

**MA ANANDAMAYEE**  
**AMRIT VARTA**

A quarterly journal dealing mainly  
with the divine life and sayings of  
Sri Anandamayi Ma

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## MATRI VANI

We should not allow our attention to wander at large, but stick to a particular aim or object. Nevertheless to begin with we shall have to choose an object that is suited to our *Sādhana*. To live in solitude means to be solely in the company of the One Beloved, does it not, father? Only when one is unattached and without cares and worries can there be freedom from conflict and perplexity. Write to him that he has no cause whatever for worry. The Grace of the Lord flows down unceasingly and at all times. A person who has made God realization, the one and exclusive goal of his life, has already found refuge in Him—even though He may for the time being declare Himself by His absence.

\* \* \* \* \*

When people talk about the vision of the Self (*Ātma Darshan*) and Self-Realization, it is only from hearsay; still it is necessary to find a way in order to gain first-hand experience of this state. Thus, what we have to do is to take to any path that will lead us to it.

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You can see this for yourself—just think; there is air and without air our body cannot keep alive. Grasp this—does not the air pervade everything, plants, minerals, animals, in fact all creatures? You differentiate between the earth, water, fire, air, the sky and so forth, do you not? Viewing them each separately helps us to understand them. It is said that in essence there is Truth-Consciousness. Bliss (*Sachchidānanda*). Only when consciousness is rooted in truth can there be bliss.

From our worldly point of view we everywhere perceive animate or inanimate things; but in reality He who is Truth, He who is consciousness, permeates them all; only this cannot be realized by the average man. As soon as the mind understands the fact of His immanence, then just as when an image is to be worshipped, life has first of all to be instilled into it, through '*Prāna Pratishthā*', so He becomes as it were active within us, at first, through the vehicle of the breath, which is an expression of the life-force (*Prāna*). The word *within* has been used only because we think in terms of 'within' and 'without'. This is why we speak of 'I' and 'you', of God 'with form' (*Sākāra*) and 'without form' (*Nirākāra*). Be ever aware of the following; what is called life-breath is really an aspect of a universal, all-pervasive power that functions-continuously. It is He in one of His forms; He who is Truth-Consciousness, reveals Himself in this mode. If with the help of a *Mantra* received from the Guru, we can remain concentrated on the breath, or even if at any time there be no *Mantra*, we simply keep



## MY FIRST *DARŚANA* OF MOTHER ANANDAMAYI

—M. M. Dr. Gopinath Kaviraj

[Continued from before]

During succeeding years I was privileged to come in closer touch with Mother and to know Her more intimately. But it is not possible for me to state what Her exact role is or what particular rank is occupied by Her in the spiritual hierarchy of this country. That different persons should hold different opinions regarding Her personality is of course natural. For in a matter like this, a correct analysis on an intellectual basis is not possible, nor can ordinary human judgment yield any useful result.

Still however, an attempt is being made here at the request of friends to discuss briefly some of the most prominent features of Her life and character. It is expected that this discussion will not be taken as amounting to a final solution of the problem, for it offers no solution at all. It is intended rather to serve as a possible aid to a clearer appreciation of Her or as a suggestion in that direction. The basis of this discussion is furnished by the data in Her own utterances, whether embodied in books, already published or awaiting publication, or otherwise.

Firstly, it is well known that Mother received no *dikṣā* or initiation of any kind from an external Guru and also that She herself does not give *dikṣā* to anybody. In other words, in the technical language of the *Śāstras* She claims to be neither a Guru nor a *śiṣya*.

But an informal *dikṣā*, not one taken from an outside agency, She certainly had. We know that this informal *dikṣā* took place in the month of August in the year 1922 when She was twenty-six years of age. Mother Herself admitted this fact shortly afterwards to one of Her cousins. This *dikṣā* was not of the usual type known to us, but it did represent the initiation of a certain spiritual activity within Her body, an activity which did not owe its origin to any source other than Her own self. In the conventional language of the world it may not be termed *dikṣā* at all, but it is recognized as such in the traditional teachings of the mystical science. That a systematic course of *sādhana*, including physical and psychical disciplinary exercises, followed this event in Her life is well-known. In the Tantrik literature it has been made abundantly clear that *dikṣā* is a spiritual necessity, though it is true that in every case external ceremonials or other forms of activity may not be needed. Inner *dikṣā* con-

sists of an act of self-purification. This kind of *dikṣā* is determined by the intensity of the Divine Power of Grace descending upon the soul. So far as the fundamental variety of this purificatory process is concerned, we have to recognize four ultimate types viz, *anupāya*, *sambhavopāya*, *śaktiopāya* and *anāvopāya*. When the descending grace is extremely powerful the first type of *dikṣā* follows as a natural sequence. With diminishing power the others are employed. In *anupāya dikṣā* perfection is realized at once. In *sambhavi dikṣā* or even in *Śakti dikṣā* the necessity for external *kriyās* as an aid to inner purification is not recognized.

In the history of mysticism it is recognized everywhere that in exceptional cases illumination is possible, and this takes place, even when an external source is lacking. We know of the Pratyekabuddha, who neither received his wisdom from any previous Buddha nor communicated it to others. He was a Buddha no doubt, having attained to Enlightenment, but he was neither a *śiṣya* in relation to an earlier Buddha nor a Guru in relation to a future Bodhisattva or Buddha. Had he been a Guru he would have been a perfect Buddha (सम्यक्संबुद्ध). The illumination in this case had its source within.

In the Vedic literature we come across cases of *Riṣis* who, having been blessed with spontaneous illumination, were the seers of mantras which are associated with their names. This self-generated wisdom is really an example of the so-called *Pratibhā Jñāna* of which we read so much in the Patanjali and other Yoga systems and in the Tantrik literature. The origin of *Pratibhā Jñāna* is explicable as the result of Divine Grace descending on the soul of a man.

The Grace or *Śakti* which comes down on the matured soul, is of different degrees of intensity. These degrees belong in the main to three categories- intense, mild and dull. Each of these three varieties is again subdivided into three classes, so that there are nine degrees in all. If Grace of the second degree (counted from the beginning) descends on the soul, one is not required to have recourse to a Guru for illumination and one gets the Light from within. This Light is spontaneous and does not come from an external source. In such cases the necessity of an external Guru is dispensed with. But the *prārabdha karma* remains and the body which is an outcome of this *karma* persists till the *karma* is worked out through *bhoga*. When however Grace of the first degree descends, the *prārabdha* itself is destroyed. And with the exhaustion of *prārabdha* the impure body also falls off. The question of an external Guru does not at all arise in this case, as it does not in the case of the second degree of Grace.

In *Sant* literature we hear of *Swayam Siddha Sants* or persons who are saints from their very birth and not due to the accident of knowledge from an external source. These men take no *dikṣā* from others, but they are in a position to give *dikṣā*

to deserving candidates. These great Souls descend from transcendent regions, especially from the Divine World, beyond the Cosmic Mind and the Great Void. And when embodied, their centres of consciousness never come down below the middle of the two eye-brows. In the literature of other countries also the record of similar cases is not altogether wanting.

I do not know if any of the above types of self-generated illumination is analogous to the nature of Mother's personality. It seems that Mother is not comparable to a *Pratyekabuddha*, for, while a *Pratyekabuddha* is exclusive and isolated in his blissful seclusion, indifferent to the fact of Universal misery, Mother is too keenly sensitive to the sorrows of the world to remain contented with an isolated existence, even if it were possible. All Her thoughts and activities have their bearing on the transformation of the world. And as a matter of fact She has always the Cosmic and Trans-cosmic Consciousness precluding any possible exclusiveness of outlook.

We know of cases of souls which are always perfect and which dwell permanently on the Divine plane as eternal associates of the Divine Person to whom they are related as inalienable aspects of the integral whole. These souls are very similar in nature to the *Svayam Siddha* type mentioned above. As a matter of fact they are not subject to the action of Ignorance or Time Spirit and are never required to come down to earth except in company with the Supreme Lord during His descent or otherwise as directed by Him in regard to the time, place and manner of descent. Such souls considered from the standpoint of spiritual status and attitude are varied in nature. It would be unfair to place Mother under this category, for the simple reason, that while these souls are characterized by a sense of intimacy with the Divine which seldom encroaches on identity, Mother represents an integral self-awareness which never tolerates even in the slightest degree an idea of separation or distinction from the integral Central Being. Her confession concerning Her consciousness of identity with the Cosmic and the Super-cosmic existence and with all the powers and attributes associated with it, is a clear argument against the inclusion of Mother in this category.

The view which accepts Mother's personality as a case of *Avatāra* may be dismissed with a few words of comment. The question of *Aṃsa* or *Kalā* may be left aside, but it seems to me that even the possibility of a Plenary *Avatāra* is excluded in Her case. The fact is that every *Avatāra*, unless he is of the plenary type, represents an aspect of the Divine Power and can never represent the Divine Essence or even the Divine Person *in toto*. In several cases *Avatāras* are self-forgetful Divine emanations, whereas in others in which self-consciousness is retained, integral consciousness seems to be always lacking. In case of the Plenary *Avatāra* also, if there be any,



unbroken consciousness of his plenary nature does not appear to exist. A careful study of Mother's utterances and a critical attitude towards Her life and activities would perhaps reveal the fact that Her case is altogether different. She Herself has confessed to some that She never loses her Supreme Self-consciousness. *Samādhi* or no *Samādhi*, She is where She always has been; She knows no change, no modification, no alteration: She is always poised in the self-same awareness as a Supreme and Integral Universality, transcending all limitations of time, space and personality and yet comprehending them all in a great harmony.

She has said times without number that Her body is not like that of an ordinary person generated through *prārabdha karmas* under the dominating influence of Ignorance and that She has had no previous life to account for Her present existence; nor will She have a future life in continuation of and for the adjustment of Her activities in the present life. The fact that She was aware of Herself and conscious of what was happening around Her immediately after Her birth is an illustration to show that Her self-awareness was born with Her and was not the effect of either Her so-called *dikṣā* or Her so-called *sādhana* at Bajitpur.

Mother says that all Her activities are really spontaneous and not prompted by will or purpose, nor influenced and coloured by desires. Will-power is not the spring of Her actions. The untrained will of the layman and the trained will of the yogi are equally absent in Her and what appears like will is only an expression of the Great Power beyond the will working from within. She distinguishes between *Mahāśakti* and *Ichchāśakti*, saying that while the former is like the fire, the latter is like the smoke that issues out of it. *Ichchāśakti*, or will-power cannot exist in a person who, whether considered as an individual or as the Universal, is essentially impersonal. The power of the Impersonal or the Power which is impersonal expresses itself in the Cosmic Mind as the universal will and in the individual will, but in itself it can hardly be described as will of any kind. It is pure, ineffable and absolute. Of course, there is such a thing as Divine Will, but we have to interpret it as identical with the Supreme Power rather than as will analogous to the human will though it must be admitted that the human will and the Divine Will are in a sense the same Power.

Will implies self-limitation to a certain extent, even though that limitation is an imposition by itself, on itself. What is technically known as *karma* is really an outcome of the individual will of man with an egoistic background and functioning under ignorance. Freedom of will implies a removal of this limitation. If the limitation is self-made its disappearance is equally self-initiated. In the Self which is really free from all limitations, the will is absolutely free. In other words, it is not will in the ordinary sense of the term but is an expression of the Divine Power, free and unob-

structed in its functioning. That Mother has no will of Her own as distinguished from the so-called Divine Will shows that all Her movements take place spontaneously and that we cannot hold Her separately responsible for any of them. Her movements are guided neither by the predispositions of the past nor by any consideration of the future. They are confined to the present and they rest there as in the heart of Eternity.

From this it might be inferred that She is always in a state of purity and that what comes to pass in Her life is determined not by Herself as She appears to us but by the forces working from above. Her system is like a stringed instrument giving out notes, not of its own initiative, but in response to shocks or vibrations received from outside.

It is very difficult for a man to conceive a Personality which is so Impersonal or the Impersonal actually embodied in such a Person. In Mother we have a curious combination of these contradictory elements, for which reason one finds it so hard to form an estimate of the truth of Her Being. Will-power being really absent, the absence of *karma* as a moral force becomes intelligible. That Mother is untouched by *karma* of any kind need not therefore be an enigma. There being no previous *karma*, the origin of Her body is to be explained by the play of the Supreme Power, either in itself or as reacting to the collective aspirations of humanity. As to why the Supreme Power should have expressed itself in a particular human body is a question to which an ordinary man is not in a position to reply.

The experience of *Sarvātmābhāva*, to which all mystics look forward after their realization of the Self, is found to be a normal experience with Mother even in Her earliest days. The fact is so patent to all acquainted with Her life that no illustration is needed to substantiate it.

[To continue]

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**PAGES FROM  
"MA ANANDAMAYEE PRASANG"**

[Translated from Bengali]

—Prof. A.K. Dutta Gupta

[Continued from before]

**28<sup>th</sup> May, 1945, Ramna Ashram**

In the morning Ma went to the ashram at Siddheshwari along with those devotees who had come from outside Bengal.

When I went to the ashram in the afternoon then Gita discourse was going on. Ma was sitting on the ground outside and many people were also sitting surrounding her. One young man asked Ma- "What we understand or learn we learn that through the intellect. Whatever you say do you speak that from study of books or through hearing from others? Or do you know the same through intuition?"

Ma (Laughing) - Whatever is said is not through reading of books or through intuitive knowledge. This body had no education. But do you know how that happens? Don't you see boys and girls striking *Kāsars* (a sort of bell-metal large cymbal)? As they strike on the *Kāsar* the sound comes out accordingly. This body is also like that. As you put questions the reply also comes out of this body accordingly. This is absolutely true.

How much the young man could grasp after listening to Ma cannot be said. But he expressed his wish to say something to Ma in private. Ma asked him to come in the morning before 11 a.m..

Some North Indian army people were also there. Not being able to follow anything of the conversation which was going on with Ma they seemed to be expressing some annoyance. Finding this some told them that Ma knew Hindi so they could ask in Hindi, if they liked.

Hearing this one of them told Ma - "Mataji, you say something". Laughingly Ma started talking in Hindi— "Pitaji, the world is full with my Pitaji's and Matajis and small children are my friends. All the homes in the world are my home. I have no nationality. Therefore there is nothing to worry about my boarding and lodging. Whatever I eat or wear are all mine. I never take anything which is other's." Ma was saying these words laughingly.

One of the army people remarked- "Mataji, all these words are true". Another one, after coming a bit forward, asked- "Mataji now it is *Kaliyuga*. Isn't it? Please say when it will be over."

Ma - As it is said that *Kaliyuga*, this is within a fixed period and it is also said how long this will last. So, you can know or see that from the persons who know that or from the place where that is written. But there is another side of this. I say that all the *Yugas* exist in each one. Now it is *Kaliyuga*, but for some one this is *Satyayuga*. Therefore, the *Satya*, *Tretā*, *Dwāpar* and *Kali* are in each and every *yuga*.

Nagendra Dutta- Whatever period is mentioned in the *Shāstras* (Scriptures) about the *Kaliyuga*, please say how long it will last according to your opinion.

Ma - Will everyone accept that as true if I say anything? If everyone accepts the same, then only something will be said by this body. Otherwise, this body's words will create another viewpoint among so many others.

Nagendra babu- Please explain these words to them.

But it was seen that in the meantime the person who questioned and all others had already left.

Ma got up from her *āsana* and started strolling on the grounds. Finding a chance I asked Ma- "On one point there is a difference between me and Jain. None except you will be able to resolve the same. You will have to settle the matter.

Ma- Am I to hear the same just now?

I- As you wish.

Ma- Should I listen while strolling about or after sitting down?

I- Whatever you think good.

"Let me move about a little", by saying this Ma advanced a few steps. But moving about could not be done. At every step people were coming, doing *pranām* and started talking many things. Seeing this Ma sat down and asked me, "You tell me what you have to say".

I- One thing is heard that everything is arranged in this world. Birth, death, meeting people, whatever happen are said to be arranged from before. Even the falling of a leaf from the tree is said to be not accidental. You also say such a thing occasionally. And it is also seen that if all this was not pre-arranged then it would not have been possible for astrologers, like Bhṛigu\* and others to say about the future correctly. Thus it is felt that everything is perhaps pre-ordained. But if it is accepted that everything is pre-ordained then where does the freedom of God exist?

Ma - Look, so long as we discuss by keeping in mind action and fruit of action till then it can be said that such fruit will come out of such type of action. Whether you

\* A renowned astrologer of ancient times.

speak of an astrologer or of *Bhrigu* they can count and tell only up to that far. But everything is unlimited. You see there are innumerable trees imbedded in one seed, from that one tree grows out. So many fruits come out from the tree and so many seeds remain intact in each fruit. And from those seeds how many trees, how many fruits and how many seeds will grow. So you find although the seed is one it is without any end. Similarly all the things are unlimited. While explaining the mystery of creation it is said that many a universe has been created out of only one wish of God. But the word many also connote that 'each' one is unlimited. From that point of view new creation is happening all the times. It has just been said that from one seed comes out a tree and from the seeds of that tree many new trees are grown. Although the trees may appear to be of one variety, but some difference is there. From that point of view new and new creations are occurring every moment.

Jatin- If it is said that whatever new creation is occurring all that is included in God's earlier determination, then it can be said that everything is predetermined.

I- If it is said that creation has begun out of prior determination then at whatever moment the determination is taken there seems to be a beginning. But this is against what the scriptures say; because as per scriptures creation is without any beginning (*anādi*).

Ma - Yes, creation is without any beginning (*anādi*) and also without any end (*ananta*). When we discuss about creation then ofcourse we speak by keeping our attention to time (*Kāla*) etc. Creation occurs ofcourse within time. But there is a stage which is beyond time. Otherwise how the Guru could take the disciple to a stage beyond time after giving him initiation? It is not that all things are over soon after the time is over, when we talk about the stage which is beyond time even then we accept that there are many more things beyond time as well.

Jatin- There might be a stage beyond time, but when we talk about creation we understand that to be within time. There is nothing which could be termed as creation which is beyond time.

Ma - There is creation which is beyond time. The meaning of the term creation beyond time is that creation, preservation and destruction everything is happening from time immemorial. There is no limit of any thing. If you say that God cannot create or does not create anything new then you are limiting God. But God is limitless. Even though He is one, He is unlimited and although being unlimited, He is One. Suppose you build one room with sugar. Because you are constructing that room sugar gets a particular shape or form. But when you demolish that room and convert that again into sugar then it may be felt that the form which sugar had obtained after being transformed into the shape of a room was lost. But in reality that

does not happen. Because the special shape of a room remains intact in the same.

"You see again, when water is frozen into ice, then water, which has got no shape at all, gets a shape or form. But water was there before being converted into ice. Again when ice is melted, then also that shape remains mixed in water. That form is its eternal form. You all speak about *chinmay* form, *chinmay* abode. So it is seen that there is some form even in the formless and form is also mingled in the formless. From that point of view creation is continuing since eternity. There happens no loss in the totality of God as a result of that. When you get lighted one lamp from the light of another one there happens no loss of light in that lamp; similarly even after endless creations God's endlessness is not diminished in the least. The creation which is endless evolves out of totality. As God is fulness personified, similarly His part is also full. Even if something is taken from the whole, there is no loss in the wholeness.

"As you have said that Bhrigu has told after calculations as regards the past and present lives. That also can be said to be of a certain period. That is not of the life eternal. If you say Bhrigu is without any beginning and is in a position to tell about anything that has happened or will happen in the eternal period then Bhrigu becomes God Himself. Therefore, as it is true that all things are pre-arranged, it is similarly true to say that nothing is pre-ordained. Which one is true at what point of time that depends only on the point of view of persons."

Ma (pointing to me)- That day Biren baba was saying that when man becomes concentrated in oneself then he achieves oneness or *Kaivalya* etc. as you say, meaning that he loses the feeling of divisiveness and obtains the feeling of oneness with everything. At this stage it is felt that the world is illusory and unreal. The soul is only the real thing. At this stage there happens no feeling of sorrow etc. because there remains no connection with the worldly things. This also is a stage of joy, but this is not the state of Deliverence. This is also a sort of state of bondage. After this there is another state which you term as "simultaneous", as "complete". At this stage there remains simultaneous knowledge of the part and even of the whole. The knowledge of the part and of the whole is revealed at the same time. But since the part is unlimited the simultaneous knowledge can also be unlimited. So, what we understand from the term 'eternal' is the knowledge of God's eternal creation, eternal stability and eternal annihilation which have been going on every moment through eternity. This creation, stability and dissolution is not a matter of obstacle to another; but each one is complete in itself. Here the things, affection and attachment, whatever is beautiful and whatever is ugly, are existent. Otherwise it cannot be said what is there and what is not. This is the totality, completeness. But question may come up where from this totality has come?

I- Yes, it cannot be explained. Each one gives only a name.

After this a certain gentleman asked something about the adulation of God's Name. He said "Ma, if God is full of *ānanda* why His Name is so much dry?"

Ma- Can that happen? The *Nāma* (of God) and *Nāmi* (God Himself) are one.

The gentleman - I find while repeating His Name that there is no feeling of pleasure. It is also seen that while taking His Name simultaneously I think about office files. Furthermore, how to take revenge against another, that thought also comes up.

Ma - It so happens because of the fact that there being accumulated fruits of actions and of how many lives. As the same gradually decreases you will obtain joy in His Name accordingly.

The gentleman - I am not responsible for the fruit of action. For that only God is responsible.

Ma - Can you tell even this with force? If you could, then you would have become delivered. But you cannot do that. That's why it is said that even if God's Name may not be liked by you that is the only medicine. Therefore it is said about *abhyāsa* yoga (the science of practise). Afterwards everything happens through God's grace. Gods grace also happens through two ways- grace which is favourable for you and the other one which is adverse. Those who proceed on the path which leads to more desires (*Pravritti mārg*) they suffer from grace which is adverse to them. By hurting them God turns them back toward Him. Otherwise human being would have never turned toward God.

Ma continued - "God's law is so nice that as man advances toward Him the more and more the majesticity of Him and His attributes like *aninā* & *laghima* (subtleness) are exposed to him. If he starts playing with such things then he will have to face downfall. Such downfall is also His grace. God out of His grace makes one learn that he is not to play with such things. Those things are to be preserved within oneself secretly. But there is no fault if, while keeping such things secret, something comes out automatically."

"It is so nice again, as God is perfect from all respects, one remains on the path of *bhoga* (pleasure) the sorrow which is felt that also is total. Whatever fruit follows after certain action that is also total in all respect.

The gentleman- Is there any need of the Guru while proceeding on the path of religion.

Ma- Certainly.

The gentleman- Why? All things can be learnt from the scriptures and books.

Ma - If that would be the fact then at no case there would have been the need of a teacher. Who is the Guru? Guru is God. Should never think the Guru as a human being.

After this Ma was taken to the ashram for meals. But she instead of going for her meals proceeded towards the *Nām Ghar* (Kirtan hall). The ladies were singing Kirtan there. Ma after going there herself started singing in a very sweet voice-

"Hare Krishna Hare Krishna  
 Krishna Krishna Hare Hare  
 Hare Rama Hare Rama  
 Rama Rama Hare Hare".

The ladies also joined singing. It appeared as if the Kirtan place suddenly became almost frozen, by converting the same filled with only God's Name. After singing Kirtan in this manner for some time Ma went to have her meals. We too returned to our homes.

[To continue]

\*

## OTHERS

Lord, help me live from day to day  
 In such a self-forgetful way  
 That even when I kneel to pray  
*My prayers will be for OTHERS.*

Help me in all the work I do  
 To ever be sincere and true  
 And know that all I do for you  
*Must need be done for OTHERS.*

Let 'self be crucified and slain  
 And buried deep and all in vain  
 My efforts be to rise again  
 Unless to live for OTHERS.

And when my Work on earth is done  
 And my new Work in Heaven begun  
 May I forget the crown I have won  
 While thinking still of OTHERS.

OTHERS Lord, yes OTHERS.  
 Let this my Motto be.  
 Help me to live for OTHERS  
 That I may live like THEE.

\*. Courtesy : PEACE Journal



## 'JOY, LOVE AND WISDOM'

—Jean Herbert

Seeing the radiant face of Ma Anandamayi and hearing Her laughter, you guess that She is an incarnation of joy. Touched by the caress of Her glance you know that Her heart is overflowing with love for all beings. Listening to Her teaching, so simple and clear, you understand that She is in possession of all wisdom. But one cannot say, whether it is Joy, Love or Wisdom that is the source of all this, for with Her all three are inextricably and indissolubly mingled—one could not exist without the others.

The Joy in which Ma Anandamayi lives is not that which we know in the worldly life, where pleasure and pain, hope, regret and disillusionment, attraction and repulsion follow on each other's heels, born one of another.

Nor is it an ego-centric calm of the stoic rigidity that erects around itself a rampart of indifference. Hers is an overflowing, irrepressible Joy that expresses itself in gaiety, that knows no obstacles, because it is deeply rooted in the Absolute, beyond the dualities of good and evil, I and not-I, of pleasant and unpleasant, because its unshakable base is Love and Wisdom.

The Love which Ma Anandamayi radiates is not the selfish, demanding attachment that men feel, that passion which often generates hate, which leads to bitterness and despair more easily than to peace. Nor is it the haughty, protecting benevolence of one who enjoys giving, but would consider it degrading to receive. Hers is a living, active, generous Love that links with a constant warm flow the hearts that open to it. For the Love of Ma Anandamayi is rooted in the fact of Unity; the oneness of all creatures, the oneness of man with God, the oneness of the lover with the beloved, and in all difference it sees only the joyous play of the Divine, for it is unshakably based on Joy and Wisdom.

The Wisdom of Ma Anandamayi is not the knowledge found in books, always

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2. Translation of the Preface of the French Edition of *Sad Vani* published in the series, "Les Grands Maitres Spirituels", dans *L'Inde Contemporaine*, 1943, Editions Ophrys, Adrien-Maisonneuve, 11 Rue Saint Sulpice, Paris 6e and Delachaux and Niestle, Neuchatel, Suisse. The original work (*Sad Vani*) is in Bengali compiled by Jyotish Chandra Roy and contains instructions on spiritual matters by Ma.

over contradictions, destroys its hypotheses in order to set up new ones and is not concerned whether its achievements lead to benefit or to cataclysm. Nor is it ethereal vision, born out of ecstasy, which has no connection with the world in which other human beings live and struggle. It is Wisdom which at the same time embraces the most arduous metaphysical subjects, the most agonizing problems of morality as well as the smallest details of daily life; which sees everything in its right relation, because it knows the Reality of which our world is an appearance and of which all beings, all facts, all becomings, are but partial and changing manifestations, distorted by our senses and our thoughts, and to these also She has the key. This Wisdom has a clear and intimate knowledge of all that is, because it is firmly based on Joy which realizes all unity.

Since Ma Anandamayi lives in fact integrally and not only intellectually in that "consciousness of Oneness", She is no longer tempted to identify Herself, as men do, with Her own body and Her own mind. And this depersonalisation makes it possible for Her to fix Her centre of consciousness at once in the minds of those who come to Her for guidance. Identifying Herself with them She sees at the same time the true being of the one who questions (that is his divine perfect nature) and its appearance (that is the illusion in which he fights with all sorts of problems). And therefore to questions put to Her, She replies almost simultaneously on three planes; monistically on the plane of the noumenal reality of monism, and dualistically on the plane of the religious attitude, and on the plane of practical morality. It is for him who asks to follow the advice that corresponds with his own state of consciousness-to live in Unity, to listen to the voice of God, or to obey the rules of social life.

An example of this has been given by Lizelle Reymond in her study on Ma Anandamayi (*Etudes et Portraits, Adriens-Maisoncuvre, Paris, 1943*).

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## SRI ANANDAMAYI MA

—Prof. B. Sanjiva Rao

[Continued from before]

Ma's discipline is simply described as a complete surrender of the personal will to the Will of God. The release of Divine *Śakti* which follows such surrender is never a source of corruption, never a danger, for the power is used by the Supreme Itself and never by an individualistic agency. The knowledge that is attained in such a state is not what is called conceptual knowledge. It belongs to a plane higher than the mental. Is it what in our ancient books is called the *Sat-chit-ānanda* consciousness? It is difficult for those of us who are still living within the framework of the intellect, the logical mind to speak of a supra-mental consciousness. But some of us have seen the manifestation of the results of such a consciousness. Even at the risk of being autobiographical, I cannot help mentioning a rather striking illustration of the power which Ma exercises with such extraordinary ease and spontaneity. I belong to a school of thought which looks upon running to a teacher for the solution of one's personal problems as rather childish. The pupil is expected to co-operate with the teacher in the helping of the world and not waste the teacher's time in diverting his attention to his own little self.

But without any kind of warning, a problem, a conflict of a peculiarly difficult nature, arose in my mind. No amount of wrestling with it or attempts to quieten the mind in order to dissolve it, were of any avail. I felt that I could not waste more time over such a conflict. I asked for an interview with Ma, which was readily granted. I could only tell Ma that I had a problem—I was not in a position to explain the nature of that problem. So I sat quietly in front of Her. She spoke no word, offered me no verbal explanation; within a couple of minute, the mind was in a state of a deep stillness, the problem was effortlessly dissolved—I was in a state of an ineffable peace and joy. She quietly said to me, — "Pitaji, you are in that state now—continue to be like that". I made my *pranāma* and left Her presence.

It is possible to give all kinds of psychological explanations of the manner in which such mental transformations are brought about. If I had been cured of some physical ailment as quickly, I am sure that such an event would have been hailed as a

miracle. But the cure of a psychic disease is just as significant as the healing of a physical one. I cannot pretend to explain such a phenomenon. I merely wish to draw attention to the fact that the state of 'no-mind', as it is called in Zen Buddhism, or the *Sat-chit-ānanda* consciousness, is a very vital and dynamic condition. It is not out of the emptiness, but of the fulness of Life that the Divine *Śakti* performs its miracles of healing, physical or super-physical. The state of 'no-mind' is not a mere negation, a mere emptiness. The mind has to be emptied of all purely mental creations. But the state of emptiness is immediately followed by the manifestation of a Divine Consciousness which has always been there, ceaselessly at work, but of which we become aware only when the play of the mind has ceased. What we call emptying is merely the cessation of such play.

What is the part that Ma plays in such an event? Obviously, the mind of the patient must be receptive, sensitive to the great current of Love and understanding that is poured on him. But when I recall this experience, I am forcibly reminded of the great statement of Sri Krishna that when the Supreme is seen, desire dies. All those who have had the privilege of contacting Ma, will bear out my own experience that if one allows oneself to be receptive to Her Grace, all desire dies. Evil does not and cannot live in the wonderful atmosphere which She carries with Her wherever She is, and yet it is not so much the destruction of desire, as the transformation of it into a thing of Beauty by the extra-ordinary power of Love. The no-mind state is apparently a state of nothingness. But what is it? To have nothing, to be nothing. When one is stripped of all that one has and all that is distinctive in oneself, there is nothing else that one can lose; and that destroys fear-- for no one can take away anything from us. And the state of fearlessness is the state of absolute Love-- the state of Divinity itself. This, as far as I can understand, is the secret of Ma's extraordinary influence over all those who have the privilege of being blessed by Her.

Is there any distinctive teaching, any special message, which could be considered as distinctive of Ma's spiritual relationship to the world? Can a flower teach us anything? Does the tree-top swaying in the breeze bring us any message? Is the Beauty, the Peace of the everlasting hills, communicable through the medium of the spoken word? I do not think so. The song of the sea, the wild music of the storm, they just form part of that Eternal Harmony which enters into our being, but is incapable of being rendered into human speech. Likewise the mind is unable to create an intellectual system out of Ma's answers to the questionings of Her pupils, She is no teacher who accepts disciples and yet She is loved and revered as the Mother who loves, guides and protects, who is able to give, out of the inexhaustible store of wisdom, inspiration, solace and strength. Day after day She sits in the hall of Her Ashram in

Benares and gives expression of Her rich experience and wisdom. The answers to the many questions that are put to Her come not as the result of deliberate thought but as a spontaneous pouring forth of an intuitive understanding. "Why does not the Mother answer to the cry of Her children?" She was once asked. Immediately without a moment's deliberation, rang out Her voice, — "Pitāji — Pitāji". There was no response to Her call. Once more She called and someone stood up in the hall and responded. She laughed — and She laughs with the whole of Her being— and triumphantly said— "You did not answer, because you thought I was not serious in calling you. But you answered when you realised that I was calling you. Likewise the great Mother knows when Her children are at play and when they really need Her. They call Her often without really wanting Her. But when they fall and are hurt and cry for Her help, She answers immediately." One is reminded of Christ's teaching, — "Ask and it shall be given you; seek and ye shall find; knock and it shall be opened unto you". But this asking, seeking and knocking must be genuine, must come out of the depths of our being; only when there is this integral demand, will there be an appropriate answer.

One great quality of Her answer is worth noting: The answer is on the same plane as the question: She is able to read the thought behind the question, sense the precise need of the person who is asking for Her help. There is a completely perfect adaptation of the reply to the capacity of the individual concerned and to the demands of any particular situation. A friend of mine went to see Her after the loss of a dearly loved wife and was slightly annoyed when Ma greeted him with a loud peal of laughter. He asked; "Ma, why are you laughing when I am so unhappy?" Spontaneously came the swift reply; "*Pitāji*, there is one less barrier between you and God." For Ma, life has only one purpose, it is God. Whenever a barrier of attachment is removed, there is cause for rejoicing. It is not my intention to multiply such instances. I desire only to emphasise a point which is significant: It is that the answer comes out of a consciousness higher than that of the logical mind. Ma identifies Herself with the individual who is asking for Her help, and out of the knowledge and insight that arises out of such identification does the appropriate answer come.

What happens in these cases of individual response to human need is also true of the collective need of humanity. When the cry of a world in suffering reaches the Supreme, there is an immediate answer. Teacher after Teacher appears in response to the need of the Epoch. It is no coincidence that in this fateful crisis, when the world is facing the destruction of a whole civilisation, there should have appeared in this country Spiritual Teachers of extraordinary wisdom and insight. It is not entirely a coincidence that India should have thrown up great personalities of almost superhuman

stature. Sri Ramana Maharshi, Sri Aurobindo, J, Krishnamurti and others are no mere accidents in world history. What is Sri Anandamayi's relationship to these Teachers?

What is wrong with our world today? Long ago, at the beginning of the century, a writer of great spiritual insight, Edward Carpenter, summed up the symptoms of the disorder from which humanity was suffering in a book called 'Civilisation: Its Cause and Cure'. Civilisation is the disease which is afflicting humanity— that is his diagnosis. Two World wars and a third one in the offing are a justification of his prophetic insight. Stated in their simplest terms, the roots of war and conflict are to be found in the idea that an individual can possibly be happy at the expense of another. This delusion is responsible for all the conflicts in human relationship. What is true of the individual is also true of groups, of those mentally constructed entities which we call nations or races. Conflicts arise out of the ignoring of the vital truth that man is not an isolated unit. Individual life gains its significance only in the context of an integrated whole of which he is a part. Torn from the context, the individual man, isolated from the family or the social group, has no meaning. Man can only be a man in relationship and not in isolation. The man who lives only for himself and disregards his relation to the whole misses happiness. Likewise a group has no meaning except in terms of the individuals which constitute the group. If the individuals are selfish, corrupt, no organisational changes can create an honest group out of such dishonest individuals. All democratic, individualistic societies, as well as all the totalitarian ones, are guilty of practising one or the other of these delusions. Modern civilisation built upon the idea of achieving happiness by perfect organisation on the material and even the social level is bound to crash and crumble. The cement which holds modern society together is self-interest, enlightened or unenlightened. Such a society must sooner or later disintegrate. There can be and there is no future for a generation consisting of individuals who live only for themselves, whose criterion of the 'good' life is the largest share for themselves of the 'good' things of life. So long as this view of life prevails, war and conflict are inevitable.

What then is the remedy for such a disease? Obviously there must be a complete change of values. It is not an easy process to convince a modern man that the way of self assertion is the way of destruction. Yet when an individual realizes— and not merely accepts intellectually— that happiness, peace and liberation spontaneously result when the self is abnegated, that he finds himself in harmony with everyone and everything. No league of nations can achieve world unity by compromise formulas which seek to balance the interests of one nation by the interests of another. Such a system of checks and balance is bound to break down. The imposition of a superficial unity by force, either, physical or even 'moral', will prove a failure. Unity cannot

be 'imposed' by any organisational methods, just as no law can compel a husband to love his wife. Unity is an inner relationship of harmony. Such harmony and unity can only be achieved by the removal of disharmony and disunity—you cannot impose health, you can only remove disease.

Any social order which is to be stable must be based on the sure foundations of the law which governs all relationships. *Dharma* is properly a network of such relationships, not only between humans, but between the individual and the entire universe, living as well as non-living. *Dharma* is the expression in terms of behaviour and conduct of this universal law of harmony. This law states clearly that man can only be happy when he lives for the whole and not for himself. This is not a Utopian ideal—it is the law which daily governs the universe and even our human body. My little finger cannot think in terms of its own growth and stature. If it did it would lead to a monstrosity. Even the growth of cells has to be bound by the law of harmony, which in the case of the body we call health. If they grow in defiance of this law, we call it 'cancer', a disease. Health is an indivisible state of harmony—one finger does not enjoy more of health than another—health is the harmony of the whole, the harmony of the inter-relationship of the parts. Such harmony can only exist when the smallest part, as well as the largest, the cell and the organ, both live in complete obedience to the law. In Nature there is no great and small, there is perfection, not a division of superior and inferior. Superiority and inferiority, which constitute the cause of all conflict, are the characteristics of our ego-centred civilisation. Where these are eliminated there are the true beginnings of a real community.

In the family, there is an inequality of capacity, of temperament, of experience. But in any well ordered family such inequalities result merely in a differentiation of functions without the idea of superiority or inferiority. The family is the only social unit in which an individual can be fully himself. There is no ulterior purpose for which the different individuals have come together. The child is not branded with the stamp of inferiority, of a lower status, because it is unable to earn its own way. Differentiation of functions involves no psychological superiority or inferiority: out of such a relationship of love comes peace and joy. The family system in the West, and slowly in the East also, is beginning to feel the influence of political, economic and social organisation—and less and less does the family fulfil man's fundamental need for communion, for love. All social disorders, all conflicts at whatever level of our existence are due to the increasing mechanising of man's consciousness, his mind, his work. Man is essentially a living force and his whole being revolts against the crushing burden of organization. The Church, the State, increasingly direct his activity and thwart his spontaneity. It is man's attempt to be free from this deadening influence of

his environment that results in all the hideous tragedies that are taking place around us. What will bring back to man the happiness, the peace, the living creative power of his being which are now almost hopelessly lost? Our spiritual Teachers speak with one voice in answer to the demand of the entire human race for the bread of life, the living waters that shall bring healing to a sorely afflicted world — only Love can bring salvation to man.

Ma Anandamayi is the refuge of thousands of despairing hearts— among them are many from western lands. They do not understand Her spoken words. But they do not fail to catch the fragrance of Her marvellous love. It heals the wounds of the heart, broken by all the cruel things that have happened to them.

"Peace is not to be found in the world outside. Dive deeply in the depth of your own being and find therein the pearl of great price." That is the message of every Teacher since the beginning of days. It is Ma's message. Love is the very core of our being and Peace and Joy. Sri Aurobindo speaks of the Supramental Power, Sri Ramana Maharshi and Krishnamurti speak of the Power of the Eternal, the only Reality. The Truth is the same. There is but one Reality, one Truth. That Truth is Beauty, it is the very heart of Love. It manifests itself in a heart purified of self.

Ma is the living proof of such Love and Joy. Effortlessly She pours out that Love on all who come to Her. She is the Mother, and all the men and women of the world are Her children. Their hearts are an open book to Her. The pattern of their individual lives is clearly visible to Her. She has come in answer to the cry of a world which has lost the power to Love. All problems are dissolved by and in Love— conflicts cease when men are prepared to break down the walls of prejudice, the walls created by self-interest. Problems, whether they are individual or national, are only capable of solution where there is a completely disinterested search for Truth. Truth becomes manifest when the false is given up. The life of sensation is false, the life which seeks satisfaction in power is false, whether that power is physical or super-physical. When all that is false in our thought is given up, Truth dawns upon us. Likewise when all that is false in our feelings is eliminated, Love comes into manifestation. Love and Truth and Beauty cannot be taught, are incommunicable through the medium of thought. They are directly apprehended by the spirit. Such immediate experience of Reality seems to be possible in the presence of one, who, like Ma, lives in the supramental consciousness— one begins to sense the life beyond thought when one is in contact with Ma. Such a state of being becomes more concrete, is felt as even more real than the life of sensation. One has only to watch the results of the working of this higher consciousness, to realize how problems dissolve themselves around a person living in this state. On every occasion when men and women gather around Her the



most noticeable feature is the quality of the atmosphere. Rich and poor, Maharani and humble devotee, the learned Pandit or Professor and the ignorant seeker, the Sannyāsi, the Yogi and the Devotee all meet on a common level — they all drop their titles, distinctions, wealth, power and feel like common children of the great Mother. In Her blessed presence, all differences, inequalities are dropped with an ease that borders on the miraculous— and yet people are perpetually discussing the problems of Peace and War, of the way of removing international tensions. There is only one way, the way of Love. When people meet in the name of the Supreme, there the spirit of Love and Peace abides. Even a casual visit to Ma's Ashram is sufficient to make us aware of this Truth. The answer to every problem is Love. For a problem is an ever-varying manifestation of the spirit of isolation, the expression of the ego. There is only one essential problem— the self, the ego. Love dissolves this knot of the heart. In Ma's presence one achieves this sense of freedom, this release from the tension of self-consciousness. One realizes that the loss of the false life of the self is the gaining of Eternal Life. The teaching of the great Masters of Divine Wisdom is seen to be the only way out of this terrible crisis, the impending tragedy of a third global war.

Once in a long while Humanity puts forth a rare flower of exquisite Beauty and Fragrance. It cannot be said to teach, to have a message, it lives for only one purpose, to demonstrate the existence of a Power, that is ever at work creating by Its transforming influence, Beauty out of ugliness, Love out of strife. Such a Power is Sri Anandamayi Ma. May She bring peace and harmony into this world of strife.

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**Note :**

This beautiful article, written by the renowned scholar Prof B. Sanjiva Rao more than half a century before, is being reprinted for the sake of English speaking readers of our Journal from a book on Ma, which has also long been out of print.

—Managing Editor

## A UNIQUE BEING

—Dr. Nalini Kanta Brahma

It was a cold evening in December, 1924 when I was taken to Shahbagh for a *darśana* of the Mother by Rai Bahadur Pran Gopal Mukherji, the then Deputy Postmaster General of Dhaka. He had already secured the permission of Her husband for the purpose and we were taken straight to the room where Mother was sitting alone deeply absorbed in meditation. A dim lamp was burning in front of Her and that was perhaps the only thing in the room. Mother's face was completely hidden from our view as in those days She used to veil it exactly like a newly married village girl. After we had waited there for about half an hour, suddenly the veil loosened itself and Mother's face became visible in all its brilliance and lustre. Hymns containing many "seed mantras" began to be recited by the Mother in uncommon accents, producing wonderful resonance which affected the whole surroundings. The stillness of the cold December night, the loneliness of the Shahbagh gardens and above all the sublimity and serenity of the atmosphere in the Mother's room— all combined to produce a sense of holiness which could be distinctly felt. As soon as the recitations ceased, Mother's father who was present that day at Shahbagh began to sing a few songs of Ramprasad with an exquisitely melodious voice, and Rai Bahadur Mukherji remarked that the sweet songs of the old man must have been instrumental in bringing about the descent of the Divine Mother. As long as we were in the room, we felt an indescribable elevation of the spirit, a silence and a depth not previously experienced, a peace that passeth all understanding. We came away from Shahbagh late at night with the conviction that we had been in the presence of a superior Being whom it is difficult to doubt or deny.

I had the good fortune of seeing Mother next in the summer of 1926 at Deoghar, where She had gone at the invitation of Rai Bahadur Pran Gopal Mukherji. On that occasion She stayed there for a week. Śri Śri Balananda Brahmachari Maharaj was alive then and used to have conversations on spiritual topics with the Mother for long hours both morning and evening. *Nāmakirtana* was held in the Ashram and Mother went into states of deep *samādhi*, Mother was almost dancing with joy whilst singing 'Hari Om'. She sang with such a sweet and melodious voice that it seemed to all present that She could not be any human being, but must be a Goddess in human

form. Śrī Śrī Brahmachari Maharaj himself remarked that he had carefully observed that Her feet did not touch the ground and this was to him a conclusive proof that She was the Divine Mother incarnate. After singing *Hari Om, Hari Om* for about half an hour She took Brahmachari Maharaj to his room in the upper storey of the "Dhyāna-Kutir" and there told him certain very deep things. As nobody else was allowed in the room, the substance of the conversation can only be conjectured. Śrī Śrī Brahmachari Maharaj was very much impressed by the Mother and it was at his special request that She agreed to stay for a week, changing Her original programme of remaining for three days only. Even after so many years *Hari Om* as sung by Her seems to be still ringing in our ears, and it had such a charming and wonderful effect that even agnostic youths and non-believers felt it's influence and some of them were heard actually chanting *Hari Om* in their sleep. At that period, for the major portion of the day, Mother used to live in a higher world as it were and whenever She had to reply to any question put to Her, it seemed definitely that She was descending from a higher level and for several minutes She could utter words only with great difficulty. The look in Her eyes changed whenever She attempted to speak and proved beyond doubt that She was forcibly attempting to come down from a higher level. This transition is not noticeable now and it is quite likely that She now always lives on the higher plane and that this has become so natural and spontaneous, that it need not be shut off even when there is work at the lower level, and that the two go on simultaneously.

In the afternoon of the day of starting from Deoghar I was granted the privilege of a private interview. I asked Mother what I could do for spiritual advancement and was told in reply that what I did was all right and that nothing further could be done even if She instructed me to do so. I betrayed signs of doubts. Mother noticed it and said, "Very well, I am telling you a very simple thing. Do not worship the portrait of a man who is alive." "I never do and why should I?" was my answer. Mother merely smiled and said, "Very well."

After two years and a half I met Her in the house of Her husband's brother at Calcutta. I remember two or three missionary gentlemen coming to see Her that evening and She was busy with them. As soon as I approached Her, She said, "Well, you do not worship the portrait of any living man, do you?" I was bewildered. During the interval of those two years and a half I had got a bromide enlargement of a saint (who was then alive) kept in my puja room and had been worshipping it every day. She did not wait for an answer and said to me, "You see, then, that what is ordained to happen, happens and nothing but that."

Mother is a great personality. It is impossible not to bow down in Her presence

and not to obey Her commands. She is not the person to be persuaded by entreaties and whatever She wills must needs be performed. When She decides to go out on a tour alone and asks Her nearest associates to stay behind, however harsh and cruel the command may appear, it has to be carried out without a murmur. Nobody has the courage to go against the decision of the dynamic personality. Mother is kind-hearted, so soft and so tender, so merciful and so gentle, that it often seems impossible that She could wound the feelings of anybody. Again, at times She is so strong and so resolute, that She seems harder than steel and almost heartless and cruel. It may truly be said of Her that She is "harder than thunder and softer than a flower" ("बज्रादपि कठोरपि मृदूनि कुसुमादपि") gentler than the gentlest and more beautiful than the most beautiful ("सौम्येभ्यस्त्वति सुन्दरी") and yet as dreadful as enraged Death Itself ("कुपितान्तक"), as mild and sweet as the silvery rays of the moon ("ज्योत्स्नाचेन्दु रूपिण्यै") and yet as harsh as Severity Itself ("रौद्रायै"), merciful yet cruel. ("चित्तेकृपा समरनिष्ठरता"). These seemingly contradictory characteristics merely show that She transcends the ordinary human categories. Her beauty surpasses the most beautiful of all earthly things and so She is truly described as more beautiful than the most beautiful. She is cruel when She has to fight against evil forces and then She knows no compromise. She is again exceedingly gracious to those who are striving towards righteousness and Her infinite love encompasses all. When She travels hundreds of miles to see an ailing patient in the hospital or to console a mother who has lost Her only child, Her mercy and love are evident. But who knows whether Her mercy and love are not even greater when She does not yield to entreaties and appears to be cruel? Fighting against evil forces ("समर निष्ठरता") is also an indication of mercy (कृपा), because it is the only way to the Kingdom of Heaven that has been lost.

Mother's answers to questions are so simple and so forcible that they cannot but touch the hearts of those who listen to them. Wonderful solutions of difficult philosophical problems by an almost illiterate woman show that there is in Her the great Light that illumines everything. Ceaseless activity without rest for 365 days of the year shows it must be the universal Life that is pulsating in Her. The motherly affection that is bestowed on all who come to Her and captivates the hearts of them all bears out that it must be Absolute Love that is working. The single-minded devotion to Truth, the utter spontaneity and freedom in all Her actions, the steadfast adherence to the ideal, the constant reverence for all that is great and holy, the respect for tradition and custom, the utter disregard of worldly praise or blame — all these go to show that we have in the Mother a very unique being worthy of love and adoration, of reverence and worship.

# THE HOMEWARD JOURNEY : MY PATH

[Darśan of Sri Anandamayi Ma, the Dalai Lama and  
other Spiritual Epiphanies]

—Jai Jai (James Johnson)

## Boyhood reveries

When I was a boy of nine or ten, I remember entering altered states, which I then called 'reveries'. On two occasions as I sat by small and sandy Spring Creek which ran through the cow pastures of my Minnesota home, both times my mind seemed to have stopped completely and I entered a calm and deeply peaceful state. I had an intimate and luminous Awareness of the trees and grass of the park-like pasture, of the water flowing in the creek and, most clearly and amazingly, of the soil the plants were rooted in and of the water flowing slowly through it, underground, to merge with the Mississippi River a few miles away. I was not separate from them; they were also who I was.

Another time I was roused from a similar reverie by a long, wet lick on my cheek. Looking up, I found myself gazing into the deep, black, loving eyes of one of the milk cows. Behind her, the entire herd was standing silently, watching me. I felt very blessed that day.

## Sermon

I was raised in the Norwegian Lutheran Church of our town, Red Wing, Minnesota, U.S.A, earlier a prosperous Mississippi River grain shipping port when the prairies were broken in the late 1800s. There was no Danish church or, as a Dane, I'd have been raised in that. Some time in my mid-teens several of us who had shown some promise were called upon to deliver sermons based upon the Old Testament Lesson for that Sunday to the congregation.

My text was part of the passage in Exodus where Moses encounters Jaweh in the burning bush. He asked that he be allowed to see Jaweh's face and is told that he, Jaweh, will pass before him, but that Moses will be allowed to look only upon his back, for "No man may look upon my face and live."

My exegesis of this text, no doubt influenced by my early reveries, was that all of nature, the entire Cosmos, is God's back. Only this are we allowed to see and from

this we must discern the true nature of Reality by whatever means lies at our disposal; science has one view of that reality, religion another and civil society another still.

These interpretations evolve with the times and are entirely the products of our minds; concepts and speculations only, transient and ultimately unreal, but the best we can do with our limited tools... and good enough if the heart is pure.

If one were to truly look upon the face of God, to see Reality as it is, one would have to die an ego death, a stilling and annihilation of the mind and all its tools of deception. The story of one's life would then be irrevocably altered and one would become a receptive vessel for the Truth and Peace of the Divine to fill and to overflow, a mitzvah and blessing then for all the world as were Jesus and the mystic saints.

At least this is what I think I said... or would have, could I have borrowed my present understanding. The pastor decided I might have a theological future and steered me toward a church school, St Olaf College, where I earned my BA in 1967. And then promptly bolted to Berkeley for the 'Summer of Love'.

I later flunked out of Chicago Theological Seminary, a United Church of Christ social gospel oriented institution, one year after Jesse Jackson had flunked out: He was too involved in Operations Bread Basket and Push to study. I wanted to study mystical theology and comparative religion; the foot-washing brethren wanted none of that and sacked me. But while there I was privileged to study with Mircea Eliade, world's foremost historian of religion, at the affiliated University of Chicago.

### **Helen Palmer**

During the 1970s I had three readings done by Helen Palmer in Berkeley. Helen is a very well known psychic and has been involved more recently in explicating the Enneagram. I found her to be very convincing and took her messages to heart.

She once said that in time I would develop healing power, first with plants and later with people when I overcame my tendency to retract emotionally when encountering others. To be in a healing mode one has to open up in the solar plexus area, the *manipura chakra*, and include the other in that space. This would be most difficult for me as I would feel completely vulnerable and waiting for an attack in that mode. It would take some time and I would have to encounter this helplessness many times before it became evident that no harm would come and that it was a healing state. "It feels like you are about to hit a brick wall... but it's paper thin and you will find yourself through it and in state of union with, and direct usefulness to the world."

She later said, "I wonder if you know how rare such a state of healing is? Only a few thousand people on the planet have it. I really feel that you will be able to offer

something valuable for the whole planet.. some new technique or method.. once you overcome your tendency to retract in that moment of intense openness."

### **Prelude: Dream and Vision, 20 February, 1979**

A new phase of my life was initiated through a lucid dream and a vision which immediately followed it. I was thereby led to Anandamayi Ma, who graced the Earth for 86 years from 1896 to 1982 and is considered by many to be an incarnation of *Śakti* or *Devi*. She stated she had never been incarnate before and that she had come because of the cries of her devotees. She also stated that she was "*Purna Brahma Nārāyana*": the complete reality and its manifestation. Her undeserved and miraculous grace has been one of the most profound experiences of my life.

In 1979, in the midst of my life at the age of 34, I fell upon hard times. I found myself unemployed, without money or a place to live and my marriage had dissolved. I was living as best I could in my old car in the abandoned quarries in the hills behind Stanford University near Palo Alto, California, sleeping under the stars if the weather permitted. I was immersed in profound sorrow and intensely questioning my existence. Deep in sleep one night, I became aware that I was in the dream state and fully conscious, became intensely concentrated on the lucid dream unfolding before me.

A man who had experienced no success in life, the lowest of the low, suddenly found riches and fame. All men admired his success in a battlefield, rewarding him handsomely with wealth and honours; then he won the love of a beautiful woman. But, at love's first kiss, I saw the thought forming in his mind, "Is this all there is?" These longed-for new experiences had not brought the happiness he had dreamed they would. I saw him wander off, deep in thought and greatly confused. As he walked, he passed by three huge idols of brass which jabbered at him incoherently, mocking his tortured thoughts. By the time he passed the third idol, he had given up all hope; if happiness and meaning could not be found in this world, why go on? Bereft of hope, he entered a richly appointed chamber and lay down upon a funeral bier. I watched intently as the life flowed out of him. Immediately I opened my eyes and, still intensely aware, passed seamlessly from the dream state to the normal waking state. As I raised myself upon my elbow, gazing out at the rose-hued dawn, I was suddenly engulfed in the brightest Light imaginable and lost body consciousness. Slowly, out of this Light a figure began to condense. He was a being whose skin was the brightest sky-blue color, his long black hair flowing down his back; he was naked to the waist and wore loose pantaloons; around his neck hung a long necklace with a large jewel pendant at his navel; a peacock feather crowned his forehead. Clearly he was a Hindu, but that was all I knew. Though I had studied all manner of spiritual

traditions for years. I had assiduously avoided Hinduism, thinking all just a lot of childish myths. So the clear identity of the figure, Krishna, was unknown to me.

He smiled sweetly, his hands folded before his heart, and said, "Fear not. I have come to teach. You may call me Elder Brother." With that, he lowered his hands slightly and cupped them. I beheld therein a vision of the Cosmos and of the spiritual realm; the manifest and unmanifest aspects of Reality, the yin and yang, united as one, and how they interact. I had but to think a question and the answer was made plain. The chief question concerned the reason for suffering.

The suffering of this world, I was shown, is not to punish us, but to keep us searching for the spiritual truth underpinning matter. Suffering goads us so that we do not fall into complete carnal bondage, dying a spiritual death as we hedonistically enjoy the beautiful natural world; it impels us to search for deeper meaning. Were it not for the sorrow we invariably encounter, we would, immersed in worldly pleasure, forget to seek the spiritual truth at creation's core—that we are that peaceful and compassionate Reality in which all matter manifests.

#### **The Vision of Krishna continues —**

The Elder Brother folded his hands back over his heart and this vision within the vision was swallowed up. Smiling still, he said, "Now take this key. Go to the third idol you saw in your dream and open it." I took the large golden key he produced and then saw seated before me the monstrous brass idol with its protruding belly. I inserted the key into its navel and turned it; the belly swung open like a door. Within the idol I saw broad stairs leading down into a dark but fiery realm which was filled with fearful images and clustered with human figures who were arguing, fighting, and engaged in all manner of perverse behavior.

Elder Brother then said, "Go within and preach release to the demons. Do not fear. You will not be harmed." With that assurance, I took courage and stepped inside. Descending the stairs, I exhorted the figures, whom I saw were not demons but just ordinary dark-bound souls, "Awake! Cease from your strife! Look to the Light from which I have come and from which you also come. Awake! Arise!" They would stop to look at me, startled, and then at one another, then up to find the Light. Thus I descended until I had reached the very bottom of the pit I turned and ascended, calling out encouragement and release as I went. As I stepped out of the belly of the idol, the door swung shut behind me with a boom.

Smiling still, Elder Brother greeted me saying, "I see I may not have to come many more times before Truth is clear to you without help. Now follow me as far as you can back into the Light." With that he began to incandesce until there was again nothing but intense Light. After a while the brilliance became simply unbearable.



Falling out of it, I found myself still propped on my elbow, staring out at the rosy dawn, in awe, wonder and disbelief at what had just happened.

Well, you can imagine that I began to explore Hinduism and very quickly found out that the Elder Brother must be Krishna; and that India is the mother of saints, whose stories and words I avidly devoured. I came across books about Anandamayi Ma and was instantly attracted to her, not only for her thrilling manifestation and profound wisdom, but also for her radiant beauty. In that I am like multitudes of other devotees, even people she encountered by chance, who could not turn away from her until her last vestige had passed from view.

My life began to improve and I found work in a retail nursery, in a short time becoming assistant manager. Early one morning, as I was cleaning the azalea and camellia beds before we opened for sales, I heard a deep-toned bell, clear and distant, tolling slowly on the calm morning air. This continued every morning for some days, even sometimes during other times of the day. It seemed most curious, so one day when I heard it, I asked a fellow worker if he also heard it. He listened for a moment, then looked at me quizzically, tilting his head, and said definitively, "No". That this was not a physical phenomenon became clearer to me when I also began to hear a very low, breathy flute playing one or two hushed notes repeatedly. These sounds always brought a deep sense of calm; they continued for a few weeks and then stopped, never to return.

### **Sri Sunyata orders me to go to India for Sri Anandamayi Ma's darshan**

During this time I met a spiritual teacher named Sunyata, an elderly but spry Dane, born Alfred Julius Immanuel Sorensen in 1890, who had lived most of his life in India, an initiate of Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi. Sunyata had been brought to Marin County in California by the Alan Watts Foundation to live out his life "teaching silence". One evening a week he held a well-attended *satsang* on Alan Watt's houseboat, the Ballejo. I thought of him then as friend and mentor. It was only years later that I came to view him as an enlightened master, able to confer that state on at least one other.

Three times during the nearly half-century he lived in India Sunyata travelled south from his home in the Himalayas to Tamil Nadu to visit Bhagavan briefly during the cool and pleasant winter. He spoke only once to Ramana in answer to some cursory questions, and thereafter he sat silently in the back of the hall. After his first visit in 1936 Bhagavan told Paul Brunton that Sunyata, then still Immanuel Sorensen, was a "rare-born mystic", one in whom the ego never really developed.

One day on a subsequent visit, while meditating with eyes closed, Sunyata suddenly felt the full power of the Maharshi fixed on him. Bhagavan's voice spoke to

him telepathically and powerfully, "We are *always* aware, Sunyata." From that locution he took his initiation and his spiritual name.

In books about Mataji, Sunyata is called "the Danish Sadhu". Sunya built a stone house on "Cranks' Ridge" or Kalimath Ridge near Almora, comfortably high in the Himalayas, with a sign in front proclaiming—"Silence!" He called the place—"Turiya Niwas" or "Abode of the Highest Consciousness". Atmananda, an elderly Jewish female *sanyāsini* (renunciate or nun) from Austria, resident at Mataji's Dehradun Ashram since the 1950s and the translator of Ma's words into English, later told me that Sunya had a following when he lived in India. Sunya had a following in California too; many of us came to love him for his simple, joyful way of Being. Atmananda was glad to hear he was well and I was also subsequently able to convey greetings from her to Sunyata.

He died in 1985 at the age of 95 when hit by a car as he stepped out from between parked cars to cross the street. For some reason an autopsy was conducted. The doctors reported that all his organs looked like those of a man half his age; he might have lived for decades more. It took two tons of speeding steel to kill him. He was my friend and mentor.

One Saturday morning as Sunya and I were talking in his room, I mentioned, with a sigh, how attracted I was to Anandamayi Ma and how I wished she was still alive. She had been born in 1896 and everything I had read about her was from before 1960, so I assumed she must have passed away by then. With a start, he exclaimed, "But she is alive! Though she is growing old and is not in good health. She isn't expected to live much longer. You had better get over there as quickly as possible! And by the way, she is the real thing, a full incarnation of the Divine. I had her Darshan a number of times over the years. She even called me and Yashoda Ma, who I revered, and whose disciple was the remarkable English Krishna Devotee, Krishna Prem, in to meditate with her privately."

I had just received a large bonus from the nursery, more money than I had ever had in my life (which is not to say much), so I took scheduled a vacation, secured passport and visa and bought a ticket to India; and within a few weeks I was making my way to Vrindaban, Krishna's childhood home, where Ma was staying at the time at one of the many ashrams which sprang up to serve her all over Northern India.

[To continue]

## HOMAGE TO SWAMI BHASKARANANDJI

—Rohini Desai

It is an honor to write a *Shraddhānjali* for Swami Bhaskaranandji. So many years of association with him leave behind so many memories and it is so difficult to write comprehensively about so many benefits that he has conferred on all of us. I will always see his smiling face.

My husband, children and myself loved and revered him, as did my parents. In Ma's last days when She was so unwell, my father Kaniabhai had asked Shree Ma - "Ma, You are always talking about *Vyakta Avyakta*. When you are not there who should we go to and ask for help as we do with you?" Ma had said - " Ask Bhaskar" (*Bhaskar se poochna*).

We all depended on him for guidance in all matters, as did so many others. He understood people thoroughly and instantly. His guidance covered everything- from what food to eat and how to cook it, to health, marriage, job, money, family, etc. etc. He knew absolutely what was the right thing to do. He knew one's capacity so well and when he did not want to comment, he would say - "Let us see what Ma does." Quite often you wondered why he said a certain thing. After some time you would realize why and say to yourself- "So this is why Swamiji said what he did."

He was one of the most kind and compassionate persons I have ever known. He never stood in judgment on any one. So you were never afraid to tell him anything. At the same time he would not condone something wrong. I have never known him to get angry about anything. There was nothing good or bad about things - it just is (*Jo ho*).

He has done so much to help everyone in every way. Truly his approach and outlook was a "practical spirituality" that helped so many devotees in all aspects of life. So many young people were drawn to him. He has given solace in times of great distress and has built the *ātmashakti* of so many devotees to enable them to endure and withstand the tribulations of their lives. So often I have just wanted to sit in his presence, just bathe in the peace and happiness that surrounded him:

Bhaskaranandji has left this world. I cannot imagine not ever meeting him again. But that is how it is and I can only end this with repeated *pranāms* to Shree Ma and Bhaskaranandji.

## SWAMI VIJAYĀNANDAJI MAHARAJ —HIS LAST DAYS

—Sri Vigyānānanda (Jacques Vigne)

Most of the readers already know that Swami Vijayānandaji Maharaj left his body peacefully on Monday, the 5<sup>th</sup> of April, 2010 at 5.10 PM: He had attended the satsang in a very normal way up to the day before - Sunday evening, in spite of the fact that his breath was getting shorter and shorter and his voice more and more difficult to hear. Before, when we were very close to him, we could hear him, but for one or two weeks, it was getting more difficult, because his breath was shorter and shorter.

Mās *līlā* is really surprising: as I was just beginning to write this message to give some details about the way Vijayānanda "had merged into the Brahman", I received a phone call from a young Swami of Israel origin, connected to Swami Bhaskarananda, who informed me that he had left his body that morning on Thursday, the 8<sup>th</sup> at 4.55 AM at the ashram in Bhimpura, on the bank of the Narmada, Gujarat. He was 93 and three months, what means two years and two months less than Swami Vijayānanda. They met Mā Anandamayi almost at the same period and were both of them very close to her. Mā had entrusted Bhaskarānanda with the task of giving initiation. When they were sitting together, it happened from time to time in the ashram in Kankhal for some celebrations, they did not show great emotion, but you could feel they had a deep connection and were united in a peaceful and spontaneous way. The fact that Swami Bhaskarānanda "merged into the Brahman" just two and half days after Swami Vijayānanda, and that they knew each other for about 58 years is a good proof of their bond. We can assume that he heard, when he was conscious, that Swami Vijayānanda had left his body and that it helped him to leave his body.

Swami Bhaskarānanda's pacemaker had failed on 1<sup>st</sup> February and he was then mostly in a coma. On the 19<sup>th</sup> of February, he had been brought back from the hospital to allow him to leave his body in the ashram at Bhimpura. He was then on ventilator, and feeding was through a tube to the stomach. After his return to Bhimpura he learned to breathe without the ventilator, though still with the tracheostomy. The times when he appeared to be conscious with open eyes increased day by day. Some people heard him pronounce "Jai Ma" quietly. He would nod 'Yes' or 'No' to ques-

tions asked. Moreover, on occasions he blessed people who were visiting him by holding their head with his hands, and would smile. It's touching from a symbolic point of view, you can interpret this as the symbol of what he had done his whole life to give his energy in the service of Mā, to give on behalf of Mā.

To come back to Swami Vijayānanda, we should first evoke the successive parts of his life in nutshell. Born to a Jewish family on November 26, 1914, at the beginning of World War I in East France, he was destined to succeed his father who was the main rabbi of the town of Metz. As a child he was very pious, even during his adolescence. He first followed a spiritual teacher, who was a French psychiatrist influenced by Buddhism, in Paris itself. In the end of 1950, he took a boat from Marseille in South France to Sri Lanka and India in the hope to find his guru. His idea was to ask instructions and to come back to practice them in this small town of South France, where he was practising as a doctor. He had hoped to meet Sri Ramana Maharshi and Sri Anandobindo, but both had just passed away when he reached Chennai in January 1951. He met Ma Anandamayi in Varanasi on February 2, 1951, asked her if he could stay for two or three days in her ashram, she said 'Yes', and actually he spent the next 59 years in Ma's ashram, and he never left the holy land, the *devabhumi* of India.

For the first 19 months, he was always with Mā, except for one day. In 1953 or 1954 She asked him to stay a full year at the Patal Devi ashram in Almora. He did so, and then came back to Varanasi. He went again to Patal Devi in 1961 for a year, and then for eight years at a stretch in Dhaulchina ashram, in complete solitude. He used to come down to see Ma for only a month every year, and still not every year. In 1970, he came back to Patal Devi ashram until 1976, when Mā asked him to stay in Kankhal. She arranged a room for him on the terrace of the Sadhu Kutir, and she told him: "*Yahan baitho!*" 'Sit here!' and so he did for 34 years, until his last breath in the afternoon of the 5th of April, 2010. He hardly left this room but for one month if we add the duration of his different hospitalisations in Delhi.

I stayed for the first time in Kankhal for three months and three weeks in 1985. At that time Swamiji used to come down every day for the evening puja, but not to stay long, hardly five or ten minutes after which he used to go back to his room. Only after Atmānanda left her body in October 1985, he started to see more visitors. We have a French quarterly called 'Jay Mā'. Atmananda did her last work of editing by revising the first number in September, 1985. In the following years, until perhaps 2005, Vijayananda continued to read the proofs and answer in writing the questions of devotees. These answers have been put on the internet, as well as the replies to many oral questions during the satsang, and articles on Ma that he wrote mainly in

the 50's at [www.ananda-mayi.org/devotees](http://www.ananda-mayi.org/devotees).

Let us now describe what happened in the last few months. At Christmas, 2009, he had bad flu that handicapped him and he missed the satsang for a few days. Afterwards he came back and gave satsang as usual up to Sunday 4<sup>th</sup> of April 2010 in the evening — that was his last meeting with the devotees.

On Monday 5<sup>th</sup> morning Izou, who was close to him for more than twenty years, went to his room because he was feeling unwell. He was tossing and turning in bed so as to find a position that would alleviate his pain, but in vain. The nape of the neck, the back of the head and his chest were very painful. He vomited several times. An Indian doctor from the place came, diagnosed gastro-enteritis and prescribed some medicines. Vijayánanda did not take them because he had understood that the diagnosis was wrong. In fact, it was probably the symptoms of an intracranial hypertension with the beginning of an engagement of the basis of the brain in the spinal canal, this results in depression of the breathing function that makes breathing weaker and weaker, and leads to death. For Swamiji, it was probably due to the considerable bending of the nape of the neck through osteo-arthritis, and the vertebral compression that was pressing the spinal cord and that had paralysed the lower limbs when he wanted to walk a few steps. In fact, for a few months, his breath had been getting shorter and shorter, and his voice was very weak during the satsangs. As we said before, for two or three weeks, he had difficulty in finishing long sentences. Beforehand, we could understand his words by getting very close to his mouth, but more recently there were some times when even when doing so, we were not able to hear him. Consequently, at the end of March, I said to my hermit neighbour in Dhaultehina, Swami Nirgunánanda, and to another friend of mine on the phone, that it seemed that Swamiji would not stay much longer in his body.

On Monday around noon, his breathing became more difficult, but he could communicate and even stand up to go to the toilet. At 5.00 PM, the breathing got even more difficult. Gonzague was next to him and Izou was calling the air-ambulance that was supposed to carry him to Delhi urgently. Izou went up to his room, to be with him and after 10 minutes he breathed his last. What is surprising is that he had predicted to her that she would be present when he would leave his body, in spite of the strict rules that prohibit women from entering the Sadhu Kutir, which is reserved only for male ascetics. He left his body in his usual position of meditation, resting against some cushions with the hands brought together and the legs stretched out; it had been difficult for him to cross his legs for several years. He was always very encouraging to people, for when Narayan his attendant came back from the exams he had on that day, he was very happy to see him and asked him with much interest if he

had done well. Narayan did not realize that he was at the point of death and that he had only one hour to live. Izou, and Sonia from Delhi, had done their best to charter an air-ambulance in order to transfer Swamiji to Delhi. He expressed his appreciation for their efforts by saying, "It's great!" These were almost his last words. He passed away a little after. Izou could somehow contact the plane that was already on the take-off runway and cancelled it. Vijayānanda had been living in that room for 34 years where Mā had installed him telling him: "*yahan baitho!*" "Sit down here!" Indeed he died there after some decades of intense *sādhanā*.

Swamiji often said that the function of a guru is not to give merely intellectual teaching but to transmit energy. That's what he was doing in a way through several channels, sometimes very direct ones, but mostly very subtle ones. Those who have spent time at Kankhal, in particular during the last year, can testify personally. He himself had a lot of energy; for several months, he was sleeping very little. Despite that, he was giving much of his time to attend regularly the satsangs. When he knew that people had important questions and a strong desire to spend more time with him, he was staying more than the two usual hours, in spite of his old age. He was never complaining about his health. For this reason we had not expected his imminent departure. When he was asked about his health, he could not lie to say that he was going well, so he replied: "As usual!" He almost did not take any medicine. He had often said that to live to be very old was not always a blessing and could be a disadvantage. He probably meant that the handicap was a weight for oneself and for the others. Narayan, Pushparaj's nephew, who was brought up at the ashram in Almora, has taken care of Swamiji daily for the last two or three years, while he was studying. His departure is for him a very big change and it's even more beautiful to see how quiet he has remained and how helpful he was for all that has to be done during these last days. We can see the direct and stabilising influence of Swamiji, beyond the superficial change of life and death.

Vijayānanda's special way of transmitting energy arose when he was asked to bless something. If it was a rosary, he would take it in his hands and began to recite it; if it was a book, he would leaf through it; if it was a photo of Mā, he would comment briefly on the particularity of the face, holding the photo in his hand; and if it was a meditation mat, he would usually put it on his head before putting it on the head of the person who was expecting the blessing.

On the 21st of February, the satsang was unusually full of energy; the Italian Federation of Yoga came with its president, E. Selvanizza and his wife Antonietta. She is a devotee of Swami Chidānanda, who was up until his death, the successor of Swami Sivānanda as the head of the Divine Life Society, and who was also very

close to Mā Anandamayi. The group consisted of more than sixty people and we were rather concerned about the *satsang* because of Swamiji's weak voice and the fact that he persisted in holding the *satsang* at the noisiest time of the day during the puja in Mā's temple. Nevertheless, there were many questions, and as I repeated Swamiji's sentences loudly, with Antonietta's translation, of course the group could follow the *satsang*, ask some questions and have the appropriate answers. Moreover, Swamiji offered to each member of the group, (most of them are yoga teachers), a small meditation mat made in Gandhi ashram. As there were no more questions at that point, each of us was more sensitive to the vibrations of the moment, and we can say it was a magic moment. Vijayānanda took his time, kept the mat a long time on his head or on the head of the person to whom he offered the mat. It was the last evening of this big group in the area of Haridwar/Rishikesh and we can say that they left with "something", not only the meditation mat, but above all with a subtle and keen energy. The Kumbh Mela gave the opportunity to meet some sages and these Italian people have met one of them in Vijayānanda. Even if you can't fully be aware of his level, you can receive directly love from him, this is the experience of many people who came to visit him.

He often drew our attention to the energy of the Kumbh Mela that was taking place all around. He recommended that we go to the ritual baths and meet the *nāgā bābās*. These sadhus are examples of renunciation with their nudity and their simple way of life. Around the big bath of the 30<sup>th</sup> of March, dedicated to lord Mahāveer, the god of power and devotion, Vijayānanda said that he was feeling his presence in particular. For two months, the region of Kankhal was resonating with the names of Sita and Rama day and night. Several ashrams had organised continuous repetition of *mantras*.

After Swamiji left his mortal coil I kept watch over his body in his room and for sure, the name of God continuously repeated helped me and purified me in my meditation. The first night, some small surges of emotion arose quite frequently with the beginning of tears but that did not last. The second night was much more peaceful with the process of mourning that was happening quite quickly, at least in the first layers of the mind. The saddest thing, when you are with the body of the person who was the most important for you for about 25 years, is to realize all that you should or could have done and that you did not do. In this matter, it's similar to the psychology of the mourning of one's dear ones in general. During almost 70 hours I only slept three hours, but the energy was there and allowed me to take care about practical things during the day and meditate in Vijayānanda's room during the night. During all this period, Izou, Gonzague, Pushparaj, Narayan and Dinesh were particularly



committed to do what had to be done; Izou's family also gave up everything to be there for the last rituals.

After Swamiji's departure, I often remembered the story of the end of a great Zen guru. He was plunged deep in himself in the lous position and his breath stopped. The devotees began to wail complaining, "Our guru has died, how sad it is! What will we do now, we are left to our own devices?" So that, the guru woke up and said, "You did not understand anything! We're going to organise a big banquet to celebrate together!" That's what they did, and only afterwards the guru fell asleep forever.

Swami Vijayananda had told us that once when Mā had asked him about his body after his demise; he had answered: "Can throw it anywhere, I do not care about it." Mā told him: "Your body has done so much *tapasyā* it can't be thrown away like that!" We interpret these words as meaning that we should not put Swamiji's body in the Ganga, as it is usually done for the *Sannyasis*, but that it was better to make a *samādhi*, a traditional grave. Seven or eight years ago, an old western friend of Swamiji, who had been long associated with Ma, had decided to buy a piece of land where they could build a *samādhi*. But Swamiji had no interest in being placed in a place that could become a temple, with morning and evening rituals. He wanted people's devotion to remain focused on Mā Anandamayī's *Mahā Samādhi*. Nevertheless, in order to respond to the numerous demands, he suggested that they could put his body in Pushparāj's garden, but the place should not look like a *samādhi*.

For the last few months, he was saying that Pushparaj had been a *sādhu* in a former life and that he was returning progressively to that kind of life; for several months, he was sleeping in Swamiji's room, at the bottom of his bed, to be with him when he wanted to go to the toilet, because Swamiji had fallen several times whilst doing so. In fact since he was five years old, Pushparaj was brought up in Mā's ashram, and his current house where he usually receives Mā's devotees at Kankhal, including the Western ones, can be actually considered more a part of the ashram than family home in the literal sense of the word. This verbal suggestion of Swamiji was accepted on Tuesday 6<sup>th</sup> of April in the evening even by some of the ashramites, including Br. Panuda, the senior sadhu, who has known Swamiji very closely for more than 59 years. But at the last moment there was resistance from some people as well as from the Mahānirvāni Ākhāra and a group of Pandās in Kankhal. When we heard this on the 7<sup>th</sup> in the morning, we had meeting with a special official of the Police in Haridwar, Br. Panuda, Debuda, the Secretary-General of the Sangha, Izou, Gonzague, and Swami Atmananda, a French-speaking disciple of Chandra Swami, who lives in Rishikesh. Vijayānanda had left with Izou and Gonzague a written

document where he gave them the responsibility to decide what to do with his body after his death. We must remember that neither Mā's husband Bholonath nor her faithful assistant Didi Gurupriya had a *samādhi*. Even for Mā in August, 1982, the devotees were about to put her body in the Ganga and it was the *Mahants* of the Mahanirvāni Akhara in Kankal who insisted and they took matters upon themselves for building a *samādhi*. We were very aware that Vijayānanda would not like having any conflict. We therefore decided that the best way was to repatriate the body to France. There was the theoretical possibility to bury the body for the time being in a garden and find another place far away from Haridwar and its Pandas, and to quietly build a *samādhi* for Vijayānanda. We even thought of Dhaulchina where he had spent about years. But it would have been a problem to look after the *samādhi* from a great distance and we finally decided on repatriation to Paris. In fact, it will be a blessing for the French people to have the body of this great sage close to them. For Indian people, it would not make a big difference, as even with *jal samādhi* (in the Ganga) the body would not be there anymore anyway. I know only one example of a sage of the Indian tradition who has a *samādhi* in France, this is Ranjit Mahāraj, who had the same guru as Nisargadatta Mahāraj. He left his body in 2001 and his long-time devotee built him a *samādhi* with a part of his ashes in a beautiful garden in her house.

Sonia Barbry has been visiting Kankhal for about ten years. When she finished her studies in the French School of Political Science in Paris, she had asked Swamiji if he felt that a diplomatic career would suit her, as she liked India very much, and Swamiji greatly encouraged her. Nowadays she is a Political Consultant in the French Embassy in Delhi. She came and visited the Kumbh Mela from 27<sup>th</sup> to the 31<sup>st</sup> for herself and also to write a "telegram", which means a report for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs about this great event of India. She felt that Swamiji wanted to say goodbye to her when he asked her to come for two private interviews, included on her last day in Kankhal just before taking the train to Delhi. A few days later she was very helpful in organising emergency assistance just before the death, and afterwards for the formalities and the organisation of the repatriation of the body to France. She was the one who signed the Death Certificate in the name of the French Republic. May we thank her for her service to Vijayānanda.

### **Did Vijayānanda know that he would leave his body?**

Sandrine Oubrier spent about 15 months almost continuously at the ashram in Kankhal and attended almost all Swamiji's last satsangs. She said that twice during the last year, some visitors told Swamiji that they would come back for the Kumbh Mela and he answered that maybe he would not be there. As they were very sur

prised, he made up for it saying that maybe he would not leave his room for the satsang. Moreover, some travellers, despite the fact Kankhal was not included in their trip, decided to come and visit Vijayānanda.

When Izou arrived in Kankhal on the 28<sup>th</sup> of March, just after her father's burial on the 19<sup>th</sup> Vijayānanda asked her not to leave. So she booked her plane ticket for after the big bath on the 14<sup>th</sup> of April, the last one of the Kumbh Mela. Izou's father and Vijayānanda were born the same year in 1914; in age they were just one month apart; they had been in the same regiment during the Campaign of May, 1940 without knowing each other.

I should mention that another great Swami of Ma's ashram, Sivānanda, left his body just 4 days after Vijayānanda, on Friday the 9<sup>th</sup> of April in the morning. He had been to hospital two days before. My feeling is that the spiritual atmosphere of the Kumbh Mela in Kankhal was getting stronger and stronger as the big bath of the 14<sup>th</sup> of April, *Mesh Sankrānti*, approached which marks the end of one cycle of 12 years and the beginning of another one. Many spiritually elevated persons tend to choose this auspicious period to leave their bodies.

In many ways, Vijayānanda was turning his back on many things and prepared people for his departure. Before he would often ask visitors who were about to leave, to come back later, but recently he did not do that. He often related one of his last private meetings with Mā, in the hall of the ashram in Kankhal. She told him as she was showing him her body, "This is just a cloth, I am omnipresent!". He concluded saying that he believed Ma.

Vijayānanda liked quoting a transcendentalist poet of the XIX<sup>th</sup> century, may be Emerson, who explained that for the one who was at a high spiritual level death became a laughable eventuality. Swamiji said that the bodies were like leaves that were falling from the tree, while the Self was the tree itself and remained the same in any season. He did not dramatize death and said that there were two possibilities either if you were a believer you would melt in the spiritual light, or if you were a non-believer you would fall asleep. It was useless to make a big drama of it or to be always talking about death and becoming a specialist. He noticed that the thing that frightened people about the big passage was the prospect of endless suffering. But this supposedly endless suffering could be alleviated by medicine or at the most they caused a fainting fit or the death itself, so they were not endless. As a general rule, the simple way Vijayānanda considered death often reminded me of a sentence from Montaigne in his *Essais*: "Each day brings us closer to death and the last one gets us there."

Swami Vijayānanda suggested the real encounter with a sage was not a ques-

tion of quantity, but of quality. In this sense, he used to tell often the following story about Kabir :—

"Kabir was a weaver. He lived in the 15<sup>th</sup> century in Benares. He was clad as a poor man. One day, it so happened that an ill-tempered and arrogant rich man had a big bundle to carry home. He called Kabir, who was passing by; "You! Come here! There is this bundle to carry home, can you do it?" Kabir said; "How much?" "As you want!" The rich man then got furious; "You coolies, you always say that, and afterwards you ask ten times the price!" Kabir replied; "All this does not matter, since when you reach at your door, you will fall flat dead!" At this point, the rich man became still more furious: "You will see when I am at the door of my house that I am not dead just by the sound beating I will deliver to you!" Kabir smiled, took the bundle and went with the rich man towards his house. While walking, he only remarked; "Just a piece of advice; when you reach the door of paradise, and when the angels of death will judge you, if they propose to you a day in paradise before many centuries in hell, accept their offer!" Everything happened as Kabir had predicted. When the rich man was spending his only day in paradise, Kabir was having a walk around. The sage recognized him and whispered in his ear the *tāraka mantra*, the *mantra* which saves one from the round of birth and death. From that very moment, the angels of death haven't been able to take him down to hell, and he continued to stay in paradise."

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