

BELOVED MOTHER

AMRITANANDAMAYI

a sketch



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By

SWAMI JYOTIRMAYANANDA



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A WORD ABOUT THIS BOOK

"Born at Vallikkavu, a coastal village of Kerala, 34 years old Mata Amritanandamayi was given to japa and meditation from early childhood. Formal schooling or worldly life did not hold any charm for her. In 1975, at the age of 22, Mataji's divinity manifested itself and, during the last 12 years, she has drawn unto herself thousands of devotees. Many have sought Mother's grace for mental peace and spiritual solace. Her Bhajans, rich in philosophic content and mostly in praise of Sri Krishna and Mother Divine, are soul-elevating".

* * *

"Self-realisation is attaining equanimity of mind. Mata Amritanandamayi is a Yogini who has fully achieved this equanimity of mind. A face radiating peace and bliss; an unperturbed nature, showering mercy upon all, making no distinction whatsoever of the rich and the poor, between good and bad, diseased and healthy, between young and old, between man and woman; no distinction of caste, creed or religion, only blessings for all who approach her. Is not this equanimity of mind, self-realisation? With no desire for occult powers, and no longing for worldly achievements she leads every one to the path of self-knowledge. With that end in view, she is training a band of educated and dedicated young men who are endowed with faith and humility".

This brochure seeks to introduce Mata Amritanandamayi, a mystic-saint hailing from a humble family in a remote corner of Kerala. The author had the good fortune of meeting the Mother, for the first time, at the Vivekanandapuram campus at Kanyakumari, in the month of May 1984. During that short period of her pilgrimage to the Land's End of India along with a band of disciples and devotees, the Mother graciously gave two Bhajan performances, one of them at

Vivekanandapuram, which impressed and inspired one and all. From an informal talk with the Mother, the author learnt about her Ashram in Kerala, the Ashramites and their daily routine there. In due course, he had an occasion to visit the Mother's Ashram located in picturesque surroundings flanked by the Arabian sea and backwaters near Vallikkavu (Quilon District).

Crossing the enchanting backwaters one arrives on the shores of the island village of Parayakadavu, the birth place of the Mother. A short walk from the boat jetty brings one to Mata Amritanandamayi Mission, the Mother's non-sectarian Ashram nestled in a grove of coconut trees caressed by the gentle western breeze blowing from the nearby Arabian sea.

One's first impression as one enters the Ashram premises is one of unmistakable, all-pervading peace. Though originally her parental home, since 1981 this premises has turned into an abode for a number of spiritual aspirants who are engaged in spiritual practices, and is also the spiritual home of thousands of devotees in India and abroad. Registered as an Ashram, it strikes one as a place where one can soon learn to see God in oneself and in others under the loving care and guidance of the Mother herself.

The daily routine of the Ashramites commences early in the morning. As part of the five year course of study offered by the Mission's Vedanta Vidyalaya, eight hours of the day are set aside for meditation which is interspersed with classes on Bhagavad Gita and Upanishads taught in English and the local language – Malayalam; comparative study of world religions and instruction in Sanskrit also find a place in the curriculum. Every evening there is congregational Bhajan led by the Mother. During the day, the Mother is easily accessible to one and all without any distinction. She receives everyone with equal love and affection. She listens keenly with immense patience to the problems of those who approach her and attends to them in a touchingly tender and compassionate way. "I am always blissful", says the Mother, "but when I serve the suffering humanity, I find more joy in their happiness. My children's happiness is my wealth and health".

The Mother discards none. She receives the wealthy and the poor, the healthy and sick, the children and the elders, men and women with the same amount of motherly love and compassion. And the Mother can be seen taking active part in all the Ashram activities.

The Ashram ground covers about two acres and consists of simple living quarters for permanent residents and guests, a kitchen and common dining hall where South Indian Vegetarian food is served thrice daily — recently a separate canteen has been opened to cater to the needs of the devotees thronging to the Ashram — a sizable library of spiritual books in English, French, Sanskrit and other Indian and European languages.

There is a guest house to accommodate the increasing number of visitors who flock to the Mother for her blessings and spiritual guidance. A large meditation hall and Bhajan hall adjoining the temple dedicated to the Divine Mother are under construction.

All the work connected with the maintenance of the Ashram is done by the Ashramites themselves as Seva which forms an important part of the Mother's teachings. All people are welcome for a sojourn in the Mother's Ashram.

A small write-up on the Beloved Mother and her Ashram appeared in the Bhavan's Journal (Nov. 1-15, 1984). Later in September 1985, the write-up was enlarged, and thanks to the patronage of some devotees at Trivandrum, it was brought out in the form of a booklet for the use of the Ashram. In February 1986, it was revised and reprinted at Madras. And in May 1987, it was further revised, enlarged and brought out on the eve of Mother's tour abroad, with a view to introduce her to the devotees there. The copies having been exhausted abroad, the fourth edition was brought out to coincide with the Mother's week-long visit to Madras by the end of February 1988. And now on the eve of Mother's second world-tour, this enlarged fifth edition is being brought out to meet the ever growing demand of the reader-devotees both in India and abroad.

The following is a synopsis of the contents of this book:- While the prologue highlights the greatness of saints in general, and the necessity to seek their holy

company and follow their noble teachings, the main body of the book deals with the fascinating divine personality of the Mother, her universal love and compassion, and ministration, her mission of training a band of educated and dedicated aspirants, her initial stage of life characterised by a passionate quest for God and the culmination in Enlightenment, the added item of interest in her Ashram, viz. her Darshan in Devi or Krishna Bhava and the account of a striking spectacle which meets the eyes of the devotees on a Darshan day at the Ashram temple. The concluding part of this book briefly reviews the contents of two notable publications on the Mother, one of them being the first substantial account of the life and teachings of the Mother in English. While this is an Ashram Publication, the other one is an American Publication authored by a young western disciple of the Mother, presenting an interesting description of the Mother's unique life and inspiring personality. A few extracts from the last two chapters of this book presented herein at the end are self-explanatory.

The note captioned: "A word about the Mother's Ashram" prefixed to this book, is from Sri Ottur Unni Namboodiripad who has depicted the unique features of the Ashram at Vallikkavu, the various activities of the inmates as well as the Founder. Sri Namboodiripad who is presently camping at the Ashram, is an accomplished, renowned poet of Kerala - a "Ubhayakavi" (capable of composing in Malayalam, his mother tongue, and Sanskrit as well), and an inspiring exponent of 'Bhagavata', besides being an ardent devotee of the Holy Trinity: Bhagwan Sri Ramakrishna, the Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi and the great Hindu monk of modern India, Swami Vivekananda.

A few sayings of the Mother have been appended under the caption: "Mother Speaks".

The poem captioned "Mother" is to be read in the light of the following utterance of Mata Amritanandamayi: "Always understand that the Mother is omnipresent. ...Realize that the Mother is Truth Eternal.... I perceive everything as the Truth, Brahman Itself.... Have faith that Mother's Self and your Self are one.... You should not see the external Mother

.... enshrine Mother within".

Also appended to this booklet is a route map indicating the way to the Vallikkavu Ashram so that those who wish to go to the Mother may not find it difficult to locate the place.

An exhaustive list of the Ashram publications is also given in the end for the convenience of the readers who may be interested to go in for a detailed study of the life and teachings of the Mother.

Before concluding this prefatory note, a word about the Mother's first foreign tour. In response to the pressing invitation of her many disciples and admirers abroad, and with a view to advocate the supremacy of love and devotion, to foster universal brotherhood cutting across all man made barriers, and to give a fillip to spirituality in the west, the Mother recently undertook a 3 months' tour which she has completed successfully. As per reports received, from the time the Mother landed in the San Francisco International Airport on the 18th May 1987, till the 15th July 1987 when she left for Europe from the John F. Kennedy International Airport in New York, she was involved in hectic programmes in the various important cities of the States of California, Washington, Wisconsin, New Mexico, Illinois, Maryland, Rhode Island, Virginia, Massachusetts, New York, Connecticut, Washington D.C. In all these places the Mother conducted Bhajans, Satsang, interviews, question and answer sessions, worship with Lalita Sahasranamaarchana and meditation classes. The impact she made in all these places can be gauged by the vastness of the concourse of devotees who assembled and congregated for the Darshan of the Mother wherever she made her appearance. Many a staid visitor was moved to tears and some were even on the verge of hysterics at the time of her departure from each centre. Thus the Mother left for Paris on the first lap of her European tour leaving behind a large assemblage of sons waving farewell to her with cries of "Mother, please come back soon". Needless to say that the Mother's tour of the European countries was a repetition of the successes and triumphs that attended her tour in the United States of America.

The Mother is again scheduled to go abroad, on May 8, 1988, for the second time. Details of this three months tour can be had of the American branch of Mata Amritanandamayi Mission located at: 1182-B, Market Street, No.661, San Francisco, Ca-94102 (Tel: 415-524-2029), Ref: Bri. Kusuma.

Madras
March 22, 1988.

SWAMI JYOTIRMAYANANDA

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THUS SPAKE MOTHER

* It may be easy for you to love Mother, but that is not enough. Try to see Mother in everybody. Don't think that Mother is confined to this body alone.

* To truly love Mother means to love equally all beings in the world.

* Only when you have selfless love even towards an ant can Mother consider that you truly love her.

* If you really love Mother, do Sadhana and realize yourself. Mother gives you love, not expecting anything from you. It is enough if I could see my children always enjoying Spiritual Bliss.

* Mother does not say that you should believe in Mother or in a God sitting far away in heaven. It is enough to believe in yourself. Everything is in you.

(see page 36)

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Mata Amritanandamayi Center

1182-B Market Street #661 San Francisco, CA 94102



415-524-2029

MOTHER'S 1988 WORLD TOUR

- May 16-17 Berkeley Conference Center, 2601 Warring St., Berkeley
 May 18 Ft. Mason Conference Center, Building 'A', San Francisco
 May 19 Trinity Methodist Church, 2362 Bancroft Ave., Berkeley
 May 20 Christ Episcopal Church, Campbell Hall, Santa Rosa Ave. at San Carlos Ave., Sausalito
 May 21 Devi Bhava Darshan: *Divine Mood of the Universal Mother* in Palo Alto
 May 22-23 Scottish Rite Temple, 1290 Sutter St. at Van Ness, San Francisco
 May 24 Moraga Hall, 1307 Seabright Ave., Santa Cruz CA
 May 25 First Congregational Church, 1985 Louis Road at Embarcadero, Palo Alto,
 May 26 Women's Club of Carmel, Carmel CA
 May 27 Devi Bhava Darshan in Carmel CA
 May 28 Unitarian Church, Franklin St. at Geary Blvd., San Francisco
 May 29-30 City Park Lodge, Mt. Shasta City, CA
 May 31 Devi Bhava Darshan on Mt. Shasta
 June 1-5 Retreat in the Redwoods, Miranda, CA
 June 6 East Shore Unitarian Church, 12700 SE 32nd Blvd., Bellevue WA
 June 7 To be annouced
 June 8 United Methodist Church, Blaine Room, 811 Fifth Ave., Seattle
 June 9 Scottish Rite Temple, 1155 Broadway East, Seattle
 June 10 Devi Bhava Darshan, Daybreak Star, Discovery Park, Magnolia, Seattle
 June 11-15 Santa Fe, NM-Mata Amritanandamayi Center, Canada de los Alamosa
 June 16-17 St. John's Episcopal Church, 1419 Pine St., Boulder CO
 June 18 Devi Bhava Darshan in Boulder CO
 June 19-20 Quakers Meeting House, 1704 Roberts Court, Madison WI
 June 21 Devi Bhava Darshan in Madison WI
 June 22 Unitarian Church of Arlington, Arlington VA
 June 23 Washington Ethical Society, Washington D.C.
 June 24 To be annouced
 June 25 Devi Bhava Darshan in Springfield VA
 June 26 Unitarian Church of Arlington, Arlington VA
 June 27-28 The Tower, 45 West 18th St., New York City
 June 29 Devi Bhava Darshan in New York City
 June 30-July 1 First Presbyterian Church, 32 Harvard St., Brookline, MA
 July 2-4 Peterbourough NH
 July 6-9 London July 10-12 Paris July 13-14 Cologne
 July 15 Frankfurt July 16-19 Munich July 19-21 Zurich
 July 22-31 Retreat at the Center of Unity, Brienz, Switzerland

Each morning, the Holy Mother will receive people in an informal darshan setting from 9:00 A.M. onwards until each person has been seen individually. Each evening, the Holy Mother will lead the devotional singing which will be followed by individual darshan. Please call for specific information.

in the
service
Bri. Kusuma

A WORD ABOUT THE MOTHER'S ASHRAM

It was during the past 2½ years only that I had occasion to visit this place off and on, and each time make a brief stay of a month or two. Before that I had come here once or twice but I had then neither the time nor the inclination to study the activities of the Ashram with any degree of interest. After I had stayed here once for about a month and made a careful and thorough study of the working of this Ashram run under the guidance and direction of the Mother who heads this Mission, my respect for the Ashram and its founder waxed by leaps and bounds. The efficient way the Ashram was run and the way the inmates were responding to the training imparted to them under the strict surveillance of the ever watchful Mother, only augmented my steadily increasing regard and esteem for the adorable personality of the Mother.

Here, about thirty brahmacharins and ten brahmacharinis are put through a system of education closely resembling the Gurukula system of our ancient Indian heritage. Of course, the women trainees live far apart from the men trainees, though the curriculum of studies, rules and regulations governing general conduct and discipline are the same. Upanishadic texts, Gita, Vedanta, Sanskrit are among the subjects the inmates have to study daily. Besides that, Yogasanas, Lalita Sahasranamaarchana, individual studies, meditation, and Bhajan are the routine activities of the Ashramites here. One will find the residents here engaged in gardening, serving food, cleaning water-closets, attending to office work, marketing, receiving guests and visitors, erecting fences, sweeping courtyards and corridors, etc. In all these activities the inmates participate wholeheartedly and ungrudgingly. The Mother herself joyfully joins the sons in doing all these chores about the Ashram. It is wellnigh impossible to find any inmate of this place idling or lazing. Only 3 or 4 hours are to be spent in sleep. The mother is as indifferent to the niceties of food and clothing as she is to the lure of name and fame. Among the thousands streaming to this place are children and old men, poor and rich, illiterate and scholars. On all these, the Mother showers the same degree of affection as any mother might feel for her own children. She would have everyone of them

approach her unhesitatingly, individually confide their sorrows and difficulties to her and receive the needful advice and consolation. All this she does with a tender solicitude so natural to her, and persons leaving after the interview have the feeling that they have stood in the presence of the Divine Mother of the Universe. Meseems, here is the ceaseless flow of the Ganga of tenderness and compassion.

No wonder the mother who four years ago was unknown to the outside world, nay, even to the people of Kerala, is now a celebrity not only all over India, but also among the countries abroad. Numerous are the devotees of Sri Ramakrishna who come here and among the residents of the Ashram itself quite a few have been initiated with the Ramakrishna Mantra. It is a matter of inconsolable grief for me that I could not see or know the Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi, the divine consort of Sri Ramakrishnadeva, in person. And now when I have declined into the vale of years, when I came to Vallikkavu and beheld the Mother, I had the feeling that Sri Sarada Devi herself has come here now in this form to fulfil my long cherished desire. That feeling has been gaining strength day by day. Still to me Guruvayurappan, Sri Ramakrishna and Sri Sarada Devi are and will ever be the sole objects of my adoration. The great drama formerly enacted in Dakshineswar more than a century ago, I think, is now being re-enacted here in this place. I have even told the Mother straight: 'It is because of my conviction that the personalities of the Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi and Sri Ramakrishna merged are manifested through you, I have consented to stay here. The moment, I feel that conviction failing me, I shall not be seen here any more'. To which the Mother laughingly replied that she would never want any one to change his chosen deities. This great-heartedness of the Mother is what makes her unique. She never has word of blame or reproach or criticism for any institution or organisation or individual. Many a malevolent persecutor of the Mission has relinquished his hostile attitude after coming to know the Mother's personality. She never gives ear to reports of evil-minded persons and never believes them blindly. Four years ago there was just

one hut here on the campus. The Mother used to lie down on the bare earth. Now because of the influx of visitors from all parts of the country, new and modern constructions have sprouted up in the premises. Sometimes on some days two or three hundred visitors may suddenly make their appearance at the Ashram. But there is now ample provision for all of them to stay here in comfort. This month, a canteen has been opened newly with a view to serve the needs of wayfarers. The Mother herself does not touch money. Even so, there is no dearth of funds here. No one goes about for collection of donations and such like for the maintenance of the Ashram. Hindus, Mohammedans, Christians, Indians, Foreigners are among the number of permanent residents here. About a thousand neighbours bent on destroying and ruining the organisation strove their best over the years foisting false allegations about the functioning of the Mission. But their ill-intentioned efforts proved to be abortive. About half the number of detractors have become staunch devotees of the Mother now. High placed officers drawing gubernatorial salaries have resigned their jobs and become Brahmacharins here. Here, a westerner who lives in a cave nearby, never coming out, spends 20 hours of the day in meditation. All these things are there for everyone to see for oneself. Only agnostics who close their eyes tight deliberately and choose to dwell in utter darkness of their own creation will deny the celestial effulgence that radiates from the environs of Vallikkavu.

M A M, Vallikkavu, — OTTUR UNNI NAMBOODIRIPAD
Feb., 5, 1988



BELOVED MOTHER

AMRITANANDAMAYI

"Through the vital personalities of mystics and saints the radiance of the spiritual streams out upon the race. God speaks to man through man. Such personalities act as receivers and transmitters. They distribute flashes of the Uncreated Light".

— EVELYN UNDERHILL.

"It is the glory of the saints that they come to bless the world; they wear out their bodies in serving others; forbearing love is their stock-in-trade; there is no self-love within them. Their happiness is in the happiness of others".

— TUKARAM.

PROLOGUE

Life is a bounteous gift of nature, but noble living is a rare gift of wisdom. In the company of saints — the enlightened ones — we derive the light of wisdom. The spiritually illumined ones are indeed a repository of spiritual wisdom and divine virtues. In their life there is a peculiar power; in their company our hearts get purified and we derive real spiritual strength. They give us right understanding which is the greatest need on the spiritual path; they help us steer clear of all the obstacles.

The saints not only inspire and guide us to an enlightened life but also lead us on to the summum bonum. Their exemplary life and inspiring teachings act as a beacon light in the midst of the encircling gloom. It is they who hold the key to an ideal life.

We should try to follow in their footsteps and cultivate our inner life along the path laid down by them. We should try to emulate their example and put into practice their teachings with sincerity. This emulation will be the greatest tribute we can pay them. 'It is difficult for us to understand those who have realised God. They see what we cannot see because they have experienced what we only hope to experience. But if we surrender ourselves to such individuals, keep

their company and follow their teachings, they will heighten our awareness and shape our lives'.

FASCINATING PERSONALITY

Mata Amritanandamayi is a shining link in the luminous chain of saints and sages of this ancient land, who are the eternal spiritual beacons to mankind. An enlightened soul with a magnetic personality and unique charm, the Mother is the embodiment of universal love and compassion, and her whole being is always engaged in the amelioration of the sufferings of the people who throng to her.

All are equal in her eyes since all are her children. She manifests motherly qualities on a universal scale which leads one to the conviction that she is almost the Divine Mother. She gains nothing for herself for all the troubles and self-sacrifice that she undergoes day after day. She receives nothing while she gives everything. With overflowing love, inexhaustible patience and disarming innocence she draws innumerable souls to the life divine. In short, it is her universal Divine Motherhood that attracts and binds the people who come in contact with her and finally elevates them spiritually.

Endowed as she is with divine power, the Beloved Mother has around her a soothing spiritual aura. What a radiance of peace and love emanates from the Mother! What a vibration of joy and fulfilment is scattered by the heavenly smile that plays constantly on her countenance! It indeed acts as a soothing balm to the heavy-laden people flocking to her for solace. Unreservedly does she shower her benediction on all those who approach her. She is adored by many people for many reasons ranging from the mundane to the spiritual. She patiently and lovingly listens to each one and in a short time, they invariably find their problems solved and desires fulfilled. It is in this way the seed of faith in God is sown in many a heart. Devotion motivated by desires gradually develops into motiveless devotion; desire for mundane objects gives way to the desire for God who is the source of all happiness. The little seed of faith sown by the Mother blossoms in the fullness of time into an aspiration for the attainment

of everlasting Divine Bliss that dwells within everyone.

Meeting this saint, one can understand the meaning of unconditional divine love; in her form, one finds God showering that love on one and all. No wonder, such a saint is sought after by many. The serenity, the heavenly glow lighting up the saint's countenance and the intense fascination that radiates therefrom, are all the power of purity which appeals to the Divine in man and stimulates the noble elements in human character.

ANTECEDENTS

Mata Amritanandamayi endearingly called by her devotees and disciples as "Ammachi" (a Malayalam expression for Mother) was born on September 27, 1953, on a small island situated between the Arabian Sea and the Kerala backwaters along the southwest shores of India. 'Sudhamani' as she was named by her humble parents, was barely five years old when she manifested deep devotion to Lord Sri Krishna whose picture she held close to her bosom, gazing at His sublime divine form and confiding her sorrows to Him.

From the age of seven onwards she began composing poignant devotional songs in praise of Krishna, and her enchanting, soulful mystical songs became well-known throughout the village.

When her mother fell ill, nine year old Sudhamani had to abandon her school studies in order to attend to the household chores. Getting up before dawn and toiling until late at night, whatever respite she got was spent in her heartfelt prayers to Sri Krishna. Through her single minded devotion to her Lord born out of incessant repetition of His sacred name and reflection on his enchanting divine form, Sudhamani got fully absorbed in Him. Overwhelmed by His divine excellence and constantly reflecting thereon, she was established in the Divine Consciousness and attained perfect equanimity.

Not long afterwards there arose in her mind an intense yearning to have the vision of the Divine Mother. And so she immersed herself for months together in the most rigorous and austere spiritual disciplines. Unmindful of her bodily needs, and the vagaries of the climatic conditions, Sudhamani lived out in the open,

spending days and nights in deep absorption in the Divine Mother. At long last the Divine Mother appeared before her in all Her splendour, and as a mass of effulgence merged in her. From that day onwards, in the words of Ammachi, "Nothing could be seen as different from my own formless Being". Perennially enjoying the divine bliss, she one day heard a voice from within say, "My Child, I dwell in the hearts of all beings. Adore me, therefore, in all beings by relieving them of their sufferings". Thenceforth Ammachi received one and all showering on them benediction, love and affection.

THE MISSION

The Mother is silently and unostentatiously engaged in imparting character-building and man-making training to a band of spiritual aspirants, who, fired with the zeal of holiness and fortified with eternal faith in the Lord, renounced all mundane interests and joined her Ashram, in a remote village on the shores of Kerala, with the sole aim of God-realisation and equipping themselves for the service of society in all possible ways. According to the Mother, the greatest of all benefactions is the act of rousing an aspirant to the glory of the divinity within. The awakened man solves for himself all his problems and becomes a blessing to society too.

"A spiritual aspirant must meditate at least eight hours a day" exhorts the Mother. "He must also take part in some manual labour or other for at least an hour, and should not talk much as it dissipates energy. By constantly looking within, he must try to dispel the darkness of ignorance lurking there". This is her repeated advice to all the inmates of the Ashram. And she is very particular about all of them acting upto her instructions. While being a Beloved Mother ministering to all their spiritual and mundane needs, she is also a strict disciplinarian and does not hesitate to take those to task who fail to keep up the Ashram routine commencing before dawn with Vedic chanting as also the repetition of the thousand names (Sahasranama) of the Divine Mother and concluding with meditation at 11 o'clock in the night when all the

inmates go to bed. Besides long hours of meditation at different intervals, the daily routine includes scriptural classes, private study and a bhajan session at dusk led by the Mother whose singing of devotional songs is verily soul-stirring. The inmates are expected to render at least an hour's service daily in the Ashram so much so all the Ashram work is done by the inmates themselves. The Mother herself joins in all the activities.

As a reviewer has rightly observed (vide 'Mountain Path', July 1985), "the regime at her Ashrama is strict - eight hours compulsory meditation every day for all inmates - and the living conditions appear to be extremely spartan, but even so, a significant number of people have settled there and accepted her as their Guru".

Thus, aspiring to lead a life divine, many young men and women gathered around the Mother, for engaging themselves in Sadhana and Seva. As their number increased, the need for an organisation arose and so came into being 'Mata Amritanandamayi Mission', (MAM) in 1981.

ASPIRATION, REALISATION AND DEDICATION

As has already been pointed out, the initial stage of the Mother's life was characterised by a passionate quest for God. As an aspirant, she longed intensely for the beatific vision of the Divine and that spiritual hunger culminated in her Enlightenment. "From my very birth, I had an intense liking for the holy Name of God", graciously reveals the Mother, replying to a query of a devotee as to how she attained God-realisation. "I would repeat the Lord's Name incessantly with every breath, with the result a constant flow of divine thoughts was kept up in my mind, even in the midst of hectic household chores and irrespective of the place where I was or the work I was attending to". The Mother adds that a continuous and unbroken remembrance of God, with love and devotion, would be of immense help to an aspirant in attaining Godhood.

As all saints and Godmen tell us, time and again, one can easily and quickly attain Divine Grace in Kaliyuga by constantly chanting His all-powerful holy

Name and singing the Divine Glories. The scriptures and epics too glorify the greatness of chanting and singing the Name and God. In fact the Divine Names and songs have great potential to purify the mind by instilling and fostering devotion to God. In a pure mind the divine knowledge dawns spontaneously. Consequently all worldly afflictions are totally exterminated and one is bathed in Blessedness. Mata Amritanandamayi is a shining example of this truth.

"Her story is a remarkable one by any standard. As a child she was possessed with the thought of Krishna, and as she grew up, her devotion to Him was so great that on many occasions He appeared to have taken her over completely. While she was still in her early teens, people began to be attracted to her, partly because of the miraculous events that were constantly happening in her vicinity, and partly because of the palpable spiritual radiance of her presence. She attracted many local devotees at this time, but her own spiritual Sadhana had not yet been completed. This period of her life continued for some time and it reached its finale when she realised the Self shortly after she had a vision of the Divine Mother. Ever since, she has been devoting herself full-time to the welfare of her devotees". ('The Mountain Path', July, 1985)

In the words of another reviewer (vide 'The Hindu', April 2, 1985), "a child that showed sparks of divinity, later turned into a spiritual guide; with very little education, hailing from a humble family in a remote corner of this country, enlightenment has come to her.....that is Mata Amritanandamayi. Her divine mission has now spread and she has an Ashram, devotees, followers flocking to the place. Her message is not out of elaborate reading and hence her life is a rare phenomenon - recognised and acknowledged in HinduismSudhamani (as was the Mother known in the early days) has undergone a tremendous metamorphosis through God-realisation to become the Mata".

Today, 'self-dedication to all life' is the great ideal the Divine has placed before the Mother. In other words, spiritual enlightenment, in turn, has led her to an exalted state of self-dedication for the common weal, and she has thus become a great benefactor of

mankind.

As to the Mother's teachings, "they are simple and homely, and she uses everyday analogies to clarify and illustrate her ideas. Her pronouncements about the nature of Reality are Advaitic and while she generally advises her devotees to follow the path of devotion and surrender, she also gives out useful and authoritative advice on other spiritual paths".

It may be pointed out here that the Mother holds in high adoration the saint of Dakshineswar, Sri Ramakrishna, whom she considered as her spiritual father during her Sadhana days. In fact she felt his tangible presence and derived inspiration from him. This is confirmed by the Mother herself. To devotees and disciples, the Mother advises a devout study of the "Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna" as she holds that it contains all that is needed for spiritual aspirants.

ADDED ATTRACTION

The added attraction in MAM which is a growing spiritual centre today, is the special Darshan on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Sundays when the Mother receives one and all in an exalted divine state (Devi Bhava or Krishna Bhava) while devotional songs are sung continually in chorus.

About the Bhava, its meaning and significance, Mother says, "All the deities of the Hindu Pantheon, who represent the numberless aspects of the One Supreme Being exist within us. One possessing Divine power can manifest any of them, by one's mere will, for the good of the world. Krishna Bhava is the manifestation of the Purusha or the static aspect and Devi Bhava is the manifestation of the Prakriti or the dynamic aspect of the Impersonal Absolute. Here is a crazy girl who puts on the garb of Krishna and after sometime that of Devi, but it is within this crazy girl that both exist. It should however be remembered that all objects with names and forms are mere mental projections. Why decorate an elephant? Why should a lawyer wear a black coat or why does a policeman wear a uniform and a cap? All these are merely external aids meant to create a certain impression. In

like manner, Mother dons the garb of Krishna or Devi in order to give strength to the devotional attitude of the people coming for Darshan". The Mother adds: "We entered this world unclad. Later on we put on clothes according to time, place, and status or position. Notice the attire of a lawyer or a doctor. It renders the position more attractive. A beautiful golden vase is rendered more attractive by ornamentation. Even so is the Mother's attire during Krishna and Devi Bhavas. It lends additional attraction and visual splendour. Beauty is the very nature of God, isn't it?". The Mother concludes: "The Atman or Self that is in me is also within you. If you can realise that Indivisible Principle that is ever shining in you, you will become That".

During Darshan the Mother receives all without any distinction and showers her love and affection on them equally. She patiently listens to their problems and suggests solutions for them. In spite of the fact that the Darshan may take many hours, the Mother patiently attends to each one until the last person has received her blessings. Not only during the Darshan but at all times she whole-heartedly attends to the spiritual needs of the devotees and takes an active interest in their spiritual progress (vide 'The Mother of Sweet Bliss', pp 35, 36 and 84).

Many devotees flock to the Ashram for the alleviation of their sufferings, both physical and mental. Mother rejects none. "An unbroken stream of love flows from me", says she, "towards all beings in the cosmos. That is my inborn nature".

A STRIKING SPECTACLE

A striking spectacle which meets the eyes of the devotees on a Darshan day at the Ashram temple, needs particular mention. Among the innumerable devotees of the Mother who throng to her for help and solace, is a person afflicted with Hansen's disease. The way the Mother receives this devotee and treats him for his dreaded disease is simply breath-taking. The leper devotee comes to the Ashram once in a week, mostly on a Sunday, and avails himself of the Darshan of the Mother in Devi Bhava. Just as Mother receives other

devotees she receives him too with all love and affection, enquires about his health and welfare, observes his body and limbs with meticulous care and provides the much needed relief. In this context, it is interesting to know what an American disciple of the Mother has to say. Giving the antecedents of the leper, he writes: "The leper was oozing from head to foot with pus. He was more dead than alive. In fact, his brothers had already died of the same disease. His eyes, ears, and nose were hardly visible due to the devastating effect of the disease. The stench coming from his body was such that he had to keep his begging bowl about 50 yards away from where he was standing, so that those taking pity on him could put some food in it. One day, someone told him there was a lady manifesting Divine Power in a village nearby and that, may be, she would help him.

"Thinking that nothing could be lost, he went there but hesitated to go near the crowd. Ammachi, who was seated in the temple as Devi, spotted him in the distance and jumping up called out to him, 'Oh my son, do not worry, I am coming'. She then ran to him and spoke words of assurance to him. She bathed him with pots of water and finally smeared handful after handful of sacred ash on his whole body. She advised him to come back every week on the three nights that she would be in the temple.

"The leper came regularly for the next six weeks, and she treated him in the same way. After the sixth week, his wounds ceased to ooze and started to heal. At present, he is completely cured of the disease, although his skin bears the scars of it". ('On the Road to Freedom: A Pilgrimage in India', by Neal Rosner, p. 152)

THE FIRST SUBSTANTIAL ACCOUNT

'The Mother of Sweet Bliss', a recent publication authored by one of her spiritual sons, presents a short but authentic account of the life and teachings of the Beloved Mother. The author has done a great service to the devotees by preparing this book, highlighting the Mother's eventful and adventurous spiritual life. While providing the readers with a glimpse into her unique

spiritual experiences, he has also dealt with the trials and tribulations she had to undergo in the early days and the persecutions she had to suffer at the hands of her parents and others who, ignorant of her spiritual growth, and perplexed by her unusual behaviour during her Sadhana days, ridiculed her and even dubbed her as schizophrenic. But intoxicated with God-love she silently and cheerfully went through the fiery ordeal, ever remaining unruffled. This has been clearly brought out in the book.

At the end of the life-sketch of the Mother, the author has dealt with the genesis of the Ashram. It testifies to the fact that God has His own inscrutable ways and means of getting things done in the fullness of time, and that those who trust and totally surrender to the Divine Providence will be provided for in every respect, 'Yogakshemam Vahamyaham'.

Through a few significant incidents, the author also lets us know how the Mother, a strict disciplinarian and hard task-master that she is, trains the inmates of her Ashram.

The selected teachings and sayings of the Mother (translated from the original Malayalam) presented in the book, will be found simple yet insightful.

As mentioned earlier, the Mother is an ecstatic singer of Bhajans (devotional songs) and often goes into raptures while singing the sacred names of the Lord. She has, to her credit, several devotional compositions, in her mother tongue — Malayalam (vide 'Bhajanamritam'). In one of them, 'Ananda Veethi', she has clearly described the process and culmination of her exalted spiritual experiences. Its English transliteration along with the English rendering has been provided. A perusal of it will enable the reader to have a glimpse into the spiritual stature of the Mother.

The Mother of Sweet Bliss dealing with the unique life and illuminating teachings of Mata Amritanandamayi, is sure to prompt the readers to meet the saint in person and feel blessed by her divine presence.

ANOTHER INTERESTING ACCOUNT

Another interesting description of the Mother's

unique life and charismatic personality can be found in the last two chapters of a recent American Publication: "On the Road to Freedom: A Pilgrimage in India" (Cassandra Press, P.O. Box 2044, Boulder, CO 80306, U.S.A) which is a rare and revealing account of a young Westerner's twenty-year heartfelt spiritual journey in Modern India. Told with innocence, wry humour and genuine insight, this unusual story narrates the archetypal quest for spiritual realisation, the trials of personal transformation, and meetings with some of India's greatest contemporary masters including Mata Amritanandamayi. This book will illumine and inspire seekers to deepen their commitment to the values of love, wisdom, and selfless service to humanity. The author, Sri Neal Rosner, is an American who has been living in India since 1967. During this time he completed several pilgrimages across the continent of India, lived for twelve years at the Ramanashram, and has lived at Mata Amritanandamayi Mission, his present home, for the past eight years.

In the last two chapters of the said book, Sri Neal Rosner describes his Providential meeting with a disciple of Mata Amritanandamayi, which led him to Vallikkavu in Kerala - about 500 miles Southwest of Arunachala. He also gives a touching description of his first meeting with the Mother, his interesting conversation with her and her spontaneous, enlightening replies; his as well as the Mother's spiritual experiences and many other interesting details of Mother's life as heard and observed by him.

With the permission of the author a few extracts from the last two chapters of the said book are given herebelow for the benefit of the devotees. Sri Neal Rosner recounts the life history of the Mother as gathered by him directly from her. While depicting the Mother as an embodiment of Universal Love and Service, he also points out how she is a strict disciplinarian as a teacher, guiding the activities of her Ashram and the daily routine of the Ashramites:-

UNIQUE LIFE IN BRIEF

Kerala is considered to be the garden of India.

Wherever one looks, vegetation abounds. One can find banana and coconut trees growing in every yard. The particular area where Ammachi lived was a dense forest of coconut palms too numerous to be counted, stretching for miles in all directions. It was a bit like a paradise on earth.

With great difficulty I learned some of Ammachi's life history. Being naturally humble, she talked about herself only after much coaxing:-

The seed of devotion was in her heart from her earliest years. She considered Krishna as her all in all and started to compose songs to Him even at the age of five. She always kept a little picture of Him in her petticoat and then took it out and talked to Him. When she was eight or nine, her mother fell sick and the burden of the housework fell on her shoulders. She was forced to stop going to school, although she did go to a parochial school to learn sewing. Her mother and brother were strict disciplinarians and did not hesitate to beat her or kick her if they found anything in her conduct which they felt improper. Her brother especially was a source of great suffering to her, as he was opposed to her devotion to God and abused her for loudly singing the Divine Name.

From 3.00 a.m. until 11.00 at night, she was busy sweeping the yard, feeding the cows, cooking the food, cleaning pots and pans, washing the family's clothes, and doing numerous other jobs. As if this was not enough, she was sent to her relatives' houses to assist in their housework as well. But all the while, she repeated the Divine Name under her breath, awaiting the day that she might behold her Lord, Sri Krishna. She had the habit of giving away anything in the house to any poor or starving person, which would land her in hot water when she was discovered. Once she was tied to a tree and beaten severely for having given away her mother's gold bracelet to a starving family.

After reaching her teens, she started to have frequent visions of Lord Krishna and felt herself identified with Him. She would lock herself in the small shrine room in the house and dance and sing in the ecstasy of God-Consciousness, or remain immersed for

hours in deep meditation, completely oblivious of her surroundings. Sometimes she was found sitting unconscious in the bathroom, with tears streaming down her face, muttering the words, "Krishna, Krishna". Only with great difficulty could she be aroused to external awareness by her mother. Finally, her internal realization became manifest to the outside world.

While plucking grass for the cows one day, she overheard a discourse about Lord Krishna going on in the neighbouring house. Unable to control herself, she ran to the spot and stood there, transfigured as Krishna Himself. The villagers could not make out exactly what had happened to the little girl. Many believed that she was being possessed by Krishna, and others just thought that she was having some kind of fit. None, of course, could understand that she was identified with Him. Crowds started to gather.

This was by no means a blessing for Ammachi. Believing her to be a fraud and a blot on the family name, many villagers and even close relatives tried their best to kill her. They poisoned her food and even took up knives to stab her. However, they failed in all their attempts and, in fact, met with various disasters shortly after.

About six months passed in this way when one day Ammachi developed a desire to see the Divine Mother, just as she had previously longed for the vision of Krishna. Thinking that through meditation and austerities she could gain the favour of Devi, she spent all of her time immersed in deep meditation on Her form. Sometimes, overwhelmed with restlessness for the vision, she would weep like a child for her mother. She was frequently found lying in the sand, her face streaked with tears and her hair, ears, and eyes full of mud. She did not think of protecting her body from the elements and sat or lay in the midday sun or heavy rain. Due to the intensity of her longing and her constant thoughts of Devi, she began to perceive the entire universe as Her form. Kissing the trees and embracing the ground, she would weep at the touch of a breeze, feeling it to be full of the Mother's Presence. But for all her longing and austerity, she could not behold the personal form of the Divine Mother, which was the object of her

longing.

At long last, the Divine Mother appeared before her in a living form and talked with her. She told Ammachi that she had taken birth for the good of the world and should show the people the way to merge into the True Self. Graciously smiling, she then transformed Herself into a brilliant effulgence and merged into Ammachi. In Ammachi's own words, "From that moment onwards, all objective vision ceased, and I came to behold all as my own Self". She came to realize her True Nature as formless and containing all forms, even the form of God, within it. Thenceforth, in addition to Krishna Bhava, Devi Bhava also began. This was by no means the end of Ammachi's troubles.

TRIALS AND TRIBULATIONS

Perhaps out of feelings of jealousy because huge crowds came to Ammachi, or merely for the fun of making trouble, a number of people continued to harass her. Some informed the police and tried to get her arrested on charges of disturbing the peace, but at the sight of her shining and blissful countenance, the police bowed down to her and went away. An assassin, hired to do away with her during the Darshan time, entered the temple with a knife concealed under his clothes. Mother beamed a benign smile at him, which filled him with remorse for his wicked intention. Falling at her feet, he begged her pardon and became a changed man. At the time of my coming to her, things had more or less calmed down, though there were still a number of villagers opposed to her.

One day, her father having had his fill of troubles brought about by her Divine mood and the consequent crowds, approached her during Devi Bhava and considering Devi as possessing her body, appealed, "I want my daughter back the way she was before you came. Please go away".

"If I go", she replied, "your daughter will become a corpse". Not heeding her words, the father insisted that his demand be met. That moment, Ammachi fell down lifeless on the spot. For eight hours, there was not a sign of life in her body. An uproar ensued, and the father was blamed for being the cause of her

untimely death. Lamps were lit around her body, and prayers were offered to God to bring her back to life. Realizing his mistake and repenting bitterly, the father fell flat on the ground in front of the temple and wept, crying out, "Forgive me, O Divine Mother! I am an ignorant man. I will never repeat such words again. Please bring my daughter back to life". Slowly, slight movements became visible in Ammachi's body. At last, her physical condition returned to normal. From that time onwards, her parents ceased to put any restrictions on her, and she was allowed to do more or less as she pleased.

EQUAL LOVE TO ALL

There were sages who after 40 or 50 years of intense meditation somehow attained Self-Realization, but this was quite a different case. From the age of 16 or 17, she had been established in the Supreme State and had used it in this unique way for the good of the common man, without revealing her identity nor minding the abuses heaped on her. She never lost her patience but showed equal love to all who sought her, even to those who sought to harm her.

Talking about the people who had tried to harm her, she said one day, "It was their misguided conceptions that made them speak and behave the way they did. They could not realise the significance and purpose of spiritual life. That being the case, why should we be angry with them? Look at these beautiful roses. What a fine fragrance! But what do we give them to make them grow? Manure! What a difference between the beautiful flower and the bad-smelling manure! Likewise, impediments are the fertilizers which make us grow spiritually. To create trouble is the nature of the ignorant. We must pray to God to forgive them and to lead them to the right path".

CHILDLIKE

Some small children were playing nearby. She got up and started to run after them, playing tag. She was running and screaming just like them. Except for her size, one would have thought she was about six or

seven years old. After about 15 minutes, she returned to us, out of breath.

"One should spend some time every day with small children", she said. "Their innocence will rub off on us, and we will enjoy the happiness of a child. Actually, our True Nature is to be an innocent child of God, but we let it get covered by things like lust, anger and greed. The same innocence that you see in the eyes of a child can be seen in the eyes of a God-Realized person".

In those days, except when she was in meditation, Mother spent all of her time with us, feeding us with her own hands, joking with us, or singing songs and telling interesting anecdotes. There was never a dull moment, and we found that, as the days went by, Mother alone existed in our thoughts.

BEARING THE BRUNT

Darshan started at 6.00 p.m. and continued until 6.00 or 7.00 a.m. Even after that, Mother would sit in front of the temple talking to visiting devotees until 10.00 or 11.00 a.m. We could not understand how she could bear such a strain day after day. We had no inclination to sleep on those three nights. When Mother was staying awake all night to help the people, how could we comfortably sleep? At first, the local people could not understand why two foreigners wanted to stay in a tiny fishing village with a "crazy" girl like Ammachi, but they soon came to look upon us as some of their own who simply felt a powerful attraction, as they themselves did, towards Mother. Mother prohibited us from revealing her true identity to the visitors or villagers. She felt that their faith should not be disturbed, as they were getting their problems resolved through such faith.

"All will come at the right time, children. Who brought you here? The same One will bring about whatever is necessary, when it is necessary. Let us just do our duty without having any desire for the fruits. Mother needs no propaganda. Those who have purity of heart and thirst for God will come and seek and understand Her". She continued playing the double role of God during Darshan time and a somewhat crazy but

charming girl at other times.

MOTHER OF ALL

Ammachi is the Mother of all who came to her, be they men or women, old or young. She looks upon all as her own children; this, in turn, inspired them to look upon her as their own Mother. This brought about a great revolution in the minds of many of the people who sought her presence. They saw that she wanted nothing from anyone, but instead offered her time, food, health, and even rest to them without limit, regardless of who or what they might be. They felt that such a selfless love did not exist anywhere else on this earth. One's own mother might get angry if disobeyed or slighted, but Ammachi forgave even those who tried to kill her and loved them as if they were merely naughty children. She never asked anything of anyone and accepted all as they were, dirty, clean, or otherwise.

This desireless Love bound many people to Mother in a steadfast tie of attachment. Many found that, except in her company, they could find no meaning in their lives. She was ever present in their thoughts. They began to feel that they must rid themselves of their vices, as these were unbefitting a child of hers, even though she never told them so herself. Some of them, even in spite of her protests that she could not support or feed anyone, came to settle near her, leaving their homes, jobs, or schools. The people who decided to remain near her no matter what she or others might say, were mostly young men who had college degrees but found that the worldly life held no prospect of real happiness in the light of her wonderful, pure, and selfless Love.

WISE COUNSEL

While talking to these boys, she emphasized the illusion of seeking happiness through a worldly life; how for the sake of a few moments of pleasure one pays with years of pain. One becomes restless due to the desire for pleasure and, even after enjoying them, the cravings spring up again and again. Repeated enjoyment,

far from leading to satisfaction, leads one to boredom and finally despair. If real and lasting happiness does not lie in the endless enjoyment of sensual pleasures, where then does it lie?

Ammachi pointed out to these young men that the same energy used for worldly purposes could be directed to yield the experience of inner Bliss and Divine Knowledge. Worldly enjoyment saps one's energy and is a slow death, whereas spiritual experience fills one with energy and takes one to realms of Realization and refined Bliss which are unknown to the common man. She would say, "Nectar is deposited at the top of the head in the mystic thousand-petalled lotus, but man never cares to look there, busy as he is with the five senses below". Having herself realized the Truth, her words carried authority which no amount of book-learning could give. She lived what she preached. She did not, however, press anyone to take up any spiritual practice, but only exposed them to these ideas.

BINDING THROUGH THE POWER OF LOVE

Two years after my arrival, a group of five or six young men came to settle near Mother. There was no shelter for anyone, so they slept out in the open, under a tree, or on the veranda of the temple. They took no notice of their food or clothing but simply got along with whatever was forthcoming. Mother told them repeatedly that she could not support them, but still they were unwilling to leave her. Her company and her words were all they wanted. One had to admire their spirit of renunciation. Though not burning with the desire for Self-Realization, they nevertheless felt that the worldly life was not the solution to the problems of the search for happiness. They were indifferent to all worldly pleasures and found that Mother's company was their only source of peace and happiness.

The coming days found more people arriving and settling near Mother. She did not insist that they meditate or have any type of daily routine. The reason was obvious. The people coming to her were not seeking her company out of any desire for spiritual realization, but only for the happiness and peace which they enjoyed

in her presence. If she insisted on any sort of discipline, they would run back to their homes and worldly activities. She was in the process of binding them to her through her selfless Love. At the right time, she would start to mould them spiritually.

This is the way of a true Guru. It is not his philosophy or ideals that will keep the relationship between himself and his disciples intact during the ensuing strenuous and prolonged course of spiritual practice, but only the disciple's knowledge that the Guru has infinite and unlimited love and concern for him. A true Guru, after binding his disciple to him through love, will gradually take the disciple through a course of discipline to slowly reveal all the workings of the mind, both gross and subtle, down to the subtlest point of where the very existence of the mind starts. Reaching the "bottom" of the mind, the disciple comes to see the Truth shining within as his Real Self, and finds that the body and mind are unreal projections of that Self, his True Nature. This process is a prolonged one for most aspirants and may even take more than one lifetime. There are many trials and tribulations along the path of Self-Knowledge and renunciation of the false mind. Love is the prime mover of the universe, and only Love can keep one going until the end, in spite of difficulties encountered along the way. If love is lacking from the beginning, the disciple will flee when the going gets a little rough. It is, therefore, the duty to the Guru to instil that sense of love and trust in the heart of the disciple at the beginning of the relationship, overlooking everything else.

A GREAT MASTER

As the days passed, I slowly came to realize what a great master Ammachi was. However many people came to her, she understood their spiritual levels, their problems, their mental make up, and how to raise them spiritually and, if necessary, materially. She knew exactly how to act at any moment, with any number of people. Her actions did not seem to require any thought, but rather flowed from a spontaneous source always befitting the situation. What is medicine for one may

be poison for another, and this principle was fully known to her. In fact, something which was medicine for someone at one time might harm the same person at another time.

In my own relationship with her, I found a gradual but definite change. When I first came to her, she showered her motherly affection on me. She even fed me with her own hands. She spent most of her time with me and one or two others who were living there. Feeling restless when I could not be near her even for a few moments, I told her so, "You will soon feel me within you always and not care about the external presence", she reassured me. Her words turned out to be prophetic!

'DON'T WAIT, WORK!'

Even though I had been meditating for many years, the Bliss of Union with God still seemed to be far away. I knew that a Realized Soul had the power to remove the screen of ignorance covering the Reality in a disciple's mind. I had asked Ammachi about it, and she had admitted that it could be done, but only if the disciple was perfectly ripe for it. He should have purified himself through spiritual practice to such an extent that he had become like a ripe fruit about to fall off the tree. I decided to ask Mother why she would not bless me with such grace, since I had been trying for such a long time. I did not, of course, realize that my question implied a certain amount of false pride that I had reached a perfectly ripe state. I approached her when she was alone.

"Mother, you have said that the Enlightened have the power to liberate their disciples. Won't you do the same for me?" I asked. "I have also heard of many instances where the Guru has blessed the disciple with the Supreme State". I proceeded to narrate stories of great saints who had gained the highest Realization by the Grace of their Guru.

"They had supreme devotion for their Guru", she began. "When a disciple has such self-effacing devotion for his Master, then even without asking, the thought arises in the mind of the Guru to bless the disciple

with the complete removal of ignorance and the resultant Liberated State. Until then, if one has not reached that degree of maturity, even if one lies down in front of me and commits suicide, saying that I must bless him with Realization, I cannot and will not. The moment you are ready for it, it will flash in my mind to do so, and not before then".

"Then what am I to do until then?" I asked.
"Shall I just wait?"

"If you simply wait, you will have to wait a long time indeed! Do not wait, work!" she said emphatically.

AS A DISCIPLINARIAN

Because a foreign national cannot live in India more than six months unless he is attached to an institution for purposes of study or business, it became necessary to have the Ashram officially registered with the government. Following this, Ammachi felt that the devotees residing there should begin to follow some sort of discipline. To that end, she drew up a compulsory timetable to be followed by those who choose to live near her. Her whole attitude began to change at this stage from that of a mother to that of a spiritual guide. Though the same motherly concern and patience was there, she started to wholeheartedly advise her devotees to follow this or that course of spiritual practice. In fact, she even went so far as to say that those who did not want to do meditation and other spiritual practices could go home by the next bus. This was a bit of a shock to those who had been living a carefree life, thinking that it would be like that forever.

For me, it was a great relief and even somewhat of a surprise to see Mother taking the reins into her hands to make her children into saints. I started to feel more at home, and the atmosphere started to change from that of a big house to that of an Ashram, full of spiritual aspirants engaged in an austere and dedicated life. Mother asked me to look after the discipline of the residents in a general way, as it was not possible for her to be with everyone all the time. I was to report to her any lapses in the daily routine.

RECOGNITION

While the life in the Ashram was undergoing vast changes, things outside of the Ashram were also changing. More and more people started to recognize Ammachi as a living saint who had realized the Supreme. Her unique universal Love, patience, and concern for all became known. She was invited to all of the important temples in Kerala and was received with all honours. Also the type of people visiting the Ashram changed more to those who wanted spiritual betterment. Things had, at last, become as I had wished for long ago. Enjoying inner peace, I recalled the words of Mother as sung by her in a song describing the purpose of her life:-

Dancing in the Path of Bliss,
Likes and dislikes disappeared...
And forgetting myself, I merged in
The Divine Mother renouncing all enjoyments.

Countless are the yogis who,
born in India, have followed
The great principles of Divine wisdom
as revealed by the Ancients.
Numerous are the naked truths
expressed by them
That can save mankind from misery.

The Divine Mother told me to inspire the people
With the desire for Liberation. Therefore,
I proclaim to the whole world the
Sublime Truth that She uttered:

"Oh Man, merge in your Self.
Oh Man, merge in your Self".

* * *



MOTHER SPEAKS

* I am here not for enjoying any rest or comfort but to serve others and alleviate their sufferings. Their happiness is my happiness. I do not want anyone's service, I am here to serve all.

* I am the servant of everyone of you. I haven't got any special place to dwell. I dwell in your heart.

* Always understand that Mother is omnipresent. Have faith that Mother's Self and your Self are one.

* I behold only the Essence (Divinity) in you. Any one can see so through practice.

* As I perceive everything as the Truth, Brahman Itself, I adore Truth. I bow down to my own Self.

* Realise that the Mother is the Truth Eternal.

* You should not see the external Mother. If you do, many obstacles will crop up. This will not happen if you enshrine Mother within.

* It is not enough to meditate merely closing the eyes and sitting in a corner. One must serve all people selflessly and even without desiring salvation. All must be seen with equal vision. We must be like the wind. The wind blows over foul-smelling things as well as fragrant flowers. It never ceases to blow over a thing because it stinks.

* Having attained one's own salvation through spiritual practice, one should benefit others as well.

* Different types of people come to see me, for devotion, for worldly problems, for relief from diseases. I discard none. Can I reject them? Are they different from me? Aren't we all beads strung on the one life-thread? According to each one's level of thinking they see me. Both those who hate me and those who love me are the same to me.

* An unbroken stream of love flows from me towards all beings in the cosmos. That is my inborn nature.

* Darling children! Waste not your precious time; know for certain that time lost cannot be retrieved. Think of the Lord and His glories.

* This body is a rented house which has to be vacated when required. Before death we should acquire the necessary spiritual strength to build an abode of our own so that when we are asked to vacate this rented one, we will happily do so and go to live in the house of Eternal Bliss.

MATA AMRITANANDAMAYI MISSION PUBLICATIONS

1. **THE MOTHER OF SWEET BLISS** (English): This is the first substantial account in English of the life and teachings of Mata Amritanandamayi.
2. **A Comprehensive Biography** (with conversations of the Mother) in English is in the Press.
3. **FOR MY CHILDREN** (English): Containing over 300 sayings and teachings of the Mother, full of practical hints for spiritual aspirants, classified topic-wise.
4. **BHAJANAMRITAM** (A Book of Hymns and Songs in Roman script): Containing about 200 selected devotional songs, most of them recorded in 15 volumes of cassettes brought out by the Ashram (see item No. 19). The text of each song/namavali is transliterated into English, followed by a lucid English translation thereof. These songs/namavalis are mostly from the 'Bhajanamritam', Part I & II, (see item No. 12).
5. **BHARATAMRITAM** - Ambrosia of India: A bi-monthly in English, published by the Bombay Centre of the MAM.
6. **AMMACHI** (La vie et l'enseignement d'une mystique d'aujourd'hui): Life and teachings of the Mother in French.
7. **AMMACHI** (Leben und worte der heiligen Mutter): Life and teachings of the Mother in German.
8. **THE LIFE AND TEACHINGS OF MATA AMRITANANDAMAYI** (Malayalam) Part I & II: A comprehensive Biography of the Mother with a detailed record of her conversations with the devotees.
9. **AMRITA MOZHIKAL** (Malayalam): The Mother's sayings and teachings (over 300), full of practical hints for spiritual aspirants, classified topic-wise.
10. **UNARUVIN MAKKALE** (Malayalam): Mother's didactic message serialised every month in 'Matruvani' - the Malayalam monthly of the MAM (see item No. 15).
11. **AMRITA SUTRAM** (Malayalam): Containing 108 pithy sayings of the Mother.
12. **BHAJANAMRITAM**: A Book of Hymns and Songs

* Supreme Bliss is within you and unshakable faith will enable you to realise it by experience. Don't superimpose happiness on material objects. It is our ignorance that prevents us from realising this limitless treasure of Eternal Bliss. Remove the veil of ignorance and enjoy the continuous and unbroken flow of the Lord's Grace.

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MOTHER

Mother, Thou art everything,
Thou art in everything;
Everything is in Thee only.
Inside, outside, in all directions
Everywhere it is Thou only.

Mother, thou art in every pore;
Every atom Thou pervadest.
Thou art the inner controller;
Consciousness witnessing all.

Thou art the formless, changeless Truth
Devoid of attributes, all powerful,
All-pervading, all-knowing -
Who can comprehend Thy glory!

Thou art the eternal, infinite Truth
Existence-Knowledge and Bliss
Manifesting as the manifold world
Yet transcending everything.

O Mother, be Thou gracious
And manifest Thyself in all of us.

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(Malayalam) Part I & II: Containing selections mostly from the devotional songs composed by the Mother and the inmates of her Ashram, inculcating and fostering devotion, renunciation and knowledge. In addition, the book also contains Vedic hymns, Stotras and popular Malayalam songs.

13. **UPADESHAMRITAM** (Malayalam): Containing the conversations of the Mother — an exhaustive collection — is in the Press.

14. **LALITA SAHASRANAMAM** (in Malayalam script): With Mother's instructions to devotees regarding its recitation.

15. **MATRUVANI** (Malayalam): A journal containing the Mother's message, Ashram news, significant contributions on matters spiritual, 'Matruvani' is a monthly Prasad from the Ashram (MAM).

16. **MATA AMRITANANDAMAYI DEVI**: Life and teachings of the Mother in Tamil.

17. **BHAJANAMRITAM** (Tamil): Containing 60 selected devotional songs in Tamil script.

18. **AMRITANANDAMAYI ASHTOTTARASHATANAMAMRITAM AND ASHTOTTARASHATANAMAVALI** (Sanskrit) - by Sri Ottur Unni Namboodiripad.

19. **AMRITANJALI** (in 15 volumes): Audio tapes (cassettes) containing inspiring, didactic devotional songs (see 'Bhajanmritam' - item No. 4) sung by the Mother and joined in chorus by her Ashramites.

20. **VIDEO CASSETTES:**

i) **'A Day with the Mother'** and **'Amritsagar'**: The daily routine activities of the Ashram and the participation of the Mother and the Ashramites. 'Amritsagar' is an audio-visual presentation of some of the sayings of the Mother.

ii) **'The First World Tour'**: Glimpses of the Mother's first world tour from May 15, 1987, to August 10, 1987 when she visited USA and some of the European Countries.

21. **PHOTOGRAPHS** (both in colour and black and white) in different sizes; also available: lockets, key-chains etc. etc...

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* Further particulars about Mata Amritanandamayi Mission (MAM) and its Publications can be had of:-

The Secretary,
MAM,
Parayakadavu,
(Vallikkavu)
Kuzhithura P.O.,
Via Adinad,
Quilon District,
Kerala - 690 542,
India.
(Tel: Vallikkavu 78, Karunagapalli Exch.)

* MAM Publications are also available with:-

- 1) Sri K. V. Sadanand,
No. 26, First Main,
Trustpuram,
Kodambakkam,
Madras - 600 024.
(Tel: 447033)
- 2) Sri S. R. Seshan,
No. 43, Railway Station Road,
(near Post Office),
Kodambakkam,
Madras - 600 024.

* In USA:-

Bri. Kusuma,
Mata Amritanandamayi Centre,
1182-B, Market Street,
No. 661, San Francisco,
CA 94102
U.S.A.
(Tel: 415-524-2029)

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ROUTE MAP

Indicating access to
MATA AMRITANANDAMAYI MISSION

