

An Introduction to Śrī Ānandamayī Mā's  
Philosophy of Absolute Congition

Kedar Nath Swami



Om Ma Sri Sri Mata Anandamayi Peeth Trust,  
Indore (M.P.)

# An Introduction to Śrī Ānandamayī Mā's Philosophy of Absolute Congition

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Publisher : Om Ma Sri Sri Mata Anandamayi Peeth, Trust  
Residency Area  
18 A.B Road, Indore 452001 (M.P.)  
Phone number- 07312524265

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First printed : 2010

Copies : 2000

Book can be had from-

M.P : **Om Ma Sri Sri Mata Anandamayi Peeth Trust,**  
Residency Area  
18 A.B. Road, Indore - 452001 (M.P.)  
Phone : 0731-2524265

Uttaranchal : **Sri Bhupendra Sharma**  
Sri Sri Ma Anandamayi  
Ashram Book Stall P.O. Kankhal Haridwar, 249408 (U.A.)  
Phone : 0091-9897326822

Gujarat : **Sri Ramkrishna Seva Samiti**  
Jagabhai Park, Ahamedabad-380008 (GJ)

Printer **Apsara Fine Art Printers**  
89, M.G. Road, Indore  
Phone : 0731-2434147, 98260-27300



## Dedication

To Mahā-Śūnya  
Who enabled me to write  
The Philosophy of Absolute-Cognition  
I humbly dedicate this work.

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## PREFACE

Many books have been written on the life and teachings of Śrī Ānandamayī Mā in various languages, but none exists dealing with Her philosophy. Here is a humble attempt to fill up this vacuum. How I was motivated to write this book has a brief history-

**It lies in three factors, viz:**

1. A sense of dissatisfaction with the existing doctrines and explanations of Reality.
2. Search for a new explanation; and its discovery in the life of Śrī Ānandamayī Mā .
3. A token of gratitude at the holy feet of Śrī Ānandamayī Mā through this offering.

Dissatisfaction with the existing explanations of Reality was caused by my perception of so much discrepancy among the theories as put forth by the "exponents" of different schools of philosophy. The controversy was so distinct that I found it rather impossible to reach some definite conclusion. Although I have come acrossed many interpretations offered by some modern scholars suggesting a synthetic approach to various schools of Indian philosophy yet mostly all forward a "progressive" view which does not seem very convincing. Perhaps no founder and no exponent of any system would admit this situation.

Śrī Ānandamayī Mā tackles and solves the problem in a quiet different way which satisfies the reason and tallies with experience. This, however, we shall deal with in the main text, here what we wish to point out is that although dissatisfied with the available interpretations of the Reality, the attempt here is not to criticize any doctrine or to appreciate the other. For, after considerable contemplation over the problem we have reached the conclusion that it is only in direct realization or mystic illumination and not through the discursive intellect that the problem of the nature of Reality can be solved in the most definitive way.

It is this "seeing" that makes philosophy a "darśana" (vision of Truth). And it is this vision that turns the conception into perception and makes the cognition of Truth **complete and absolute**.

The vision of Śrī Ānandamayī Mā stands for a complete and absolute cognition of Reality, and as such Her philosophy may rightly be called "the philosophy of absolute cognition" (Purṇa Prajñapti Darśana). Śrī Ānandamayī Mā has used the word 'Yā tā' for the Absolute and its cognition<sup>1</sup>. 'Yā tā' is a Bengali term which can be translated as "Purṇa Prajñapti" in Hindi and "Absolute Cognition" in English. There will be more about 'Yā tā' in the body of the text.

As I have said earlier, this is the first attempt that has been made to present systematically Śrī Ānandamayī Mā's philosophy of absolute cognition on the basis of the revelations that occurred spontaneously in Her life and the answers She gave in response to the questions put before Her. The questions

were so varied and manifold that one cannot hope to cover all of them in a treatise which is meant only to serve a specific purpose, yet whatever we found to be most essential to formulate Her philosophy, we have included in the text. Our attempt, however, is just a beginning and the future may invite many others to work on the subject. The person we call Śrī Ānandamayī is like an Ocean, the deeper one dives, the more one gets from it.

It is hoped that the present work will motivate the scholars of philosophy to carry on the work we have initiated and the future will witness the comparisons of Mā's philosophy with other oriental and occidental systems of philosophy<sup>2</sup> thus opening new frontiers of knowledge.

Man is a creature of deficiencies and imperfections and as such many shortcomings may be found in this presentation. The only apology which I can make is that it is a work of devotion and dedication and that my six years of close and direct association with Śrī Mā has given me an understanding and insight that could go deeper into the heart of things. And with this blessing of Śrī Śrī Mā, I have made this humble effort.

I shall feel amply rewarded if the seekers of Truth are inspired by this and make 'Yā tā', the true goal of their lives. In the realization of 'Yā tā' lies the future of humanity, as it this realization which makes one free from egoity which is the root of all evils. To know 'Yā tā' is to know God; to know God is to know Self; and to know Self is to know ALL; and to know all is to know Śrī Ānandamayī Mā. "To know and attain Me is to know oneself and everything" declares Śrī Ānandamayī

1 See the introduction of "Mother As Seen By Her Devotees" by M.M. Dr. Gopināth Kavirāja, p. XVIII

2 In this context we may suggest that the comparisons with Advaita Vedānta and Buddhism in the east and with the systems of Kant, Hegel and Bradley in the west may be fruitful.

Mā. May Śrī Ānandamayī Mā the Mahākaruṇa Incarnate, bestow Her grace upon one and all.

### Acknowledgments

I have been assisted by many well-wishers in my task, and it remains my first duty to pay my gratitude to them all and to pray to Mā for their supreme good. Thus to Dr. Seema Bulani, who, as always, played an important role from the very beginning till the end of the work; to Dr. Swami Gurusharanananda and Mr. Shay Bachar who typed the manuscript; to Mr. Christopher Pegler, Swami Mangalananda and Swami vijnanananda who kindly spared their valuable time to read the manuscript and made many valuable editing suggestions in the style and presentation; and to Brahmachari Omananda from Israel who always ready to discuss Mā's philosophy, offered many valuable suggestions. Then I am grateful to Mr. Richard Lannoy for permitting me to include his Foreword for this book<sup>3</sup>. I am most deeply indebted to the Śrī Śrī Mā Ānandamayī Sangha from whose publications I have been greatly profited and without which it would have been impossible even to take up the task in hand. I am extremely grateful to all the members of the Sangha related with this task. I extend my thanks also to those authors and publishers from whose books I have drawn the material for this book. My thanks, again, to all those who have contributed in one way or another to the success of this undertaking.

Kedarnath Swami  
Omkareshwar  
January 20, 2010

<sup>3</sup> This Foreword was originally written for the book entitled *As the Flower Sheds Its Fragrance* edited by Atamananda

### FOREWORD

(Richard Lannoy)

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

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

Description is the least adequate of methods with which to present a being of almost unimaginably rare subtlety. India, of course, is famed for her genius at producing individuals who have attained the summit of self-realization and uncommon spiritual elevation - saints, sages, seers, the Vedāntin, the *Sahajin*, holy men and women illuminated by the light of divine inspiration, steeped in the wisdom of pure *jñāna*, suffused with the sweetness of immeasurable *bhakti*, lofty in perfect command

of *yoga*. The variety is almost as great as among the flowers of the forest! Each is unique, incomparable. However, to the disciple and the devotee there can only be *one* who is Guru, for the Guru is the one, the Beloved.

It seems to me patently clear that this book celebrates the teaching not of an individual who is part of a cultural phenomenon of representative of a passing trend but a Being beyond the reach of our limited and limiting worldly-wise, our *knowing* categories. Certainly, Śrī Ānandamayī Mā was a woman, a Bengali, a 'great name' to conjure with among the discriminating - surely no single human being in the India of our time has reached more individuals with such perfect promptitude, wise counsel and deep spiritual insight. Yet there is strangeness, a particularity, an indefinable rarity about Śrī Ānandamayī Mā, an uncanny, ineffable quality which comes so near the limits of the definably human as to make an adjective like 'human' quite inadequate when applied to Her case, and 'divine' paltry. It is widely accepted that She was, simply, unique.

That there is more than mere hyperbole to this claim of singularity is evident from the striking fact that while all around Her were devoted to the principle of *perfectibility* and to effortful striving, she was, throughout Her life, the acme of effortless *perfection*. At birth, Śrī Ānandamayī Mā was given the appropriate name Nirmalā - the 'taintless', in recognition of Her exceptional sweetness of disposition. From Her earliest years Her *bhāva* drew people like a magnet. If features of conventional *sādhana* were spontaneously manifest from time to time, as it were without bidding, they were in the nature of effortless and playful *līlā* - the over plus of fullness - not a purposeful striving towards betterment.

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

Each person who knew Śrī Ānandamayī Mā has stories to tell of Her marvelous way, Her love, compassion, insight, practicality, wisdom. She operated at every level and in every domain pertaining to the spiritual life. The depth and diversity of Her many fold gifts are evident on every page of this book. She was so untainted by prejudice, so present to all, that each felt that she met their inner most needs with unerring and precision. Nobody could fail to understand Her for she addressed Herself to that level at which we are all, in truth, the children of God. The quality of strength - so quintessentially feminine - is evidence of an Energy as subtle, as dynamic, and as elusive to grasp (still more to write about) as a perfume or the sound of a distant bell. For Mataji spoke at all times from the very fundament of simplicity - lightly, unhesitatingly - yet with a more completely commanding authority and utter certainty than any one known to me.

For those who knew Her over many years, particularly who were either residents in or visitors to Her ashrams there was also the added dimension of Her extraordinary skill at organizations, Her grasp of detail, and Her limitless capacity to provide totally opposite advice or instruction at the right time



with extreme precision. Her skill in this domain is attested by the way She became the indispensable guide to all members within numerous remarkable and distinguished families over several generations. She was thus not only an exemplar of the exalted spiritual state, of *sādhana*, of psychological acuity, of compassionate succour, but a paragon too of action in service to the supreme. It may appear a somewhat worldly comment, but the solidity of instruction, the *soundness* which She Herself manifested, and prompted in others, was as vital to the spiritual welfares of Her *bhaktas* as was the sheer luminosity of Her presence to the more contemplative sensibility.

I will never forget Her talk - particularly to small groups gathered in the evening at Vindhyachal. It flowed, mellifluous and clear, like mountain water, tumbling without hesitation over sparkling pebbles.

If I had to choose just one metaphor as an approximation of what such poetry means to me I would say that Śrī Ānandamayī Mā was as far beyond ordinary mortal ways as the Self is far beyond the mediocre self-dramatization of the ego. She was, surely, the nearest one is ever likely to find to an earthly embodiment of the quintessence: illumination, enlightenment. So untrammelled by our ordinary burdens was She that one could hearken here to the very essence of inner Being.

It may be noticed that Śrī Ānandamayī Mā's attention is absolutely single and focused upon one sole theme. Her discourse is shorn of even the least irrelevance, the least detour into technicalities. Not a shread of spurious glamour or mystification. No announcement of secret esoteric doctrine. The urgency is irresistible. Not a moment is wasted by dwelling on the colorful

inventions and fantasies of mysticism and symbolism, be they ever so ingenious. To no self-pandering idleness does She appeal. The matter in hand is that sole concern which unites all humanity, irreducible in its simplicity - immediate, totally accessible: the One.

Norfolk. May, 1983.

Richard Lamoyy



## ŚRĪ ŚRĪ ĀNANDAMAYĪ MĀ 1896-1982

(A Short Biographical Note by Swami Atmananda)

**M**ā Ānandamayī was a unique incarnation of Divinity - the Uncreated in peerless manifestation. She was never identified with Her own person: for Her there are no "others", there is One alone, appearing in countless form - none can be excluded. To enquiries about Her identity She would reply: *"What-ever you conceive, think or say"*.

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

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

*"Everyone is right from his own standpoint,"* She would say. She did not advocate the same method for all. *"How can one impose limitations on the Infinite by declaring: 'This is the only path'?"* and *"why should there be so many different religions and sects? Because through everyone of them He gives Himself to Himself, so that each person may advance according to his inborn nature...."* A great Mahātmā said: "Just as the

earth provides for each plant the substance necessary for its growth, so does Ānandamayī Mā guide every aspirant according to his individual uniqueness".

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

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

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

Even during childhood She lived Her maxim *"Jo ho jāye"* (Let come what may)-unconditional surrender to the Divine will. She never voiced any desire. Always happy and eager to help, She never cried, either at birth or later, except to divert Her

mother's grief over the premature death of her sons. Uncommonly attractive even then, everybody loved Her. She attended village school for barely two years.

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

In 1924 Bholañāth became manager of Shahbag Gardens at Dacca. There, during kirtans and also otherwise, Nirmalā was seen in states of spiritual ecstasy, resembling those of Chaitanya Mahāprabhu, as described in Vaiṣṇava literature. Well-educated and learned persons gather around Her and, with their families, remained lifelong devotees. In 1929 they build an Ashram for Her. Already in 1927 She had travelled out of Bengal. In 1932 She left for good. First She stayed at Dehradun. A new set of people were attracted, starting the Kishenpur Ashram in 1936. This is where Śrī Mā left Her body in August 1982.

Her ceaseless peregrinations throughout India continued for about 50 years. Millions of Indians and hundreds from abroad had Her darsan. She encouraged Kirtan and sometimes sang

entrancingly. She never delivered lectures but replied to questions. Sādhus, renowned scholars, philosophers, statesmen, ambassadors, Rājās, Rānis, writers, artists, doctors, lawyers, businessmen listened spell-bound to Her spontaneous, unhesitating answers that hit directly the point, free from metaphysical technique. They were impressed by the profundity of Her wisdom and the fluency of Her expression.

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

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

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

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

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

"Of the love of Ānandamayī Mā everyone receives his share and all possess the whole of it."

### *Ātmānanda*

"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 Śrī Ānandamayī. May She bring peace and harmony into this world of strife." (B. Sanjiva Rao, in Mother as seen by Her Devotees p.17)

## INTRODUCTION

Introduction records some of my experiences which gave me an insight and understanding into the heart of the matters metaphysical. As my re-interpretation of the doctrines of Indian philosophy is based upon these intuitions, I thought it necessary and meaningful to include them in this book. Since my whole spiritual journey from beginning to the end had been in the boat sailed by Śrī Śrī Ānandamayī Mā, it was only natural that in a book on Her philosophy I should include it.

In May 1976 I had my first darśana of Śrī Ānandamayī Mā in Kankhal (Haridwar). In my very first darśana of Her, She graciously revealed Her divine status and identity. The very moment I saw Her I could not control my emotions and burst into tears. A very strong and deep intuitive feeling told me that I was seeing a living God—a God of Love, a God of Truth and a God of Compassion. All thoughts of the mind ceased to exist. The only thought that overpowered my whole being was that She was nothing but GOD ALONE and that She had come on earth to save and guide humanity; to release the souls who find themselves in the clutches of saṁsāra (worldly existence).

Before this event, I had not read any book about Her, nor had heard anything about Her greatness. It so happened that I was in search after Truth, and in this search I had found Her. Finding Her, my mind became still. This was the end of my

seeking a God imbued with fullness and majesty. I had found Him not 'in' Mā, but 'as' Mā.

After seven months of this experience, again by Her grace, I was allowed another experience that was totally of a mystic and transcendental nature. It was so abstract that even to designate it as an "experience" seems improper. At best I can call it the "limit of negation"<sup>1</sup>, or in the words of K.C. Bhattacharya it could be termed the "denial of 'I'". The self-consciousness as it were, had given place to a Reality that had no speech to say and no mind to think or analyze. It was a returning of the consciousness into something unknown, which can be termed neither the consciousness nor the unconsciousness.

I cannot say that it was an experience of a "blissful" being or that I realized something "positive" or even that it was an experience of "being". It was a total negation. Nothing was left there to experience or to realize. Perhaps I may call it the 'fullness of emptiness'.

The denial of 'I' was the denial of the world as well. Nothing then was real or 'existent' for me. I myself, and the world were both lost in some unknown void. When the consciousness returned from that state of nothingness or emptiness, it found that everything existed, and yet nothing existed. 'I was; and yet I was not; the world was, and yet the world was not.' Such was the very nature of this 'experience'.

If I am not wrong, I can equate this mystical experience with the 'ajativāda'<sup>2</sup> of Gauḍapāda on one hand and with the

1 For a detailed description of this experience, see our booklet "An Epilogue to Reality"

2 The doctrine of no-origination

'nairātmyavāda'<sup>3</sup> of Nāgārjuna on the other. Explaining his doctrine of no-origination (ajativāda) Gauḍapāda says, "No individual soul is ever born, nor is there any possibility of it. This is the highest truth that nothing whatsoever is born."<sup>4</sup> The same declaration we find in Nāgārjuna when he says in his Mūlamadhyamakakārikās: "Buddha has taught that 'there is neither ātman nor anātman', and again he also taught that 'there is ātman' and that 'there is no ātman'<sup>5</sup>" "production is impossible, because nothing can originate; and if there is no production, how can there be sustenance and destruction? They are like an illusion, a dream or a magic city of the Gandharvas. And thus when they are unreal, a composite substance is also unreal"<sup>6</sup>.

Nāgārjuna and Gauḍapāda both say that the objective world and the subjective individual self both do not have any substantial reality. And this exactly was the experience which unexpectedly occurred in the course of sādhanā. I took this experience to be the final one and thought I had reached the Goal and that now there was no more journey. I asked for a private interview with Śrī Ānandamayī Mā, which She readily and kindly granted. I narrated this experience before Her and asked whether I was right to consider my realization as 'final', and that this was the end of the my journey?

Before this interview, I had approached Her many times, putting my spiritual problems before Her, and every time I found Her explaining the matter in all its details. I was expecting the same this time too. But to my utmost bewilderment, She only made a very cryptic remark: "The journey has begun".

3 The doctrine of self-denial

4 Māṇḍūkya Kārikā.3/48, also 4/71

5. Mūlamadhyamaka kārikās 18/6

6. Ibid, 7/83,844

Perplexed with this enigmatic reply I looked at Her face. Within me there was a flood of thoughts. I thought, "What more can remain to attain or know when I am not? It is always 'I' - the individual self - which desires, seeks and attains but when it is just not, how can there be any more journey to know or to attain something?"

Mā read my mind. Seeing me perplexed and in the state of confusion, she graciously gave me a very compassionate look and tenderly in a very sweet and soft voice asked me to approach Her next day. Somehow I passed the night and rushed to Her the next day. It proved to be the most fortunate day for me. Śrī Ānandamayī Mā initiated me into Śrī-Vidyā<sup>7</sup> and thus enrolled me into the school of Āgama or Tantraśāstra. I was very as I knew that it is only by Guru's grace and blessing that one can have *real* access in any science of Reality. She instructed me to follow incessantly the discipline of this most holy science. I followed, and in due course I realized the significance of Her cryptic reply. I discovered that it was really a 'journey', a journey not from ignorance to knowledge but from inward 'experience' to outward 'understanding'; or to put it in the words of 'Āgamaśāstra' it was a Journey from 'Pauruṣa-Jñāna' to 'Bauddha-Jñāna'<sup>8</sup>. In the words of Śrī Ānandamayī Mā, it was a journey from 'void' to 'great void'; from 'śūnya' to 'Mahāśūnya'.

7 Śrī-vidyā is a preventive and corrective science of Reality. It prevents the veiling of Truth and corrects our perceptions by granting us true knowledge and right understanding.

8 Āgama philosophy recognizes and distinguishes between two types of ignorance viz. 'Pauruṣa ajñāna' and 'bauddha ajñāna'; and two types of knowledge viz. 'pauruṣa jñāna' and 'bauddha jñāna'; By former is meant the ignorance inherent in soul and intelligence respectively; latter is the removal of this ignorance respectively by 'Grace' and by practicing spiritual discipline as prescribed by one's Guru.

It was like a travelling of an empty soul to a Reality which is fullness, and which paradoxically encompasses all opposites such as Being and Non-being etc. With this new vision, now Truth for me was neither exclusive negation, nor isolated assertion, but an enlightened silent. 'Nothing' which is a supreme synthesis of both and resolves all contradictions. Levis of Blois has nicely put the whole matter in these illuminating words: "The soul, having entered the vast solitude of the Godhead happily loses itself; and enlightened by the brightness of the most lucid darkness, becomes through knowledge as if without knowledge, and dwells in a sort of wise ignorance"

Śrī Ānandamayī Mā Herself once during an important conversation solved the riddle of śūnya and mahāśūnya in this way: "*Form is really void. One should see that freedom from form really means the realization that form itself is the void. In this way the world (of subject and objects) reveals itself as void (śūnya) before merging into the Great Void (Mahāśūnya). The void that is perceived within the world is a part of 'Prakṛti' and therefore still form. From this Void one will have to proceed to the Great Void*"<sup>9</sup>.

And explaining 'Mahāśūnya' She once told: "*Mahāśūnya is His form*"<sup>10</sup>. What actually is meant by this short statement will be clear from another statement of Her: "*Only for the Supreme it is possible to be everything and yet nothing, and vice-versa*"<sup>11</sup>

It is evident from the above utterances that Reality or

9 Words of Śrī Ānandamayī Mā, Dialouge 24, p.184

10 Śrī Śrī Mātā Ānandamayī Vacanāmṛta, p.223

11 Words of Śrī Ānandamayī Mā, p.114



the Absolute for Śrī Ānandamayī Mā is a great resolution of all opposites and is a mystic unity of all contradictions. What seems to be a contradiction for the intellect is a resolution for the 'revelation'. Where the mind fails, the faith wins<sup>12</sup>. In the light of new vision and insight, I was now able to understand the real implication of the negative and positive declarations about Reality or Brahman-ātman, which are found in the Upaniṣads, and other scriptures of the world religions.

Śrī-Vidyā made me see the real meaning of the 'advaita' of Vedānta; of the 'advaya' of Buddhism, and many other technical terms which are used in different systems of Indian philosophy and the misunderstanding of which is one of the primary causes of further dispute and controversies. With this new intuition, I found that there is no real contradiction amongst the various doctrines of Indian philosophy advocated by different schools of thought and realization. All systems of Indian philosophy teach the same truth. This statement may seem to be an oversimplification, but it is not so- as we shall see soon.

Can anyone dare to say that Sages like Kapila and Patanjali, Gautama and Kaṇāda, Jaimini and Bādarāyaṇa who were the founders of different schools of Indian philosophy were ignorant people? Can anyone consistently declare that Mahāvīra and Gautama Buddha were unenlightened ascetics? If not, then is it possible for Absolute Truth to be contradictory? And if the absolute Truth is unified, then is it possible that its ultimate experience be different from person to person?

These are a few of the questions which cannot be solved by reason or dialectic alone. It is only experience

<sup>12</sup> Bhagavad Gītā; 4/39 'They attain knowledge who have faith.'

(*aparokṣānubhava*) which can help us by imparting real insight into the problem and solving it in a most definite way.

Scriptures are the unquestionable guides, but to understand them too, we again need direct experience. The words of the Enlightened Ones also are as valid as the Śruti, but here also we face the same problem: How to know the real meaning of what they said? In the ultimate analysis the last resort left for us is the words of a 'present-day' Seer of Truth.

Śrī Ānandamayī Mā stands for such a present-day Seer of Reality; and we are fortunate that we have a full record of Her utterances. We must try to understand and interpret various doctrines of philosophy in the light of Her teachings. Only then we can reach a 'real' synthesis and a 'real' understanding.

It is ridiculous to say that there is no such need, as we well know that there have been many discrepancies and controversies in the past, and in modern times also there have been various scholars who instead of seeking for a true synthesis seem to take one side devaluating the other. Philosophy is the science of Reality, the vision of Truth; it does not and cannot teach a false or contradictory Truth as it borrows its doctrine not from the mind which is ignorant and divided, but from 'prajñā' which is unified and one with Reality.

Where then, does the problem lie? If Truth is one and if its realization too is the same for all, why then is there so much controversy and so many varied theories and 'isms'? To us however, it seems that the problem of understanding the real import of the Upaniṣadic teaching and of various doctrines of Indian philosophy is related with two factors, viz.

- 1) **Characterization of Reality in definite terms; and**
- 2) **An attempt to understand Reality with the help of reason or dialectic alone.**

### 1. Characterizing or defining the Real:<sup>13</sup>

The crucial point here is related with the nature (lakṣaṇa) of Reality. According to the expounders of Vedānta, Scriptures define the Real in two ways, viz. one, as stating its essential nature (svarupalakṣaṇa); and second as pointing out its accidental attributes (tatasthalakṣaṇa). By 'essential' nature of a thing is meant what is the very constituent of a thing and which cannot be separated from it. When a thing is pointed out by mentioning those qualities which are not essential to it, but are only accidental, then it is considered as the accidental nature of a thing. According to the exponents of Vedānta 'Existence, Consciousness and Infinity' is regarded as the essential nature of Brahman. In support of this view, they quote Taittiriya Śruti 2/1 which says that Brahman is 'Satyam-Jñānam-Anantam'. While describing the accidental nature of Brahman, they quote from the same Śruti which says that Brahman is that from which is born everything<sup>14</sup>.

We, however, do not agree with this explanation. It is a misapprehension of the purport of Śruti. By the statements quoted above, Śruti does not ascertain the nature of Reality. Such statements, and others of similar nature only form a part

<sup>13</sup> see T.M. P.Mahadevan, "The Philosophy of Advaita", chapters 3-5.

Mahadevan's exposition of advaita philosophy is based upon many authentic works of Śāṅkarites.

<sup>14</sup> Taittiriya Up. 3/1 'Yatō vā imāni bhūtāni jāyante'

of its methodology. The inherent intension or purpose of Śruti here is that this is how Reality is 'to be sought' and not that Reality is as 'such'. Reality cannot be defined. It can only be 'realized'. And when it is 'realized', our whole understanding prior to realization is transformed into a totally new intelligence or 'Prajñā' which is above and surpasseth all understanding. Every definition puts a limit on the Truth which is infinite.

### 2. An attempt to understand Reality through reason or dialectic:

This is another obscuration. To try to know Truth or Reality through reasoning or dialectic is like to draw the beauty of Nature on a canvas. The picture may be very beautiful, yet it is not the true Nature. Similar is the case with Reality. Truth cannot be known through drawing the lines of thought-patterns upon canvas of the mind. The pattern or patterns may be appreciable, yet they are only 'thoughts' of Reality and not the Reality 'as it is'.

The same explanation holds true about different schools of Indian philosophy. None of them teaches a doctrine or an 'ism' of Reality, but only hints at it by showing a 'way'. And a 'way' is not the 'Goal' until one is on the way. With all these issues we shall deal in the main body of the text. Here the point we wish to emphasize is that we should try to resolve the metaphysical problems or philosophical controversies not solely upon the basis of reason, but we must direct our efforts towards the direct realization of Truth, for, in experience alone lies the real solution.

The purpose of the descent of Śrī Ānandamayī Mā is not



to solve the metaphysical problems on the level of the mind or the intellect. She can contact our soul; can speak to it and can solve the problems therein. Our sole duty then is to turn to Her in faith and reverence and ask for Grace in all humility. She is always there to respond.

Kedar Nath Swami

Omkareshwar

Jan, 20, 2010