

MA ANANDAMAYEE AMRIT VARTA

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

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Shree Shree Anandamayee Sangha

BHADAINI, VARANASI - 221 001

Dated July 15, 1999

Dear devotees,

On behalf of Shree Shree Anandamayee Sangha, the all-India institution founded in the divine name of Shree Anandamayee Ma, I feel it my duty to bring to your kind notice that at the earnest request of Ma's devotees hailing from different parts of India we have started publishing from Varanasi the quarterly journal "Amrit Varta" in four separate languages Hindi, Gujarati, Bengali and English from Shree Ma's birth centenary year 1995-96.

The said journal deals mainly with the divine life and teachings of Ma and is also supposed to be the principal organ of our whole organisation.

It was our keen expectation that the journal in Shree Ma's holy name would be very much welcomed by all Ma's devotees and admirers. But it is really surprising that the number of subscribers of different editions of the journal have so far been very much below our expectation and consequently the journal is being printed at a substantial loss due to regular increase in the cost of printing and paper etc.

It is, therefore, our earnest request to you that you will be good enough to come to our immediate assistance not only by regularly subscribing to the journal yourself (any edition of your choice) but also by arranging for a good number of advertisements in the journal as well as through enrolment of additional subscribers from among your friends and relations.

For the convenience of all we have kept the annual subscription of the journal only Rs. 60/- per year (postage free within India) and rates of advertisements are also quite reasonable.

We sincerely hope that this will receive your kind attention without fail.

Thanking you in anticipation,

Yours in the service of Ma

Panu Brahmachari

Managing Editor
"Amrit Varta"



MATRI-VANI

There is a time for everything. No one can come to me until the time is ripe.

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Question— How can I know which is the true path ?

Answer— If you sit with all doors and windows closed, how can you see the path ? Open the door and step out; the path will become visible.

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Visitor—I have no spiritual aspirations. I am happy as I am.

Answer—That is good; we also are talking of happiness. If you have found the secret of happiness why do you make this statement instead of being in this state for all to see ? (She smiles, the visitor laughs and acknowledges that it is so). To be with God is true happiness.

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The multifarious kinds of beasts, birds, men—what are they all ? What are these varieties of shapes and modes of being ? What is the essence within them ? What really are these ever-changing forms ? Gradually, slowly, because you are rapt in the contemplation of your Beloved, He becomes revealed to you in every one of them; not even a grain of sand is excluded. You realize that water, earth, plants, animals, birds, human beings are nothing but forms of your Beloved. Some experience it in this manner; realization does not come to everyone in the same way. There are infinite possibilities and consequently which, for any particular person is the specific path along which the Universal Love will reveal itself in its boundlessness, remains concealed from most individuals.

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Question—Is it possible to bribe God ?

Answer—By cheating, you yourself alone will be cheated.

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To be a human being means to place first and foremost the desire to know one's self.

God is everywhere. He pervades everything. He whom you think you have sought in vain for so many years, is not apart from you. Just as a man cannot be without bones, blood, flesh & skin, so the One is present everywhere, at all time, interwoven with everything that exists.

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God is one's very own self, the breath of one's breath, the life of one's life, the *Atma*. Not until his true Self has been revealed to him may a seeker ever relax his search. By seeking one will find; the Self is within one's own grasp. To feel fatigued, exhausted, because one has not found Him is a very good sign indeed. It indicates that one is nearing the purification of one's heart and mind.

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In dreams all kinds of things can be seen; things which the mind has been busy with, and also things which have not been thought about, but which have occurred in the past or will come about in the future. In any case everything that happens belongs to the realm of dreams.

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When one has become still, that is to say, when one has become established in a state of tranquility, then the activity of nature which continues at every moment in sleep and in walking and is part of the movement of the pilgrimage from birth to death, this and the thinking mind become caught in that stream and eternally remain floating in it. Ever to keep the mind poised in the Self, wide-awake in the current of Reality, where the unfathomable, the One-without-end is ever revealed in His infinity—this must, with the intensity of a possession be your one and constant endeavour.



IMPRESSIONS OF ANANDAMAYI MA

[Four]

—Richard Lannoy

The eyes of a Sage are, of course, the focus of intense interest. Ma Anandamai's eyes were, as might be expected, most unusual and strange. It was actually quite difficult to settle your gaze on them, regardless of whether or not she happened to be looking at you. At time they were serene and still, but more often they flickered and fluttered like hovering moths, with neither self-consciousness nor agitation—certainly not in any way flirtatious or hypnotic. No, their flickering seemed to indicate intense receptivity, mental agility, as if she was listening to a myriad inaudible and different signals on a radio receiver. I have never watched such an eventful face. It was not exactly focussed on any one spot however, but this acute attention seemed diffused in order to encompass both the very near and the very far. Then, like a light being switched off without the least drama—all animation, all expression, all the fine sensitivity that held you in thrall, would abruptly vanish. Just for a little while, the face would become, like that in the last of the Ten Ox-Herding Pictures, nothing special.

Once or twice on these occasions our eyes would meet. But even then it was hard to say whether they did or didn't meet, for the radar power of her eyes seemed to cover a wide range. It is difficult to tell what their colour was either, but I guess it was a mixture of black, brown & russet. The irises were irregularly flaked, crumbly with golden glints. I could focus on one eye quite easily, being as near as I was; I could settle on it comfortably even when she seemed to be looking straight at me. But if I made a concentrated effort to look into the other eye, it was not only extremely difficult to hold my gaze but the eye became strangely perturbed and to blink within an otherwise impassive face. My description of this security no doubt reads as detached, clinical, controlled. In fact, it was much more feeling-saturated and communicative than I can put into words. It was truly extraordinary experience, inspirational, uplifting, consolidating. Yet, it is natural that I should describe this particular face in such impersonal terms, considering who she was. In her silence she was, it seemed, aside, detached, apart. She didn't give an impression of coldness in the very least, but her sheer presence was paradoxical. One had to take a long searching look before one found this ultimate redoubt of selfhood.

No sooner has one made any kind of assertion as to her true nature than one has to qualify it ! I could say she had the simplicity of a rose, but I could equally say

she had all the complexity of a rose. Her *nothing special* quality did not, however, conceal her distinction of manner and movement, especially in a crowd. Her walk was unusual and that alone marked her out even when viewed from a long distance away. It had a sort of comfortably springy elasticity; she seemed to relish the sensation of walking. The English poet Lewis Thompson who, from long experience, had developed a discerning eye for people of very high spiritual quality, met and had long private talks with her in 1945, and said he could tell at once she was a realized being from the way she walked—completely without ego.

She had a marvellous way with words and a marvellously musical voice, as anyone who has heard her in person or has listened to tapes of her singing, will testify. Bengali is sweet-sounding and siplant tongue. To my ear, her mode of speaking seemed to be quintessentially feminine, but more than merely in its vocal pitch and its emotional colouring, for she used words in special & remarkable ways. She was a virtuoso in the use of dazzling verbal cadenzas that bounded away from every scriptural score—pure spontaneous extemporizations, not only with her sounds and the puns inherent in word-play (or word-*Lila*), but, more importantly, in the import of the thought behind the words. Here was the other half of spirituality—the often unheard feminine half—reunited and completed in non-dual gender.

There was an essentially poetic organization in everything she said, but then all sacred utterance, all sacred text is traditionally poetic in the Eastern cultures. Her words bounded out of her without the least heritage of quotation and conceptual paradoxes which comprise the corpus of India's spiritual traditions. She had a curiously telegrammatic way of constructing her sentences, leaving out any word which her care over clarity of meaning could dispense with, as if there was no time for lingering; so swift was her mind, so direct its route. A Bengali poet told me: 'She talks the way modern Bengali poets write'. And she never wrote anything down, never prepared her discourse, never revised what she had said; some how, it came out perfectly shaped. In her irresistible way, her woman's way, she could ignore the rules of the game in order to play it all the more exultantly, copiously, freshly.

Sadly, the problems involved in noting down exactly what Anandamayi Ma said in her discourses have been so great that very little has been safely and accurately preserved. What we have, even so, is impressive, although the musicality and alliterative word-play some how die on the printed page. Only one man, I gather Brahmachari Kamal Bhattacharjee, now Sri Virajananda Maharaj, had the ability to transcribe her discourse with scrupulous fidelity. Only a few of these transcriptions

have been translated into English. Through her patient labours and insight into Mataji's teaching Atmananda managed to convey the transparency of the words, although their musical enchantment could not survive. Here are two examples of the highest subtlety-though, alas, there must be recourse to explanation;

"You should understand that one who loves God is but out to destroy identification with the body. When this has come about, there is destruction (nāsa) of delusion, of bondage, in other words, of desire (vāsanā) , of 'not-self' (Na Sva). Your dwelling place (vāsa) at present is where the self manifests as 'Not-self' (Na Sva); when that is destroyed, it is only destruction that is destroyed."

Sva, and Sa pronounced alike in Bengali; thus nāsa (destruction) sounds like Na sva (Not-self). Vāsanā (desire) is where the Self dwells as 'Not-self' : vāsa (to dwell). na (No Not). In translation, a beautiful thought which had come tripping from Mataji's tongue, and which could be easily understood by an attentive ear, becomes laboured.

"What goes and what comes ? Behold, it is movement as that of the ocean (samudra) He expressing Himself (Sva Mudrā). The waves are but the rising and the falling, the undulation of the water, and it is water that forms into waves (taranga), limbs of His own body [Tār Anga]—Water in essence. What is it that makes the same substance appear in different forms, as water, ice waves ? What actually have you realized ? Find out !"

With marvellous plasticity, with 'concrete' poetry she makes a *murti* (image of a deity) out of words—*Samudra* means sea; *Sva Mudrā*, 'His own expression'; *taranga*, a wave; *tār*, His; *anga*, limb, intrinsic part.

(To be continued)

CONVERSATION WITH WESTERN DEVOTEES

[Four]

—Vijayananda

Q. Is it true, that Ma had to surround herself by pure people, purity providing her nourishment ?

V. This is like saying that the doctor must be surrounded by healthy people, because that is the way he earns his living. Ma had taken a physical form, mainly to help people in their search for the Supreme Being. This search can only be undertaken through mental purification. Ma was surrounded by people who needed to be purified. She did not have anything special to do with perfectly pure people. Of course, the people surrounding Her were not (except in rare cases) vicious individuals, because these kind of people do not wish to entrust themselves to a sage.

It is true, nevertheless, that those who served Ma had to be capable of observing certain rules of physical purity : chastity, pure food, personal hygiene etc....., but if Ma kept them by Her side, it was because they needed Her help for the purification of their minds. Ma used to say that it was our good conduct that would keep her in good health, but alas ! she fell ill quite often.

It is also true that Her body was an extremely sensitive instrument. If she assumed a physical form, it was not to protect her body, but to absorb the bad 'Karma' of her devotees. And it is astonishing how much that body could absorb, and yet maintain a relative equilibrium.

Q. Bhajji says that the Name of Ma is a unique Mantra, but he also says that the Mantra should be learnt from a teacher, and should be pronounced correctly in order to bear fruit. It seems that the result can be obtained by faith (the Name of Ma) or knowledge (the correct recitation of the Mantras). Which of the two is it ?

V. There are two elements in the Mantra. One is its intrinsic value as a word of power, the other is the faith that the disciple has in the force of his Mantra. These two elements strengthen each other mutually. That is, the more the disciple has faith in the Mantra, the more he is infused with power, and vice versa. If a Mantra is known as being a source of power, the faith of the disciple will come naturally. More so, if the Mantra has been passed on by a guru one loves and venerates. When a Sadguru* gives a Mantra to his disciples, he passes on spiritual power to

*. The Supreme Guru, He who is our real self.

them at the same time. Thus the repetition of the Mantra and the awakening of the power will be indissolubly linked. But the essential part is always the faith and the spiritual intensity of the disciple. Any formula can lead to Realization, if the sadhaka firmly believes that it is a powerful Mantra. For those (as in the case of Bhaiji), who are intensely devoted to Ma, just saying her name is enough to evoke her presence, and it will lead them towards an union with the Sadguru, personified by the physical form of Ma. However, for the ordinary sadhaka, it is preferable, that he repeat the Mantra given to him by the guru, in the course of his initiation. By repeating his Mantra assiduously, true faith will come to him and his spiritual intensity will progressively increase.

Q. Some people say that the saint sees good because there is no evil in him. It seems to me that he sees good and evil in the same light, being beyond both. But all the same, should there not be some discrimination, or else he might find himself in unfortunate situations.....

V. One must distinguish between a saint, that is, a very evolved being, whose mind has been identified with pure 'Satwa'¹ and a perfect sage who is beyond all 'gunas'. The saint sees evil, but his love for all allows him to concentrate on the positive aspect, because evil is never totally bad, and even in the most vicious acts one can find an element of light. As for the perfect sage who has gone beyond the 'gunas', the distinction between good and evil has no significance for him. He sees the play of the Divine everywhere, in the sage and in the fool, in the saint and in the sinner. When one watches an actor that one loves and admires, what one admires, is his talent, no matter what role he plays, and one always gets involved in the role. If he plays the role of a sage, one listens to him attentively, if he plays the foul, one laughs at him, if his role is that of a thief, one either has him sent to prison, or one has him forgiven, etc..... without ever forgetting that it is Him, always Him, behind all these multiple disguises.

Q. Is it possible that saints include us and our families in their meditation, even as we beg to be included from a distance ?

V. When we meditate, we enter or try to enter into contact with Universal Consciousness. Those who are at that moment in our field of consciousness, will automatically benefit from it, whether they have entered through an act of one, or on their own, even if not aware of their presence in the field of consciousness.

1. Sattwa is the most subtle attribute (guna), which symbolises harmony, light and purity. It is one of the three forces of the universe. The other two are 'Tamas' and 'Rajas'.

When you sit in a bus, the driver takes you to your destination, whether you are his friend or his enemy, and whether he is aware of your presence in the bus or not. The simple fact of having climbed aboard the bus is enough. But in the case of the meditator, whose contact with Universal Consciousness is intermittent, it is not easy to realize the coincidence. It is much simpler establishing contact with the perfect sage, who is constantly united with Universal Consciousness. Even in the absence of a physical presence, a photograph or a reading of his teaching is enough.

Q. The internal guru is present in everyone, isn't he ?

V. Yes, he is present in everyone, but he is veiled, that is, in a state of torpor, and it is the main duty of the physical guru to awaken him. The internal guru is the Sadguru (Or God), and it is just a question, not of evolution, but of progressively removing the impurities which veils him. The internal guru guides one in the spiritual life as well as in the material one. In fact, from the point of view of 'sadhana', there is no difference between the two. Daily life is as important (because of the lessons that can be learnt from it) as the hours spent in meditation.

Q. Is the 'I am' a finality ? Can one function in the world after the dissolution of one's individuality ?

V. The 'I am' is present in everyone, even in the ordinary person. But for the ordinary person, the 'I am' is his body and the personality which springs from it. Following the path of knowledge (the Jñana marg) the 'sadhaka' starts from this idea of 'I am' and seeks to dissociate himself from his physical being. On this path he goes through more subtle stages of identification with his astral body, with the light etc..... but it is always a very circumscribed 'self'. But when he can sustain himself on the pure 'I am', that is, on Pure Consciousness, that is limitless, then his individuality dissolves itself in the 'Universal Self', the 'Chidananda'.

In the path of devotion, the Universal Self becomes the Power of the other : God, the Eternal Beloved, about whom this self meditates with love until the individual self dissolves itself in the Ocean of the Beloved. The final result, in following either of the two paths, is the same.

The great sages like Ma Anandamayi and Ramana Maharshi, for example, are channels through which the Divine Power works for the welfare of the world. Whatever they do is done spontaneously, without any volition on their part.

As for reformers and founders of religions, they are at a more inferior level, because they have to maintain a certain 'satvik' individuality. They are inspired by