *Stotras* (prayers), and the invariable 15 minutes of silent meditation followed by Mataji's answers to questions. She makes herself accessible to every one and is never tired of seeing people. She is always cheerful and has superhuman energy. She wins everyone's heart by her charm and sweetness. She has brought cheer and solace to persons grief-stricken by the loss of their nearest and dearest, or overwhelmed by other misfortunes, to

those who are unhappy in spite of their wealth, position and learning. There are highly educated young men and women who have given up everything and live in her *Ashrams*, doing whatever they can to serve her, in their search for God. But she does not ask anyone to renounce the world, she only wants them to perform their duties in life in such a way as would please God and asks them to remember God always. According to her, God is everywhere and in everything and you have to realise God in your own heart in order to attain to perfect peace of mind. Like the teaching of the Gita, she recognises that there are various ways of reaching the goal and she advocates that everyone should try in his own way and as instructed by his Guru (religious guide). The Guru will appear if you are an earnest seeker after God. But you must first strive for God yourself. Her first advice to seekers after God is to chant the name of God regularly. She says that the taking of God's name itself gradually creates faith in God and love for Him and purifies your mind. She considers the rituals of worship laid down in the scriptures as a method of attuning one's mind to God and so she encourages and is present at religious ceremonies. "Meet saintly people and spend as much time as possible with them and listening to them" is her constant advice. By the public observance of 15 minutes *Mauna*, she brings home to people the benefits of silence, meditation and concentration on God. When people ask for guidance on how to concentrate, she advises them to learn first to sit absolutely still and empty their minds of all thoughts. She further says that to succeed in meditation, one must lead a good, virtuous life, speak, act and think rightly, love

everybody and be kind to them. She is quite emphatic that the vision of God in whichever form you seek Him must come and whatever name you may give Him it is the same one God. Once that inner light shines forth, all differences, all notions of, "you" and "I"—even of "devotion", "devotee" and "God" will disappear and you will become one with God. That is what has happened to Mataji and what she is.

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# Conversations with Sri Sri Ma Anandamayi

RECORDED BY PROFESSOR B. GANGULY

(Translated by Atmananda)

( 4 )

Ranchi Ashram,  
17/5/1958.

*Question :* How can the sense of distance be overcome?  
How can the eternal sound be heard?

*Mataji :* The sense of distance is overcome by realizing THAT which IS. All time and space lie within you; for instance you also hold Europe within you. Sounds are perceived according to world measurements. With the aid of a special apparatus sound can be heard from a great distance. But by means of the apparatus that is no apparatus the eternal sound becomes audible. When the eternal sound (*Shabda Brahman*) discloses Itself, the distinctions between me and you, mine and yours cease to exist, since there is no longer any division. In the universe inner and outer sounds exist. The eternal sound is contained in the world of forms as well as in the formless: THAT abides in the qualities (*gunas*) of matter and beyond them, in form and the formless.

*Question :* How can one attain to Peace?

*Mataji* : By hankering after it ; when one becomes fervid for Peace, it will be gained. One has to call out desperately to the One and devote oneself to *sadhana*, yearning ardently for Peace, then it will come.

*Question* : What is meant by *Prarabdha Karma* ?

*Mataji* : *Prarabdha* means *pore* (later) *labda* (acquired). The action that has been done before will later bear fruit. Just as when having overeaten one has afterwards to bear the consequences ; there is no way out of it—this is how it is.

( At that moment it was a quarter to nine and the bell rang for silence.† )

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Jogada Satsang, Ranchi,  
18/5/1958.

*Question* : In what manner should we live in the world so as to be able to view happiness and misery with equanimity ?

*Mataji* : Here one thing has to be noted : Of Him alone must be the spoken word, all else is but futility and pain.

*Question* : Please express this in a way that seekers after Truth, who still live in the midst of wordly affairs, will be able to understand

*Mataji* : Cultivate a spirit of service. Let the wife

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†In all Shree Anandamayee Ashrams and also wherever else Mataji happens to be, silent meditation is observed daily from 8.45 to 9 p. m.

serve her husband, regarding him as the Lord ; let the mother serve her son looking upon him as *Gopal* (the divine child Krishna). If the home is pervaded by a spirit of service there will be bliss rather than toil and weariness.

*Question* : How can the agony of the threefold suffering ( *tritāpa* ), which is man's lot, be overcome ?

*Matangi* : While engaged in the service of the family it is befitting to set apart some regular time morning and evening for meditation or japa.

Prostrating oneself before God with intense feeling and putting one's heart and soul into the recitation of His holy Name are means by which man may be delivered from this threefold suffering. HE takes away every kind of suffering, be it *adhibautic*, *adhidivic* or *adhiatmic*. This is why He is called '*Hari*'. It is right to perform one's *pūjā* (worship) regularly twice daily, at dawn and dusk, just as it is imperative to wind a clock at set intervals. If the work of the householder is not thus interrupted, a spirit of service cannot be developed. In place of serving God one will minister to one's personal pleasure or satisfaction and consequently be forced to endure the threefold suffering that is man's lot. Whenever time permits one should, over and above the fixed periods of daily prayer or meditation, lift up one's heart and mind to God so as to become ever closer to Him.

*Question* : What is one to do if while sitting for prayer or meditation the mind wanders off to worldly affairs ?

*Matangi* : By persevering in the constant and regular practice of daily meditation the mind will finally become of



itself calm and steady. Even if in the course of one's best endeavours one slips and tumbles to the ground, one will have to rise again by supporting oneself on that very ground.

*Question* : If we regularly meditate twice daily will our mind become conditioned by this practice in a way similar to that of Dr. Pavlov's dog, concerning which by prolonged experiments of modern psychology the fact was established that it had been trained to clock-work punctuality ?

*Mataji* : Yes, this also is an example of the efficacy of sustained practice ( *abhyāsa yoga* ).

\* \* \*

Govinda Bhavan, Ranchi,  
19/5/1958.

*Question* : Are changes produced in our subtle bodies by the regular practice of *mantra japa* ?

*Mataji* : So long as there is form there must be change. God alone is changeless.

*Question* : Does *mantra japa* result in some realization ?

*Mataji* : Do not concern yourself with 'some realization.' To begin with let God's Divine Form be revealed and then the realization of the One *Brahman* will follow. Which particular form of God is revealed depends on what particular Name is constantly invoked.

*Question* : Can one by the repetition of *mantras* get access to other worlds or states of consciousness ?

*Mataji* : Certainly ; however one's aim should be the Self-revelation of THAT which is beyond all worlds and states of consciousness.

*Question* : Is it possible by the practice of a *mantra* to attain to the actual realization of the Brahman ?

*Mataji* : Why do you doubt this ?

*Question* : Is the *Shabda Brahman* (the eternal sound) also realized ?

*Mataji* : It ought to be so. While the mind governs there is always duality and thus one experiences happiness and sorrow ; it is man's reason that decides whether anything is joyful or painful. In this world of perpetual motion the individual is that which is bound. As stagnant water becomes foul but can be purified again by a filter that kills the microbes, likewise it is with the individual and liberation. The *Paramatma* may be compared to pure water and the individual to a stagnant pool. But in essence water is everywhere, in individuality as well as in the *Atma* : "Wherever a *jiva* ( individual ) is, there *Shiva* is present." Man's Divinity is eternal, but his everchanging nature cannot endure for ever.

*Question* : How can the mind be made content ? By what method can the operations and processes of the mind be controlled and the Self seen face to face ?

*Mataji* : By aspiring to the Realization, to the Knowledge of one's own Self—the *Atma*. It is necessary to proceed along some definite line of *sadhana* : be it by regarding oneself

as the eternal servant of the Lord or as His child or by adoring Him as one's Beloved, be it by adopting the method of inquiry into the nature of the Self or any other path. Whatever be your approach, it is right for you. The sages of ancient times pointed out the way. A stage will come where all paths join together. The method indicated by one's *Guru* is the one to be chosen; at the end every path becomes straight and simple. On reaching the Goal one will realize that there are innumerable ways leading to it. To accord with the different inner qualifications of the aspirants there is a variety of paths or methods of spiritual practice. To find God means to find one's Self, to know the *Ātmā*; then one awakens to the Knowledge that the ONE is the sole Reality underlying the world. The mind can be made content only when one's real treasure, the *Ātmā*, is found.

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# THE MYSTERY OF THE BODY

U. C. DUTT

In spite of our big boasts, our knowledge of physiology and pathology is still poor and incomplete. The ancient Indians tried to know the mystery of the human body, not so much by observation and experiments as by psychic control and inspiration. The body is a fathomless mystery. It is as mysterious as the spirit. It has visible and invisible aspects. The gross body is visible. The subtle body (**Sukshma Sharira**) and the causal body (**Karama Sharira**) are invisible to the naked eye. All of them are material trappings or sheaths of the spirit (**Chaitanya**). The Vedanta recognizes five sheaths. They are physical (**Annamaya**), vital (**Pranamaya**) mental (**Manomaya**) psychic (**Vigyanamaya**) and blissful (**Anandamaya**). The first three covers consist of material stuff and the other two of non-material or conscious stuff. Yoga helps man to know and cross the different planes of existence in order that he may realize his true Self, pure Existence-Knowledge-Bliss (**Sachchidananda**).

A comprehensive knowledge of the entire being is needed to assess a part or phase of it. The visible body is a means to a higher one, not an end in itself. It is the base of a splendid structure. A Yogi must have his body free of disease and the infirmities of old age. He makes it the basis of a highly developed mental, moral and spiritual life. To start with, a body is the means to spiritual realization.

Very often the purpose of physical existence is defeated by minding the body only. A giant with strong muscles and wild passions will go down fighting before long. The doors to a higher life will ever remain closed to him. His egotism, and false sense of superiority, his uncontrolled emotions and passions will not allow him to rise above the animal in man. This is why the great sage Patanjali prescribed moral training (Yama, Niyama) before physical culture (Asana, Pranayama) in his system of Yoga with eight limbs or steps (Ashtanga Yoga).

There are various kinds of Yoga—Hathayoga, Layayoga, Rajayoga, etc. All of them start with the body and pass on gradually to the spirit or soul. On the way supernatural powers descend upon the Yogi to misguide him. If he surrenders himself to the temptations of powers (Vibhuti), he is ruined. None, but the brave, the fearless, the selfless reach the goal. But every Yogi must have a sound mind in a sound body. So he practises Asana (posture), Mudra (pose) and Pranayama (breathing exercises) to keep the body sound. Yogashastra and Ayurveda are considered to be twins as they have their origin in the Vedas. The final treatise of Ayurveda is the Brahma Samhita which is a compilation of numerous verses from the several chapters of Atharva Veda. The book deals with the system of cure, various drugs and their respective properties. Many subsequent Ayurvedic treatises were based on the Brahma Samhita. The well-known medical works like the Charak and Sushruta were composed sometime prior to the era of the Mahabharata. Because the extensive scope and popularity of the Ayurveda, it is styled as the Fifth Veda ( Pancham Veda ). Yoga means union—the

union of the individual soul with the universal or the Supreme Soul. The Vedic sages achieved communion with the one that pervades the whole universe, though they called it by various names. They were strong, straight and healthy people. So from time immemorial Indians provided for an all-round development of the body. Mr. Colebrook and others give us particulars as to how extensively the Indian system of medicine influenced those as practised in ancient Egypt and Greece.\*

Without a deep knowledge of the mystery of creation it is not possible to understand the mystery of the body or the science of physiology. And without a grasp of the principles of physiology it is not possible to find out the causes of diseases or a faultless system of their prevention and cure. The Yogic treatises like Patanjali's Yoga Darshan, Shiva Samhita and commentaries thereon deal with the theories of creation. Most of the Yogic writers have adopted the Samkhya views of Kapila. Some of them have accepted the cosmology as laid down in the Vedanta or the Tantras, and some have tried to harmonise the theories of the Vedanta and the Samkhya.

According to the Samkhya system the primal matter is called **Prakriti**. It is the eternal unconscious principle and is the unity of the three **Gunas** (forces or principles) of **Sattva**, **Rajas** and **Tamas** held in a state of equilibrium. As a result of commotion in the equilibrium due to the presence of **Purusha** (soul) the world of things springs into existence step by step. The self-luminous, active and the formless forces vibrate and shape

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\*It is on record that Alexander the Great utilized Hindu doctors for his army about 330 B. C.—*Editor*.

