

CONTENTS

Foreword	vii
Preface.....	ix
Introduction.....	xi
A Divine Child.....	1
An Uncommon Girl.....	4
A Bride at Thirteen.....	8
The Manifestation of 'Ma'.....	12
Self-initiation by Ma.....	17
Bees to the Lotus.....	21
Three Beloved Devotees.....	24
Transformation during Kirtan.....	27
Two Miracles.....	29

Nine Grains of Rice.....	31
Ma performs Namaaz.....	33
The Advent of Anandamayi Ma.....	35
A Farewell to Bengal.....	40
Sojourn in the Himalayas.....	43
In the Abode of Shiva.....	50
The Kumbh Mela of Haridwar.....	53
The Wandering Pilgrims.....	55
Ma meets Mahatma Gandhi.....	58
In the Company of Sadhus.....	60
The Savitri Mahayajna.....	62
In the Presence of Grace.....	64
Teaching by Example.....	67
The Helping Hand of Ma.....	70
The Call of the Unmanifest.....	75
Words of Wisdom from Ma.....	79
Ma's Good Work Continues.....	85
New Incidents come to Light.....	87
My Memories of Ma.....	97
Ashrams of Anandamayi Ma.....	109
Glossary.....	111

FOREWORD

Who is Anandamayi Ma, and how do we write about her?
Ma is the Mother of All.

For six consecutive years (1976-1982), I lived and moved in Ma's Presence. During this entire period, there was not a single moment when I perceived Ma as a simple human being, but always beheld her as a living, human manifestation of complete and perfect divinity.

An American disciple of Ma, Swami Mangalananda has lived in our ashram in India for many years. He has performed an invaluable service in writing this brief and readable account of the events of Ma's life.

Ma's spiritual message is that: 'All is One; we have gathered here on earth not to quarrel, but to make the best use of our existence, to make our lives meaningful by realising Truth.'

By reading the pages of this book, you will not be reading the life of a historical character alien to yourself, but you will have literally begun the discovery of your own deeper self. When you finish this book, you will undoubtedly feel an unknown urge arising from the innermost recesses of your heart to be one with Ma. This will lead you to your real destiny and be a lamp shining on your path to the fulfillment of the very purpose of the evolutionary process. At its conclusion, it will be seen that the path, the struggle, and the goal are all none other than Ma herself, the Divine Supreme.

Jai Ma!

– Swami Kedarnath
Mata Anandamayi Tapo Bhumi,
Omkareshwar,
Madhya Pradesh, India.

PREFACE

There are many authoritative and well-written books about the life and teachings of Anandamayi Ma. But, all the existing books are rather voluminous and are available only from a limited number of sources.

What was lacking was a brief biography that included the high points of Ma's life, with a few suitable pictures. Such a book could be priced fairly, distributed widely, read quickly, and would, hopefully, serve to acquaint people with the divine life of Anandamayi Ma. If anyone wanted to know more, there was always the standard literature one could acquire. It is hoped that this short biography, written specifically at the request of the devotees of our ashram, will fulfill this need.

To some extent, almost all biographies reflect the subjective views of the author, and this book is certainly no exception.

It is not meant to be a reference book, but an informal introduction to a divine and inspiring life that should never be forgotten.

Although the life of Anandamayi Ma is filled with supernatural and miraculous events, it is not the life of a legendary figure of some bygone era, embellished with fanciful folk tales handed down from generation to generation. Many people living today, including the author, witnessed the events recounted in the books written on her life. Most of these are drawn from the personal accounts of friends, relatives and other witnesses who experienced these incidents and occurrences for themselves. May all who had the grace of meeting Ma, continue doing everything possible to keep her memory alive and teachings relevant for succeeding generations, so that this unique entity who came among us, may continue to influence and uplift the human race.

– Swami Mangalananda
Mata Anandamayi Tapo Bhumi,
Omkareshwar,
Madhya Pradesh, India.

INTRODUCTION

Throughout the history of humankind, great saints and sages have come to spread the light of spirituality in a darkened world. In India, it is believed that God Himself has incarnated or appeared many times to restore victory of good over evil, re-establish the Path of Righteousness, and guide humanity to the revelation of its innate divinity.

Anandamayi Ma was often asked the pertinent question, “Who are you?” She would reply to this question, at different times, in different ways. She once told a very close disciple, *“I am the vyakta rupa of the pure aspiration of all true spiritual aspirants. You called for this body, and now you have it among you.”* By this definition, we see that Ma belongs to all who feel an inner yearning for the Divine, and she came for all of us. To know and study her life is of great importance and significance.

Many times, Ma stressed that the manifestation of her birth was not a result of *karma*, as is the case of a soul trapped in relativity. We are bound by our karma and by the destiny we have to fulfill. Ma was a completely 'free' being, and her every action and word was an expression of this freedom and divinity. Therefore, every minute detail of her life bears a moral lesson. Those who saw her felt that every movement of her body was a divine expression of sublime beauty and grace.

Ma frequently said that everything she did was for all of us. The *lila* that she performed on the world stage was for all those who had joined their minds and hearts to hers. She became a repository of all spiritual blessings and powers, and still is, to those who know of her and think of her.

Ma also said that no one could think of her unless she first thinks of them. Therefore, in the knowing of her life, and in thinking of her divine *lila*, we tune in to all her virtues and perfection for the blessing and upliftment of our own hearts and lives. The more we know about her life and teachings, the more that eternal life lives in us, and her words can constantly guide our actions in the difficult times we live in.



Anandamayi as the young Nirmala Sundari Devi



A DIVINE CHILD

On 30th April, 1896, a beautiful girl-child was born at Kheora village, in the Tripura district of East Bengal (now Bangladesh). Her family traced its descent from *Rishi* Kashyapa, who was a devout worshipper of Lord Vishnu. Her mother, Mokshada Sundari Devi, the embodiment of simple and pure virtues, would play an important role in the child's later manifestation as *Ma*. She was affectionately addressed as *Didima*. Before the birth of this child, she had many visions of gods, goddesses, and the divine light that entered into her.

The child's father, Bipin Bihari Bhattacharya, was a very religious and otherworldly man, who spent his days singing the praises of God in a sweet, soul-stirring voice. Sometimes, he would stay absent for months at a time, wandering as a penniless mendicant, singing *bhajans* and practicing spiritual discipline.

The child was named Nirmala Sundari Devi, which means ‘goddess of flawless beauty’. In later years, Ma always stressed that she has always been the same. “*As I was at birth, and as a child, so am I now.*” Didima said that at birth she never uttered a cry, but was very peaceful, radiant and possessed full consciousness. She later amazed people by recalling the names of those who were present at her birth, and of events that occurred in her early years.

The first sign that her mother had of her supernatural identity came when the child was just a few months old. One day, as Nirmala lay in her crib and Didima was going about her household chores, she noticed that a *sadhu* with a radiant face and long, matted locks was standing before the crib with folded hands. He addressed the mother and said, “This is no ordinary child, and she will not be confined within an ordinary life. This is none other than the ‘Mother’ of the whole world!” After giving his blessing he walked out of the door and when Didima looked out after him, he was nowhere to be seen.

The small child grew into a sweet-natured and friendly little girl. The second dominant trait in her life was also noticed during childhood. She never had a desire of her own or moved to fulfill any personal wish. If left to herself, she reposed blissfully contented in her own self. What motivated all her actions and movements during childhood and throughout her life, were the desires and needs of others. It was seen that the young Nirmala was always at hand to serve and help others. Transcending all social and caste barriers, she was loved by everyone in the village.

The child's favourite playmate was her grandmother, known affectionately as *Thakurma*. This elderly lady would occasionally be surprised when the little girl would, with scholarly precision, correct the Sanskrit in a *sloka* that she was reciting. On one occasion, little Nirmala showed Thakurma the correct and intricate *mudras* to be performed during puja. Another time, while the two were playing together, Thakurma, after an intense and penetrating look from young Nirmala, went into a deep, inner state of *samadhi*.

At the age of four, Nirmala was taken to a *kirtan* in the village. During the chanting of the holy names, she became so engrossed in a deep inner *bhav*, that tears started streaming from her eyes.