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*Just as there is a veil of ignorance for the individual,
So there is also a door to Knowledge.*

Mātri Vāni

Birth as a human being is hard to obtain. Having received this rare boon, if you do not give time to the contemplation of the Beloved, you will have to reproach yourself: "What have I been doing? Should my whole life continue in this manner?" To reflect thus is beneficial. Failing to do so means moving towards death.

* * *

Who is called a friend? He who makes you turn towards the One Beloved, he, verily, is a real and true friend. But he who lures you away from this direction and induces you to take the road to death is an enemy, not a friend. Try to reform yourself. Not to make an attempt to correct oneself is as good as committing suicide.

* * *

Sense enjoyment acts like slow poison. And by this slow poison you are driven towards death. Therefore it is man's duty as a human being to get into the current that leads to immortality.

* * *

The world (*sang-sāra*) is the abode of conflict. He who mistakes the comedy for reality, is just decorating for the various disguises. This is why it is called *sangsāra*,* the place where play-acting is the main thing.

* * *

* A play upon words that cannot be translated. *Sangsāra* means world, also the round of births and deaths. *Sang* clown, *sāra* essence.

Lord, Thou Thyself art in this form—regard that particular *kriyā* in this light. See in all *kriyās* an expression of THAT. Realization of Reality will come through all *kriyās* combined. Do not look upon them as separate one from the other. Who is the *kriyā śakti*? Thou Thyself. And who is the *Sakti*? He, the One.

* * *

What does *Ātmā darsana*, the direct perception of the Self signify? The seer, the seen and the act of seeing—where these three are one, there the Brahman is realized. When the question of action or inaction does not arise, this is called Self-realization (*Ātmā sthiti*).

* * *

To know the Mother means to find the Mother, to become the Mother. *Mā* means *Ātmā*, *Mā* means *mayi* (all-pervading). Self-pervading, reposing in the Atma, Knowledge, the Self, Siva. "To become" actually means: it ever is so.

* * *

There is nothing in this world, yet every single person is madly pursuing this nothing—some more and some less. What a comedy God's play is! What a lunatic asylum He has created! He Himself sporting with Himself.

'MA'

D. S. NAKRA

It is more than a privilege and an honour to be called upon to say a few words about Ma—it is a blessing. Blessed are those that utter Her Hallowed Name, and twice blessed are those that hear the Holy Word in silence and contemplate Her Living Presence in their hearts. May She be with us now and for ever.

In his "Hymn to Bhagwan Ramakrishna", Swami Vivekananda says : "He that has passed by Thee has found peace; he that has taken Thy name has received Bliss and he that has surrendered himself at Thy Lotus Feet has got Freedom".

The same is true of Ma. Fortunate are we who are gathered here. Let us think of her. Let us utter her Name and let us surrender ourselves at her Lotus Feet in thought and in deed.

I do not know why I have been chosen for the talk today. I heard of Ma many times but I was not called into Her Holy Presence till about a year or so ago.

I had the good fortune of being in her presence for just a couple of minutes when I asked for and received her blessings. She said to me : "Cling lovingly to the Lotus Feet of the Lord and your mind shall loosen its grip on worldly desires. Have faith in His Name and persevere and you shall make progress."

These are common words of advice but they assumed a special meaning and significance. Coming from her, they were a promise and a blessing.

* The following is a talk delivered at the Ranchi Ashram on the occasion of Mataji's 72nd birthday, May 1968.

This is all that I can say about Ma from personal knowledge—that she is a Living Blessing. I am waiting till her Grace vouchsafes to me another glimpse of her. I take it as a sign from her that I have been asked to speak today. This has given me an opportunity to read about her. One has first to hear the Name, think over It and absorb It before the meaning dawns and Its living presence is felt. It is in this spirit of dedication that I join you all in offering these few words at her Lotus Feet.

It is usual to start with a very brief historical life-sketch. Ma was born in May 1896 in a small village in the Tippera (Tripura) District of East Bengal; the population of this village was predominantly Muslim, mostly illiterate. Her own formal education consisted of two years' attendance at a primary Pathshala. She was married at the age of 13 to Ramani Mohan Chakravarti, later known as Bhola Nath, who was employed as a keeper of Shah Bagh, a garden of the Nawab family of Dacca. Her spiritual life began to manifest itself even before she was old enough to enter worldly life as we know it. In fact she never entered worldly life.

The story of her life is a series of events of spiritual significance with which her devotees are familiar. I will mention only a few : her performance of nimaz (recitation of Qurana ayaat)" near the grave of a Muslim saint in Shah Bagh, her spells of absent-mindedness and the recitation of hymns and mantras, her spontaneous experiencing of yogic and other spiritual states; the coming of Jyotish Chandra Roy and Dr. Sasanka Mukherjee and his daughter (later renamed by Ma, 'Guru Priya' and lovingly called 'Didi' by everybody) her ministry and long tours including pilgrimages to Kailash and Mansarovar and of course the many miracles of which some only have been told by her devotees.

The narration of the experiences of her devotees would be an elevating *Katha* and *Kirtan* by itself, but unfortunately we do not have the time for it this evening. It is

enough to understand that her life story, as such, has significance only as something concrete to which our mind can cling; it serves as a vehicle of our thought, as a focus of our embodied love. What she really is her own grace will reveal to us according to our capacity. She herself has said: "I am for you what you think me to be."

"For the great majority of us", says Dr. Weintrob (Vijayananda), "she is a Mother, full of love and tenderness; to others, a friend, an elder sister or even a child. For others yet, who are spiritually more advanced, she is the Guru or an aspect of God, Durga, Krishna etc. And it is not only in the imagination of the bhakta that she represents these aspects. Her physical appearance, her behaviour and her voice are actually transformed and adapted to the part she wishes to play. I have often seen her features assuming entirely different aspects within a single hour."

I cannot, therefore, do better than relate what she is to some of her devotees. In this way, I will be able to present to you a few aspects of her many-sided personality. There is no better way of knowing Her than reading or hearing an account of the experiences of her devotees and her impact on them. Her totality is beyond understanding.

First came Hara Kumar who called her 'Ma' for the first time. Next Jotish Chandra Roy who saw Mother as 'Anandamayi' and gave her the name which seems the most fitting, more than even the name she got from her parents—'Nirmala' (the Taintless). If words can encompass her Self, it is these two words 'Anandamayi Ma.'

Mahamahopadyaya Dr. Gopinath Kaviraj has spoken of "the wonderful poise and bliss of her sweet personality which, strong as it is, blends into the impersonal and is utterly undifferentiated from it."

Another devotee declares that: "She is harder than thunder and softer than a flower". Still another says: "She is like the Ganges—her very touch purifies. In her

presence, one feels oneself getting better all the time. She does not seem to notice or want to notice the dark side of an individual ; she only sees our luminous aspects enhanced considerably by her divine mercy”.

Another devotee declares :

“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 cannot exist without the other.”

Parmahansa Yoganandaji says : “I had found many men of God-realization in India ; but never before had I met with such an exalted woman saint. Her gentle face was burnished with the ineffable joy that had given her the name of Blissful Mother.” He adds : “She made one feel the closest of friends, yet an aura of remoteness was ever around her-the paradoxical isolation of Omnipresence.”

So much about her personality. Let us now see what the devotees have to say about her teaching. Dr. Gopinath Kaviraj says : “Mother has no line of her own : No particular teaching or doctrine ; she declares that the genuine teachings of all true teachers sincerely followed can lead us to the one Truth.” “What is wanted is unfailing patience, grim resolution, persistent endeavour, unflinching faith and unconditional surrender.” As the first commandment enjoins : “Thou shalt love the Lord, thy God, with all thy heart and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind and with all thy strength.”

“There are many mansions in my father’s house”, says Jesus. Yes, there are infinite mansions and infinite ways but we have to remember that the house is One.

All these statements are but a measure of our own more or less limited understanding. What Mother is, only Mother knows. Let us now see what occasionally she has said about herself. Let us hear her own words: "I am Purna Brahman Narayana" she said to a questioner. To another: "If there were '*aham jñāna*' (I-consciousness) in me I could express who I am. As it is not there, I am what you choose to say about me."

To still another she declared: "This entire Universe is my home. I am in my own home. Even when seeming to be roaming from place to place."

Going still further, she declares: "I am conditioned as well as unconditioned. I am neither infinite nor confined within limits. I am both at the same time. I exist before there is creation, duration or dissolution of the world. I was the same, I am the same, and I shall be the same."

For many of us, these declarations are beyond comprehension. Let us, therefore, say in the words of the Gopis to Uddhava: "We do not know, O Uddhava, what *jñāna* and *yoga* is, we know only love." Let us surrender ourselves to Ma with all our love and let her make of us what she wills.

MATAJI'S DARSANA

New Delhi, September 1968.

EILEEN WOOD JASNOWSKI

I am before her, the holy one, Anandamayi Ma.
I am sitting here, wearing the costume of the hill people,
the Punjab. I am not saying anything but thinking it :
Look at me, sitting here before you, in lotus posture.
What do you think of that,—for a westerner ?

She thought highly of it. The Universal Mother was amused.
Her eyes consumed me, ate up all my passions, fused
my dreams of fame and gain into nothingness.
Her radar, love, flashed out of wisdom's third eye
halfway across the world
and brought me home to her.

She centered all her thought into my fate line,
sponged out what she wanted
from my starred and criss-crossed palm.
Ah, yes, another one; she thought,
another one who wants to have the Grace
handed to her, like an almond or an emerald
RIGHT NOW.

Come closer. Look into my eyes.
Look deeply. Tell me what you see.

The first moment I see a quiet woman, old as love
and steadfast; I see dark hair, the kindest eyes, Buddha's
smile.

The second moment all expression's blotted out ; her
eyes blend
into mine and I'm caught in the Madonna blue light-
stream.

The third moment her upper lip twitched a gadfly of my past
had brushed it; she let it go,—an inconsequential
incarnation.

The fourth moment her face vanished but those eyes still
held me,—
set now in a cobra's narrow head. She danced on the
hood of my ego.

The fifth moment her love cracked my heart *Chakra*,
seaped into
every part of my body, flowing, pounding, rocking me high.

The sixth moment—my last unblinking glimpse of
eternity—
she tipped and nearly toppled me off my rim of life.

She burned me out in six minutes without a flick of fire.

The circle of her love widened and took me in
— where I'd always been
in the palm of her hand. Lord Krishna held me high,—
higher.

Six moments? No, hundred lives it took
for initiation by Mataji's look.

— — —

From the Diary of a European

MELITA MASCHMANN

(*Translated from German*)

Allahabad, December 28th, 1966.

Mataji has come on a visit to the Gopal Thakur Ashram at Allahabad. The house has a good atmosphere. One can feel that it is the centre of a community of persons who are occupied with something essential. In the morning Kalyaniji performs puja for nearly two hours in the temple, in front of which the congregation assembles. I am impressed by the intensity of the atmosphere and the style of the ritual. Kalyaniji's almost air-rending invocation of the Devi : "Ma, Ma !" touches my heart. In her ecstatic appeal our yearning for God, the Eternal Mother, finds expression. "Ma, Ma !" the call comes from a depth where no falsification through sentimentality and sounding pathos is possible anymore.

Mataji is sitting at the entrance of the temple, only about a yard away from the priestess. Her whole being radiates Divinity—for our adoration. But how to describe what is taking place ? It does not happen very often nowadays perhaps, and only in response to invocations such as this one : "Ma Ma !" Also in response to silent invocations.

The Devi takes Her abode in the body of this Being whose whole existence is in complete submission to God.

Sometimes I think that these precious moments of union alone make Mataji's life bearable in our midst, with our oppressive ignorance (ignorance in all forms in which we allow it to get the better of us, such as indolence, greed, covetousness, pride and so forth.) Perhaps these react on Mataji more than we think. If our longing for God which attracts us to Mataji were quite sincere, pure and passionate,

He would certainly have to reveal Himself to us through her. I am told that Ma once said : "My sustenance derives from those who, having come to me, lose themselves and find God." I feel sure that we often "starve" Mataji. Perhaps even when we imagine to be specially devout : in the midst of a solemn ritual.

Or is Mataji always Devi, not only in those special moments when it becomes so obvious ? The replies to such questions must always be conditioned by the particular school of thought to which one belongs. I do not feel bound to any of them and therefore no answer can be binding for me. In the first few years this uncertainty tormented me. We do not like to live with questions that have to remain unsolved. But if we give up insisting on a reply, the questions themselves one day disappear. Now I am content to love Mataji and to know that she is not threatened by the danger of succumbing to all the evils that result from our egos; and at times to see the Divine mysteriously shine through her.

It is after all only a metaphor for something indescribable when I say that Devi manifested through her body while Mataji sat on the threshold of the temple yesterday. When she was being decorated with garlands and covered with flowers like the murtis in temples, her whole body expressed depersonalization in which the self is annihilated for the sake of the Self. In such moments I have the feeling that an atom of Mataji's human self resists the destruction by the Self. It remains with us and joins into the veneration of the Self that has incarnated in her body. For this reason the tie of intimacy between her and us is never completely broken. To express it in my non-doctrinal language, she never ceases to be a human being, even while she is totally immersed in divinity.

Yesterday, when the puja was over, something very strange took place—(we should note and remember this.)

Somebody had a tape recorder ready and placed it near Mataji. She was perhaps just returning from a realm into which we cannot follow her. With a smile that was still half "over there" she pointed to the microphone, saying very softly : "This body has no *kheyāla* to say anything just now."

Probably many had hoped to get Mataji's voice on the tape, for they could not be discouraged so easily. A lady said : "Ma, I have an urgent question to ask : Are Brahmins Brahmins by their birth or by their merits ?" "Both", replied Mataji almost inaudibly into the humming of the machine. She afterwards gave another answer with an equally soundless voice and then became silent. She remained mum in spite of all questions, although there were a number of very intelligent people present who introduced various topics in the hope of persuading Mataji to talk. "Ma, please, answer ! Say something ! Or if you do not feel like talking, sing a little ! Please, Ma....."

Mataji sat calmly at the entrance of the temple and smiled patiently and cheerfully at the eagerness of the people who wanted to outwither at any cost. Her gaze wandered with serene attention from face to face. In the corners of her eyes there was a faint twinkle of mockery : "Do you really believe my dear-ones, that you can make me act against my *kheyāla* ?" But her mouth remained tightly shut. It seemed to me that I had never before seen Mataji's motherliness radiate quite so warmly as during those moments in which she resisted with such adamant determination the entreaties of her children. What looked like relentlessness was nothing but love. After a while the ardour of the congregation calmed down, the questions ceased and then a great stillness began to spread which had its source in Mataji. Her face now became very serious and composed. The expression of an impersonal love shone in her eyes, and everyone on whom this gaze fell must have been filled with the certainty that something of the nature of an initiation had taken place

for him. Slowly her gaze wandered over the faces, and here and there sank into a pair of eyes. Then her look rose and with great tranquillity reposed on the horizon. There it dwelt for several minutes. Suddenly Mátaji got up with a start and slipped into her room.

Mataji had thus refused to co-operate with the machine. I do not think it was by mere coincidence that her *kheyāla* established such a distinct borderline : Beyond it is the zone in which the truly human is threatened by encroachments of the lifeless machine. I have often witnessed Mataji speaking or singing into a tape but never in moments in which it would have meant a violation of the religious atmosphere, as here. Considering the fact that technical science has an almost demonical attraction for many, I would see in Mataji's refusal the symbolic victory of the Holy Ghost over a dangerous power of corruption.

**At the Opening Ceremony of the Charitable Hospital
of the Shree Shree Anandamayee Sangha.**

Varanasi, December 26th, 1968.

About twenty minutes before the motorboat of the Prime Minister cast anchor near the Ashram, Mataji appeared on the dais, accompanied by two women professors of the Benares Hindu University. While walking, Mataji had that slightly forward bent attitude which is typical for her in moments of special concentration. What it expresses is not fatigue, but rather some kind of a kingly humility. Every time I observe it, it seems to me to reflect God's loving-kindness : He who could display devastating power, clothes Himself into a figure of affectionate tenderness.

Before sitting down, Mataji gravely greeted into the pandal below. She did not wear her spectacles and the total 'otherness' in her eyes put me into a holy terror. This can only be endured, never interpreted. Before the Prime Minister arrived, Mataji gave us a *darśana* of a rare intensity. In the

midst of the general nervousness that usually precedes a function of this kind, she had the tranquillity of a rock. Most of the time she sat with her eyes shut and the few movements of her shoulders and arms were slowed down. I presumed that she was in *dhyāna*. Two or three times, one of her companions put a question to her. Easily and swiftly she emerged from her absorption and, smiling almost imperceptibly, looked round the pandal. According to my estimate, five hundred pairs of eyes, almost exclusively eyes of the so-called worldly prominence to which most of the guests belonged, were gazing at her, but not a trace of shyness was noticeable in Mataji. I was reminded of the peasant girl of the fairy tale who became a queen: In her charisma, her certainty, but also in her isolation Ma was more royal than any queen by birth. Her contacts are of a different order from ours. While we see her sit before us so silent and so calm—with whom may she be holding intercourse?

As soon as the Prime Minister arrived, the atmosphere changed radically. From the background of the pandal one could feel intense movement—like a blast of wind: The slender figure clad in a dark green sari approached the dais with almost youthful agility and lightness. At the bottom of the steps occurred one of those tiny interludes that often throw more light on the character of a person than his utterances according to programme. Indira Gandhi hesitated for an instant, then with lightning speed moved towards the edge of the steps slipped off her shoes, left them there, and from the side set foot on the first step. Quite likely this was but an automatic reaction which she may not remember anymore. The reaction of a person who—although she could well “afford” it—does not wish to leave her shoes where they might be in the way of those who follow.

When the Prime Minister stood before Mataji and bowed down in greeting, the youthfully dynamic in her was again surprisingly strong. Her face lit up with a quick glow of joyful warmth that was equally quickly concealed behind a

restrained smile. At that moment I felt deeply for the woman who has to shoulder such an enormous burden of political responsibility : Before the critical eyes of her friends and adversaries she must control her personal impulses even when meeting Mataji. But who has not experienced something similar on a less prominent level : In official surroundings one meets a specially revered or loved person and is obliged speedily to withdraw into secrecy the natural expression of one's feelings. They are too precious and too personal to be exposed to the eyes of the public.

If I observed correctly, something of this kind occurred in Indira Gandhi. Mataji's position was very different from that of the Prime Minister. She could allow more of herself to be perceived while greeting and blessing. When she clasped Indira's hands into her own there was genial warmth and yet also restraint in the expression of her face. It has nothing to do with the arrangements of protocol when I say that at that instant there was a very sublime 'in-tune-ness' in the *lila* of the two great women.

I had never before seen Indira Gandhi, and from the mostly inadequate newspaper photos I was not prepared to find her so fascinating. When she had taken her place next to the Maharaja of Benares—who by the way reminded me of a royal figure in a Mogul painting—I had leisure to watch her. I know nothing about her and still less about her politics; but for this very reason I feel free from prejudices. The woman on the dais in front of me had a certain boldness in the expression of her attitude and countenance. This observation was also in tune with the dynamic in her bearing, her walk and her movements. It was pleasing because, above all, it did not counteract anywhere the pronounced womanliness of her personality. She had a generous, surprisingly beautiful face, in which that which I called boldness was in accord with sensibility. At any rate just then this accord could be keenly felt. At other times it might have to be struggled for. Her face was intelligent,

wide awake, and now and then a little nervous. That it looked serious was in keeping with the situation; however, at the background of this seriousness I seemed to perceive a sort of permanent sadness, (or should I call it melancholy?) which made it specially attractive. The politician acts in the 'now' and the 'here', and has to believe in the necessity and the sense of what he is doing. Yet it is good and saves him from arrogance and vainglory if he has some notion of the ultimate vanity of all worldly activity. Even though this notion should infuse a secret melancholy into all his decisions.

I was unable to follow completely the speeches that were remarkably short, but I had the impression that none of the speakers impaired the dignity of the function by empty phrases. Anywhere in the world where politicians move, this is extremely rare. Throughout the function Mataji sat in her place with the same stillness that had already enveloped her like an almost tangible aura before the proceedings began. Although she never uttered a single word, she was nevertheless the real centre of everything that took place here. While all the others on the dais sat in a row, one next to the other, Mataji had her place at right angles to them all. This demonstrated in an artless manner that Mataji does not belong to the rank and to the world of the active-ones of our day-to-day life. She is "of a different world", in spite of the fact that she does not disdain—(and the construction of the hospital amply proves this)—to effectively influence the world of our daily cares.

Indira Gandhi off and on threw a quick glance at Mataji, and Mataji looked two or three times at the Prime Minister, without their eyes ever meeting. Mostly Mataji held her eyelids shut, even during the speeches. The more I watched her the more undeniable became my impression that under the cover of her almost massive outer calm she was affecting the proceedings with the highest intensity. To be sure, on a different plane than the other actors in the *lila* of the hour.

