

*As the
Flower Sheds
its
Fragrance*

DIARY LEAVES OF A DEVOTEE



**Shree Shree Ma Anandamayee Sangh
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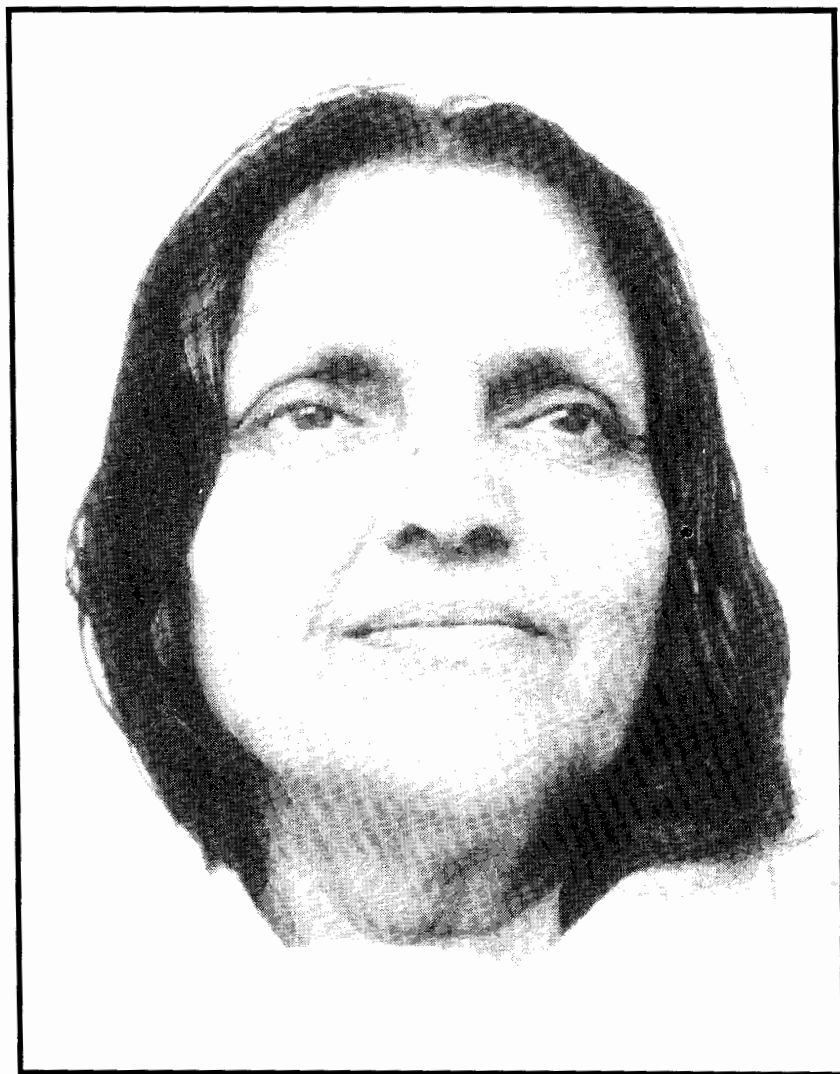
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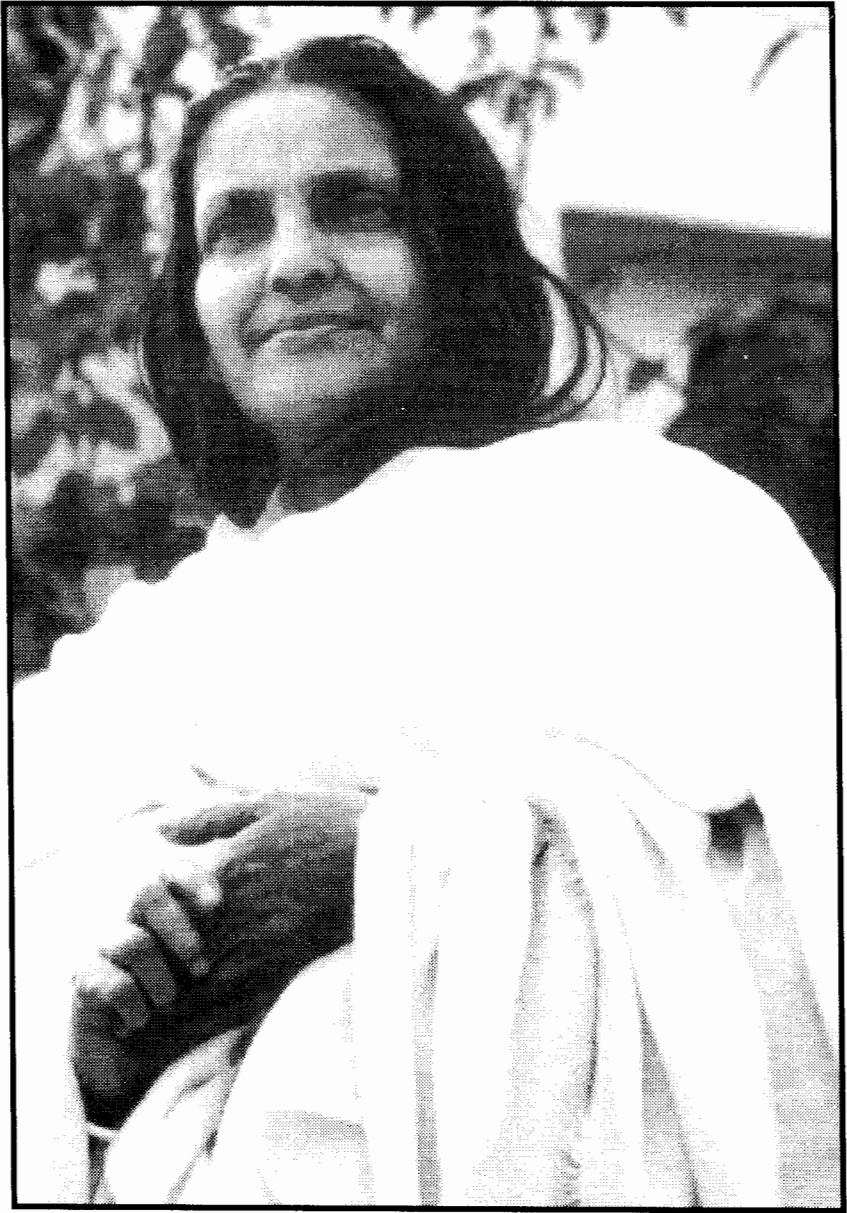
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FRAGRANCE**



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BLESSINGS

Brahmlin Atmanandji was born in Viena, Austria hence to analyse everybody, everything and environment was in her nature.

It was impossible for the Foreigner (western) lady to stay in Shree Shree Ma's Ashram because of atmosphere of touchability and untouchability prevailing there at that time. However, the zeal for finding the truth was very deep in the inner-heart and also impression of the spiritual personality of Shree Shree Ma was so great to the extent that she ignored all the outer observances and gave utmost importance to spiritual elevation. She left the company of Shri J. Krishnamurthy, a great Philosopher and surrendered her whole life at the divine feet of Shree Shree Anandmayi Ma.

This feeling / expression we find everywhere in this book and I hope this will show a shining (bright) path to the "Sadhakas" and enquirers of the present as well as of future generation.

In the end, I appreciate the full co-operation and assistance provided by our Bhimpura Ashram for printing out second edition of this Book.

With Best Wishes and Blessing to all.

Bhimpura

Swami Bhaskaranand

Dt. 23-02-2006

FOREWORD

I have been asked to write a few words by way of introducing a book which really introduces itself.

It is difficult to realise that Sri Anandamayi Ma is no longer with us physically. For many She continues to be a living presence. If therefore, I write of Her in the past tense I do so from my own limited vision, and from memories of Her in the nineteen fifties. I write descriptively, as one person from the West who has been deeply affected by an encounter, over several years, with Sri Anandamayi Ma. I would particularly like to address these words to those who never met Her, or saw Her but seldom and fleetingly. I hope those who knew Her far better than I will forgive the limitations of my own experience and understanding.

Description is the least adequate of methods with which to present a being of almost unimaginably rare subtlety. India, of course, is famed for her genius at producing individuals who have attained the summit of Self-realisation and uncommon spiritual elevation – saints, sages, seers, the Vedantin, the *Sahajin*, holy men and women illuminated by the light of divine inspiration, steeped in the wisdom of pure *jñāna*, suffused with the sweetness of immeasurable *bhakti*, lofty in perfect command of *yoga*. The variety is almost as great as among the flowers of the forest ! Each is unique, incomparable. However, to the disciple and the devotee there can only be *one* who is Guru, for the Guru is the One, the Beloved.

It seems to me patently clear that this book celebrates the teaching not of an individual who is part of a cultural phenomenon or representative of a passing trend but a Being beyond the reach of our limited and limiting worldly-wise, our *knowing* categories. Certainly, Sri Anandamayi Ma was a woman, a Bengali, a 'great name' to conjure with among the discriminating – surely no single human being in the India of our time has reached more individuals with such perfect

promptitude, wise counsel and deep spiritual insight. Yet there is a strangeness, a particularity, an indefinable rarity about Sri Anandamayi Ma, an uncanny, ineffable quality which comes so near the limits of the definably human as to make an adjective like 'human' quite inadequate when applied to Her case, and 'divine' paltry. It is widely accepted that She was, simply, unique.

That there is more than mere hyperbole to this claim of singularity is evident from the striking fact that while all around Her were devoted to the principle of *perfectibility* and to effortful striving, She was, throughout Her life, the acme of effortless *perfection*. At birth, Sri Anandamayi Ma was given the appropriate name *Nirmala* – the 'taintless', in recognition of Her exceptional sweetness of disposition. From Her earliest years Her *bhāva* drew people like a magnet. If features of conventional *sadhana* were spontaneously manifest from time to time, as it were without bidding, they were in the nature of effortless and playful *lilā* – the overplus of fullness — not a purposeful striving towards betterment.

There never was any question of Sri Anandamayi Ma identifying with a particular established creed, sect, or doctrine. She performed no act of worship or 'practised' anything, did no *yoga* or *japa* in any regular sense. If She became involved in any such activities it was, again, in the nature of *lilā*. One can only assume, with all the limitations of the mind, or sheer unfamiliarity with such phenomena, that She was already established, probably from birth at a level where such action is simply irrelevant, surpassed.

Each person who knew Sri Anandamayi Ma has stories to tell of Her marvellous ways, Her love, compassion, insight, practicality, wisdom. She operated at every level and in every domain pertaining to the spiritual life. The depth and diversity of Her manifold gifts are evident on every page of this book. She was so untainted by prejudice, so present to all, that each felt that She met their innermost needs with

unerring precision. Nobody could fail to understand Her for She addressed Herself to that level at which we are all, in truth, the children of God. The quality of strength – so quintessentially feminine – is evidence of an Energy as subtle, as dynamic, and as elusive to grasp (still more to write about) as a perfume or the sound of a distant bell. For Mataji spoke at all times from the very fundament of simplicity – lightly, unhesitatingly – yet with a more completely commanding authority and utter certainty than anyone known to me.

For those who knew Her over many years, particularly who were either residents in or visitors to Her ashrams there was also the added dimension of Her extraordinary skill at organisation, Her grasp of detail, and Her limitless capacity to provide totally apposite advice or instruction at the right time with extreme precision. Her skill in this domain is attested by the way She became the indispensable guide to all members within numerous remarkable and distinguished families over several generations. She was thus not only an exemplar of the exalted spiritual state, of *sadhana*, of psychological acuity, of compassionate succour, but a paragon too of action in service to the Supreme. It may appear a somewhat worldly comment, but the solidity of instruction, the *soundness* which She Herself manifested, and prompted in others, was as vital to the spiritual welfare of Her *bhaktas* as was the sheer luminosity of Her presence to the more contemplative sensibility.

Curiously, though Her musical speech in Bengali and Hindi is lost on the printed page, nevertheless, in the impeccably lucid translation of Her words in these Diary Leaves one can hear the inimitable ring of Her voice: For all their simplicity and directness, their unadorned brevity, Her words are unmistakable in origin. Perhaps this is because they combine utter simplicity with maximum effectivity. In answering a question, telling a story or giving counsel, every word is like an arrow speeding swiftly towards our inner illumination, or shooting up into our dazzled awareness from the inalienable centre of our being. I will never

forget Her talk – particularly to small groups gathered in the evening at Vindhyaçal. It flowed, mellifluous and clear, like mountain water, tumbling without hesitation over sparkling pebbles.

If I had to choose just one metaphor as an approximation of what such Poetry meant to me I would say that Sri Anandamayī Ma was as far beyond ordinary mortal ways as the Self is far beyond the mediocre self–dramatisation of the ego. She was, surely, the nearest one is ever likely to find to an earthly embodiment of the Quintessence: illumination, enlightenment. So untrammelled by our ordinary burdens was She that one could hearken here to the very essence of inner Being.

It may be noticed that Sri Anandamayī Ma's attention is absolutely single and focussed upon one sole theme. Her discourse is shorn of even the least irrelevance, the least detour into technicalities. Not a shread of spurious glamour or mystification. No announcement of secret esoteric doctrine. The urgency is irresistible. Not a moment is wasted by dwelling on the colourful inventions and fantasies of mysticism and symbolism, be they ever so ingenious. To no self–pandering idleness does She appeal. The matter in hand is that sole concern which unites all humanity, irreducible in its simplicity – immediate, totally accessible : the One.

Norfolk. May, 1983.

Richard Lannoy

SRI SRI ANANDAMAYI MA 1896–1982

Ma Anandamayi was a unique incarnation of Divinity – the Uncreated in peerless manifestation. She was never identified with Her own person : for Her there are no "others", there is ONE alone, appearing in countless forms – none can be excluded. To enquiries about Her identity She would reply: "Whatever you conceive, think or say".

Her withdrawal from the grasp of our senses has created a yawning chasm in the material world, while Her loving, benign presence is felt more powerfully than ever all over the globe by those who long for it.

Ma Anandamayi was reputed for the irresistible attraction of Her ever radiant, blissful personality, for Her boundless compassion and Her outstanding universality.

"Everyone is right from his own standpoint," She would say. She did not advocate the same method for all. "How can one impose limitations on the Infinite by declaring: `This is the only path' ?" and "Why should there be so many different religions and sects ? Because through everyone of them He gives Himself to Himself, so that each person may advance according to his inborn nature..." A great Mahatma said : "Just as the earth provides for each plant the substance necessary for its growth, so does Anandamayi Ma guide every aspirant according to his individual uniqueness".

It was the experience of thousands that She had the right word at the right time for every seeker after Truth.

The central theme of Her teaching in endless variations is : "The supreme calling of every human being is to aspire to Selfrealisation. All other obligations are secondary." "Only actions that kindle man's Divine Nature are worthy of the name of action." However, She did not ask everyone to become a renunciate. She taught how to live a God-centered life in the world and provided the powerful living inspiration to enable thousands to aspire to this most noble ideal. By Her very contact

the minds of men and women were turned towards God – the Divine at the center of their own unique existence.

Anandamayi Ma was the offspring of East Bengali brahmins who had kept up for generations the tradition of the ancient Rishis. Both parents were saintly. Nirmala Sundari, as they named Anandamayi Ma, was fully conscious from the first day. "It is said that from Her very birth She was aware of what She had ever been and would always continue to be and that there was no possibility of a deviation from Her self-conscious stature for a single moment." (Mahamahopadyaya Dr. Gopinath Kaviraj, D. Litt.)

Even during childhood She lived Her maxim "*Jo ho jaye*" (Let come what may), – unconditional surrender to the Divine Will. She never voiced any desire. Always happy and eager to help, She never cried, either at birth or later, except to divert Her mother's grief over the premature death of her sons. Uncommonly attractive even then, everybody loved Her. She attended village school for barely two years.

Before completing 13 years, She was married but stayed with Her parents for another year and then four years with Her brother-in-law's family where she performed housework with consummate skill. At the age of 18, She came to live with Her husband whom She named "Bholanath" or "Pitaji". He found Her surrounded by an aura of awe-inspiring sanctity which precluded marital relationship. For 6 years She spontaneously traversed at lightning speed countless spiritual paths up to perfection. She called this Her "*lilā* of *sadhana*", since there was nothing for Her to be attained. In 1922 Bholanath became Her formal disciple. He remained Her faithful guardian until he passed away as a *samnyāsī* in 1938, having attained to spiritual heights.

In 1924 Bholanath became Manager of Shahbag Gardens at Dacca. There, during kirtans and also otherwise, Nirmala was seen in states of spiritual ecstasy, resembling those of Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, as described in Vaisnava literature. Well-educated and learned persons gathered round Her and, with their families, remained lifelong devotees.

In 1929 they built an Ashram for Her. Already in 1927 She had travelled out of Bengal. In 1932 She left for good. First She stayed at Dehradun. A new set of people were attracted, starting the Kishenpur Ashram in 1936. This is where Sri Ma left Her body in August 1982.

Her ceaseless peregrinations throughout India continued for about 50 years. Million's of Indians and hundreds from abroad had Her darshan. She encouraged kirtan and sometimes sang entrancingly. She never delivered lectures but replied to questions. Sadhus, renowned scholars, philosophers, statesmen, ambassadors, Rajas, Ranis, writers, artists, doctors, lawyers, businessmen listened spell-bound to Her spontaneous, unhesitating answers that hit directly the point, free from metaphysical technique. They were impressed by the profundity of Her wisdom and the fluency of Her expression.

Anandamayi Ma has a message for everyone, not only for Truthseekers and the educated but also for the illiterate peasant, the labourer, the emotionally or mentally unbalanced, the transgressor and the evil-doer :

"This body tells of one sovereign remedy for all ills : God. Trust in Him, depend on Him, accept whatever happens as His dispensation, regard what you do as His service, keep satsang, think of God with every breath, live in His presence. Leave all your burdens on His hands and He will see to everything, there will be no more problems."

Although calling Herself "a little unlettered child" and claiming no position, the highest religious authorities of the country and some of the most learned *samnyāsīs* hold Her in profound veneration.

Anandamayi Ma firmly upheld the Indian religious tradition and endorsed scriptural injunctions. She admonished married people to emulate the ancient Rishis and serve husband, wife and children as divine manifestations. She implored everyone without distinction to set apart a definite time (at the very least ten minutes daily) for divine contemplation, however busy he or she may be.

Shree Shree Anandamayee Sangha and Shree Shree Anandamayee Charitable Society were founded by devotees to administer ashrams (28 by now), a charitable hospital at Varanasi, various dispensaries, educational institutions run according to the ancient Gurukul system adopted to modern conditions, with special emphasis on Sanskrit learning. Several girls have obtained the degree of Acharya and one a doctorate.

The Publication Department in Calcutta publishes Sri Ma's teaching, books about Her and a quarterly "Ānanda Vārtā" in Bengali, Hindi and English.

The most important of religious functions organized by the Sangha is annual *Samyam Mahavrata*, a week spent in intensive congregational sādhanā with collective meditation, religious discourses, devotional music, strict discipline in behaviour and restricted diet.

Inspired by Ma, the "Institute for Puranic and Vedic Studies and Research" was started in Naimisharanya in 1976.

Ma had Vedic Yajñas performed, specially *Savitri Yajña* in Varanasi (1947–1950) and *Atirudra Mahayajña* at Kankhal (1981).

Many prominent seekers from western countries were deeply influenced by Her. Arnaud Desjardins, the well-known French producer of spiritual films and author of spiritual books, writes : "What I have received from Mataji is myself. I was dead and have come to life. I was born of the flesh and now I am born of the spirit." The German novelist, Melita Maschmann, says : "In Mataji God allowed me to see Him with the closeness of intimacy." Dr. Collin Turnbull from England : "Mataji has a message for each one who comes to Her, but in Her very being She is a message for the whole of mankind."

"Of the love of Anandamayi Ma everyone receives his share and all possess the whole of it."



ATMANAND - 1950
(Photograph - Richard Lenoy)

Most of the contents of this volume have appeared in the quarterly "Ānanda Vārtā" between 1954 and 1964 under the captions "Diary Leaves", "Reminiscences" and "Mother's Methods."

