

MA ANANDAMAYEE
AMRIT VARTA

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

VOL.-9

October, 2005

No. 4

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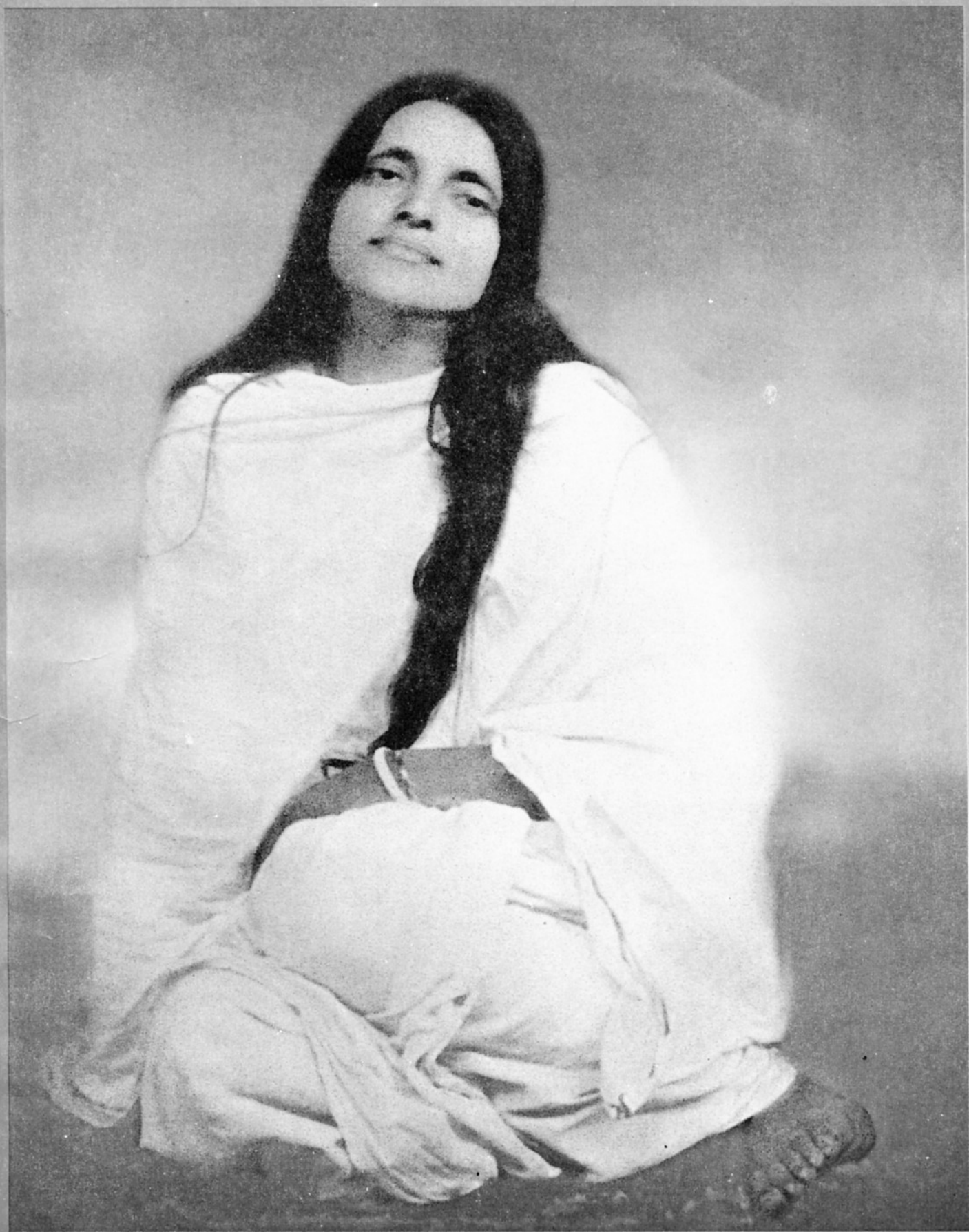
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MATRI VANI

The intense desire for God-realization is itself the way to it.

* * * * *

When you leave everything to Him who is the Fountain of Peace, then only is there hope of peace.

* * * * *

Be anchored in fearlessness. What is worldly life but fear ! When you live in the stronghold of fear, must you not be afraid ? It is futile to expect fearlessness there.

That you may be delivered from all sorrow you should endeavour to seek refuge in God alone.

* * * * *

This is the time to mould yourself. You will have to resort to renunciation and fortitude. So as to be released from the evil propensities acquired in previous lives which lead to pain and suffering, try to make your mind the consecrated shrine of the All-Good (*Sadbhāva*) and desirelessness. The first thing is to feel drawn towards God.

Be unflinching in service. Whatever has to be done for anyone, do it in a spirit of service.

There is yet another matter to which special attention must be paid: sloth has to be abandoned altogether. Where it is a question of good work (*Satkarma*), disinclination and lethargy have to be completely ruled out. The difficulties that may arise when doing anyone a service should be borne cheerfully.

* * * * *

Invoke Him, rely upon Him. Wherever you may be you are in His arms. If happiness is to be found in this world you have to aspire to God-realization.

What worldly life is, you have seen: day in and day out one is immersed in an ocean of misery. This is what is called *Samsāra* (Life in the world).

* * * * *

Through the stream of Godly thoughts lies the path that leads to the destruction of *Karma*. So long as the goal has not been reached, one is bound to reap the consequences of right action, wrong action and inaction according to *Karma*, the law of cause and effect.

* * * * *

Losing hope is losing all indeed. But has this loss of everything occurred ? Is not the heart bubbling over with desires and hopes ? This is only natural - it is the innate tendency of the individual.

Perfect resignation gives deeper joy than anything else. Accept it as your sole refuge. Whatever God does at any time is wholly benign. If you can bear this in mind you will be at peace.

* * * * *

The more time is devoted to the thought of God the greater the gain. Where worldly life is, there is want: this is its very nature. If- with or without inclination - you can keep your mind consecrated to His Feet, there is promise of peace.

* * * * *

To expect peace from worldly life is in vain. Try to live exclusively in His presence and do all service from a sense of duty. The world is certainly not an abode of happiness. The sole hope of peace is to take refuge at the Feet of God.

* * * * *

Keep your thought on Divine things (*Hari Katha*). To surrender mind and heart and body to Him who is their Lord gives peace; but to expect peace from the world will of a certainty bring sorrow in its wake. Try to live a life of holiness and asceticism, that is, abide in a state of Godliness and virtue. Why dissipate mind and body by useless worry ? What He does - whatsoever - is all for the best. Why, by harbouring only longings and desires invite sorrow ? In whatever circumstances you may be placed, reflect thus: " It is all right, it was necessary for me; this is His way of drawing me close to His Feet"; and try to remain content.

By Him alone should your heart be possessed.



THE REAL OBJECTIVE OF HUMAN LIFE

—Sri Virajanandaji Maharaj

The objective of human life is to realise the 'Self'. This can be regarded as the theme of knowledge for any aspirant of this path. The objective here being the 'Self' yet ever unknown that a riddle which can never be solved by the self. Guidance from somewhere becomes an absolute need. Here comes the role of a Guru, i.e. only a guidance of Guru can lead to know the 'Self'.

The riddle is obvious, a 'Self' is ever known to the self, all the same, it remains ever in the darkness. In short, The guidance of a Guru is absolutely sought for to solve this riddle. What is 'sadhana'? It is nothing but to act in obedience to the guidance of the Guru to the letter. In our institution, one has been most lucky to be carried to the feet of a personality who is not only a guide but the objective itself, something unique combination not usually heard of. With a small note above we should therefore have a firm determination to follow Her words without question and there should not be any deviation or hesitation or question to doubt such guidance, i.e. as unflinching obedience to which we shall move ahead.

However, a human mind in the world is always unsettled in its query to settle down. In this helpless situation, it can never remain steady on any solution ever remaining in the darkness in absence of that it can hide for the time being without realising the Guru's guidance is the only way for such solution, he is ever on a move to seek one or the other way. Evidently a movement in the darkness the light remaining far far away ever.

Without realising the importance of Guru's guidance, the only way to lead to the objective, a human mind is to qualify his guidance under a mundane light of intelligence. That is to say, an interpretation of the guidance in his intellectual understanding. This sort of understanding remains ever a movement in the whirlpool. The problem remaining ever unsolved, i.e. we create problem after problem in following our intellectual understanding failing to realise Guru's guidance.

Here is a small episode narrating such helpless pursuit ultimately leading to worldly confusion and never to lead to any solution. Lord Buddha's brother and sewak 'Anand' prayed to the Lord to accept Buddha's foster mother "Parajita" with ascetic order. Buddha tried to make 'Anand' understand, "This was not a right pleading to accept a woman with the association of man in sadhana. All the same, conceded to your pleading knowing fully well the course of events will one day

speaking for itself that the life of Buddhism by this act of surrender will be reduced by 500 years' and it did happen so. With this small deliberation as above, should we still insist on moving against the principle as laid by 'Ma' for an ascetic, i.e. a sadhu or a Brahmachari should not insist on any act or suggestion which will go straight across against Ma's firm directives. Once we give indulgence to such liberty, i.e. to liberalise the Guru's words to suit our own way, it will clearly open a downfall path. By stages, as we shall continue to move like that, one fine morning we will find that we have lost all our values and we have been far away to redeem the same. So, if the above picture is truly realised should we not make a determined effort to follow Ma's words as ever and ever and never to make any foolish attempt to make our mundane suggestion to dilute the above ideology and distract ourselves to a destination ever remaining far far away from the destination desired.

We have tried to impress that sadhana is nothing but to follow Guru's words. However, sadhana as such what it is. Ma says sadhana means to regain *sva-dhan* i.e. self wealth. The very word we gain clearly points out that we have lost our wealth already. Here the word self wealth signifies 'Self' the only wealth means the permanent asset i.e. on reality. Does it mean our reality can ever be lost? It is not really but drawn under a cover which has got to be removed. The cover means action of diverse *gunas* to which a *Jiva* has been made a slave to regain his mastery. A *Jiva* has got to conquer over the forces of his *gunas*. This conquest implies various actions and behaviours in life to have a command over these negative forces. These actions are various in their method and application in every behaviour, thinking, moving, eating etc. in our daily actions and thinking. That is to say our way of life has got to be disciplined in every phase of activity, thinking, eating, moving etc.

In the land where these things are obeyed and practised since very very long past as an atmosphere of its own which is conducive to imbibe such qualities by living in the same land itself. So it is called a *Yoga Bhumi*. The reverse is called a *Bhoga Bhumi* where all sorts of mundane enjoyment freely is the way of life. (So it is called a *Bhoga Bhumi*). In this *Bhoga Bhumi* one has become a slave to propensities, i.e. 'eat, drink and be merry only'. Here the importance of *samyam* is hardly understood. A *bhoga*, i.e. physical enjoyment with no restraint whatsoever gradually makes one to lose the power of developing a spiritual understanding at all. He is now in a state of to be a slave only of mundane enjoyment and ultimately leads to a frustrated life without any mooring. The objective of life is never understood and lost as ever. Therefore, one lost totally under the forces of *bhoga* can

never gain the spiritual wealth and ever remains a poor, i.e. all joy of life lost, whereas in *Yoga Bhumi* a poor is rich ever having in possession of *Samyam* (spiritual discipline). i.e. gaining and developing his own spiritual power that only helps to gain his self wealth.

In any case, to regain the spiritual wealth, one under the clutches of mundane power can never be its master by his own effort only. Here the need of *Guru Shakti* coming to play is essential, i.e. the extrovert forces cannot be totally overcome by self will. The pattern of such a person has got to be changed creating a field of its own where his own *shakti* can be unfolded. This is what is the help of Guru that makes it possible. His self *shakti* as an active force now helps a *Jiva* to overcome these exterior forces and discover his own *shakti* (power) to move aiming at the objective, i.e. a counter force against the mundane forces. This is called an arrest of *Abhāb Gati* (i.e. a mundane movement to enjoy objects of senses without end) even in infinite births. This is only possible to arrest this *Abhāb Gati* (i.e. movement to the world of sense object).

In *Bhoga Bhumi* one is in fact a slave of propensities, all the same, be considered himself an independent personality. This illusion is only realised in course of time when one is completely a slave of *bhogas* and lost all possibilities to redeem the same. That is to say, enjoyment of senses leads to a total loss, whereas a *samyam* helps one to gain a mastery over all sense objects and ultimately his life becomes one pointed life. Ma says this is the stage where one has shaped in the form of a *sadhaka* i.e. he remains fixed with his own objective only and illusive world is completely dropped. This is the stage where *sadhana* develops to take place by itself which Ma emphasises the effort of doing of *sadhana* would lead to *sadhana* taking place by itself. The purpose of life is on the way to regain its wealth completely. This is what is called to be in the stream of '*Swabhava* (*Swabhāvagati*).



THE DIVINE MOTHER

— Dr. Premlata Srivastav

[Continued from before]

Ma's *Sādhan Leelā* (1918-1924)

The history of Ma's deep religious practices can be understood only by the sayings that have emanated from Her lips on different occasions in some context or the other. I have tried to knit them together.

Bajitpur was the main centre of Her sadhana where she came with Bholanath in 1918. By and large the sole witness of this wonderful leela of Sadhana on Ma's body was Bholanath together with only few lucky ones who had the glimpses of this leela.

On being asked whether Bholanath could understand the happenings, Ma said—"How he could ? Until one reaches to that stage".

Ma's sadhana has been described as Her *Leela* because of two reasons. Firstly, this illustrated Her '*Kheyala*' and secondly, this whole drama took place on Her body in its own way automatically, effortlessly and with no intention of Her own. She used to watch in silence, she being only a passive participant, "what an unique unparallel experience' she has said.

Thus in Ma's case—it is "Realisation of the Self by the Self."

Her days during sadhana were not divided into morning, evening and nights. There was only one prolonged period of indescribable bliss.

Evidence of sadhana, its ascendance to higher planes for the realisation of the self or God have no meaning in Ma's sadhana *leela*. For Her, *Sādhak*, *Sādhyā* and *Sadhana* are one and one only. It is unique in its own way.

In Ma's words—"It is like one reads a book already read or revisits a place once visited. This sadhana was nothing more than a 'play'. One day while bathing in a pond this body had a '*kheyal*' to play the role of a *sadhak*, and that is how it all started."

In Ma's words "this body has not followed only one particular line of sadhana but has covered all the known lines. It has passed through all the different varieties of practises referred to by the sages of ancient times. In order to attain to a particular

stage along one of these lines of sadhana an ordinary individual may have to be born again and again, but in the case of this body it was a matter of few seconds."

During those days Ma had an unusual life style. After finishing Her daily household work with care and concern she would scrupulously clean the surrounding area, then she would go round the place with incense likening the place to a temple. Then she would sit (it used to be night by that time) in the corner of Her room for daily puja without a break. The various pujas and asanas would start automatically. Bholanath used to watch awfully lying on his bed. And what did he see in the dim light of the room ? Ma was sitting inert like a statue and suddenly Her limbs would be in brisk motion. Her body would perform various *asanas* and *mudras* in quick succession. Her complexion also changed from time to time. Quite often Her respiration assumed frightening proportions and occasionally it appeared she had fainted. A solitary spectator to all these nerve-racking transformations repeated night after night Bholanath knew not what to do ?

Ma's image as a forceful religious personality thus began to blossom as that of a newly wed bride gradually went into oblivion.

Watching the effect of *Harinaam* on Her, one day, Bholanath asked—"why do you chant Hari-Hari" all the time ? We are *shaktas*, this is not proper, he objected.

Then what ? Ma sprang back like a child, should I then repeat "Jai Shiva Shankara Bom Bom Hara Hara" ?

Yes, this is alright, Bholanath opined. Ma explained later that she felt the same kind of happiness with the changed call for God as Hari and Har are one and the same. When I prayed with my heart and soul into it an unparalleled undescrivable joy descended on this body. The initiation was yet to be done so the effect whatsoever was due to the repetition of '*Naam*' alone."

Narrating the *leela* of Her sadhana once she has said "this body has experienced so varied stages, so diverse and extreme in their nature that words fall short to explain them. In general stages do occur and last in *sadhakas*, but here it is all different. "

She further clarified- "As long as you are in different stages so long only the levels exist. After that it is just like moving in a lift. There you cease to exercise your will power. You only remain a witness of the show."

She said "As seeds are planted and pressed into the soil for saplings to come out, likewise during sadhana it is to be kept as a guarded secret otherwise many invisible and indirect hurdles come in the way."

Elaborating on the point Ma said 'Secrecy then was absolutely necessary. There are *kriyas* of sadhana which are required to be exercised in private. The different forms of sadhana were not meant for this body but are meant for you all. When you relate your spiritual experiences to me, I often say that this body had those experiences and that is how it knows what they are. Not only that if anyone discloses to this body a specific line of sadhana it can describe in minute details the various stages of that very line."

During those days of sadhana different *mantras*, and seeds used to come out of their own from this body's mouth. Now I hear from you people that in ancient days *mantras* used to be automatically pronounced by Rishis. How enchanting are these *mantras*, their form and their meaning and respectively different manifestations through human bodies. Even breathing turns different with the chanting of different *mantras*."

Further she said "Even different *asanas* and *mudras* were performed spontaneously. This body never knew about what are *asanas* and *mudras* or how they are performed ?

Sri A. K. Dutta Gupta has very well recorded Her sayings in this context.

"Sometime I would hear distinctly 'repeat this mantra', when I got the *mantra*, a query came to my mind whose *mantra* is this ? At once the reply came. Again how does it look ? A form was revealed to me in no time."

"While sitting for yagna fingers will automatically draw the *mandal* on the floor. No formal arrangement for the puja was made, yet this body spontaneously reacted to the rituals."

Ma said "while in the fifth month of sadhana a time had come when everything around this world appeared to cry and pray to show them the way to spiritual bliss. They all prayed, even the dry wood. And not only that, even 'exercises' would take the shape of an image and will go bidding good bye to this body."

She once mentioned, "one day when the various effects of sadhana were evident she had noticed a glow around Her body. The glow was so bright that she could easily walk in pitch dark with its illumination."

"At one time this body was a frail slender frame because of the '*Kheyal*' like sages do extreme austere meditation *Krichha sadhana*, this body also went through such sadhanas to retain only the skin and bones."

During the period when Ma's body was devoted to sadhan *leela* it is learnt that even a scratch on the bark of a tree would cause pain to Her body.

"As it happened sometime people were scared to see this body seated with eyes upturned, looking indifferent with tongue protruding out, the hands and elbows looking different from each other."

During talks with Mahamahopadhyaya Pandit Gopinath Kaviraj some illuminating utterances welled up from Ma.

"Look in the case of a sadhaka there is aspiration towards a goal, but here there is no question of goal or aim. Every artery, vein and nerve, their functioning and vibration are clearly seen just as when somebody in a darkroom holds a lamp in his hand and throws light on every object one by one exactly like this. But for the sadhaka who is still on the path it is impossible to perceive in this manner. He has to advance, overcoming various kinds of obstacles. Baba, here there is no question of this. Here the artery is myself, the vein myself and the observer myself. Of course when saying 'myself' it is because some word has to be used."

Someone asked Ma, "though you were bestowed with supreme knowledge since birth the sadhana *leela* has dawned upon you. During that stage in what form did the complete fulfilment of sadhana take place ?

Ma said, "It happened in Dhaka (at present capital of Bangla Desh) but in what form it happened I am not able to describe now. Completeness or manifestation of it can be said to be the culmination of sadhana." She paused for a moment and then said—

"There is a stage in sadhana where answers to any query would come out spontaneously. At that stage, it is possible to speak on any subject with conviction. This body had no formal education, leave alone the method of following or imitating. Baba, you have not taught this little daughter of yours to read or write. What is said therefore is spontaneous and true."

It is for you to see and understand the beginning of complete fulfilment and enlightenment."

Asked whether all these stages are mentioned in the scriptures Ma said, "How many of these can be mentioned ? Like time table only the important ones are noted. If you walk down the road you will find many more things. Scriptures give only the broad indications."

In the month of Dec', 1922 Ma all of a sudden took *mauna* (complete silence), not any normal reticence but a severe absension. She would speak to Bholanath or to somebody else when it was absolutely necessary. She would draw a circle with the index finger of Her right hand. Then *mantras* will gush out from within and she

could now speak. Again after the talks she would pronounce *mantras*, wipe out the drawn circle and once again she would turn *mauna*. However this was not a regular feature.

(c) Meals during Sadhana

'My food is dedicated lives', Ma once said. In Ma's words, "During sadhana this body had hardly taken water from a glass in full. Years after years passed without taking breakfast or full meal. No bath, no breakfasts, no meals. Now for the sake of keeping up the routine to satisfy you people, it is taken."

Ma once explained—

"Once this body lived on three grains of rice daily for 4-5 months. Nobody can live for so long a time on such a meagre diet. It looks like a miracle. But it has been so with this body, because it can be so. The reason for this is that what we eat is not at all necessary for us. The body takes in only the quintessence of the food, the rest is thrown out".

"As a result of sadhana the body becomes so constituted that though no food is taken physically, it can imbibe from the surroundings whatever is necessary for its subsistence..... secondly one can live on air alone, in everything there are all other things. So that the properties of other things (edibles) are in the air in some measure. Therefore by taking in air alone we get the essence of other things."

"Again, it may so happen that body is not taking anything at all, yet it is being maintained unimpaired as in a state of samadhi. So as a consequence of sadhana it is quite possible to live without what we call food. In a similar way, sadhana can effect such transformations of the body that by virtue of it any part of it can discharge the function of the eye."

In 1924, when Ma came to Dhaka, she used to take three morsels of food with drinking water twice a day. Gradually, she restricted this intake to only Mondays and Thursdays. On the rest five days, she would eat just nine, three or five grains of boiled rice. However, on persistent request of Her followers, Ma has at times broken this schedule. Once during *Amavasya* Pratul—the son of Pramath Nath—dedicated '*bhog*' (a feast) to Ma at Shahbag. Ma accepted it and thus began the practice of dedicating '*bhog*' in the name of 'Ma' during *Amavasya* by Her followers.

Bholanath's nephew Amulya had just got employment during those days. He arranged special puja and '*bhog*' out of his first salary. This also became a tradition. Much later, at Kashi Ashram, Ma narrated these incidents and said, the pujas and *bhog* during *Purnima* and *Amavasya*'s are continuing since those days.

In 1924, Bholanath noticed that Ma was not able to feed Herself properly as Her hand would not lift and reach the mouth which had to be lowered in the process, creating difficulties for Ma. Bholanath himself decided to feed Her instead. Later, Didi also got this opportunity frequently.

Once Ma had a *Kheyal*. She would take only three grains of rice as meal. If there were four grains, it would automatically come out Her mouth. For some days, she would eat only as much as one could feed Her in a single breath. That would be Her quota for the next 24 hours, she won't even drink water after that.

During Her stay in Shahbag, for some days, she ate only those fruits which, upon ripening, fell from trees in the adjoining garden, which had mostly Mango and Lichi trees. Incidentally, when she resorted to this practice, it was no season for these fruits. Hence, Ma's wish to skip meals would naturally be fulfilled. She had an uncanny knack of following systems and she made others follow them too.

Thus many of Her sadhana *leelas* were such extreme changes in food habit. Sometime very little intake; total abstension, and also occasion of overeating. Once she abstained from drinking water for 13 days at a stretch, on another occasion, she did the same for 23 days and to the point of not even washing Her mouth with water.

Ma said, "Realising that use of water was being forgotten, this body once again started normally to bring a balance."

Once, after abstaining from meals for six months, she resumed it to eat cooked rice and vegetables meant for 7-8 people.

In 1925, Bholanath's sister came to their place to spend Christmas holidays. Wishing to prepare *kheer* for Ma. She cooked 20 litres of milk for the dish. On that day Ma was supposed to be fasting. On Bholanath's request, Ma agreed and that lo and behold, she took all the *kheer* made of 20 litres of milk. *Kheer* was prepared again and Ma quickly finished that too.

On another occasion, Bhaiji (Late Sri Jyotish Chandra Roy), quietly supplied *ghee* and *maida* to serve Ma with *pooris* at mealtime. Accepting the food for a few days, Ma suddenly changed mind. On that day, she asked *pooris* to be made of the entire *maida* and *ghee* in stock. And in Her charismatic gesture, Ma ate all the *poories*—60 to 70 pieces—and said: "If this body eats this way daily all your money put together will prove insufficient. This body will not go on like this."

Didi used to say, "Ma would unconsciously eat everything including the skin and seeds of fruits unless foretold about."

Habitually, Ma hadan extremely simple and little diet. However, despite this, nobody has even found Her weak or weary.

Ma remembered once that while in Kashi a tiny brass container with lid was bought. Bholanath would eat the rice cooked in the fire of Yagna at Shahbag while for Ma, Didima would put little rice dal and vegetable in that tiny container and drop it in the big utensil in which rice, for Bholanath and others were cooked. Ma would remain on fast the whole day. Only after dusk, she would take whatever she wished from that tiny container. This became a routine for several months.

(d) Sri Ma's Spiritual Initiation (*DIKSHA*) Bajitpur, 1922

Sri Ma, Herself recounted Her initiation ceremony on devotee's request. I may be pardoned by Sri Ma for any error in interpreting and writing about that solemn occasion.

This particular *leela* of Sri Ma is as incredible as it is astounding.

Diksha is a sacred ritual, requiring *Guru, Sisya* and *Ishta—Beej Mantra*. Here Ma alone is *Guru, Sisya* and *Ishta*.

Ma has emphatically mentioned that at no stage she was in need of a Guru or initiation, so what is the meaning of *diksha* to Her?

'He who is the Guru, is also the *shishya* (disciple).

On 3rd of August, 1922 (Jhulan Purnima or Rakhi Purnima) the spiritual initiation of Sri Ma took place between 10-12 at night all by Herself. In Ma's words—

"On that special Jhulan Purnima day, this body was unusually placid since morning. After finishing all the day's household chores this body sat in a corner of the bedroom at night fall for daily worship. *Asanas* and *mudras* started all by itself. Requirements for the Puja were not procured from outside. Rather they were brought out from within and arranged in order. Although nobody could have visualised this, there was no doubt of the offerings present. In between all these activities this body was a silent spectator, nothing was done intently.

"Try to visualise about Guru in the same way as God and Goddesses appeared from this body during puja and faded back into the body after the rituals.

After the puja and lighting of the pious fire in brief took place, many rituals started spontaneously. Fingers automatically drawing a mystic design (*yantra*) on the floor. This body never before knew what is *yantra* and how to draw. The *yantra* thus drawn conformed to the requirements laid down in the scriptures.

Awakening of the *Beeja Mantra* took place within Herself and it welled out from Her lips leaving distinct visible impression in writing by Her fingers inside the *yantra* already drawn. In Ma's words:

"The ritualistic prayer was also done spontaneously of its own. Instead of repetition of name (*Naam*) *Beeja Mantra* now started. Slowly the fingers started

responding to 'japa'. Puja in tune with japa was held non-stop. Several Gods and Goddesses were worshipped. They would come out of this body and after the Puja was over, they will again go back inside the body. Specific requirements for specific pujas were offered. Even the *namaskar* used to be in a specific posture instantaneously. Prayers and *Mantras* were more distinctly pronounced than before."

So after the initiation, the spiritual exercises grew more intense.

Ma's maternal cousin Nishi Babu, who happened to be there, witnessing Her doing Puja and evening prayers in a different style, one day, asked Bholanath why did not latter object to Her japa like this when she was yet to be initiated.

When Ma over heard this comment, she sprang out of Her usual calm and shy composure, and retorted—

"What do you want to say?" Repeated she, "What do you want to say?"

Nishi Babu: "How do you take these exercises? Have you been initiated?"

Ma: "Yes, I have been".

Nishi Bahu: "Who are you?"

Ma: "Purna Brahma Narayan".

Bholanath asked : "Who are you?"

Ma: "Maha Devi".

Later Ma explained the two different answers. 'Purna Brahma Narayan' came out first, but Ma being a lady they had-doubt. That is why Purna Brahma Narayani, Mahadevi etc. were pronounced later. There was a reason behind the pronouncement 'Mahadevi' At that time, the soul and body were in oneness for puja. That's why 'Mahadevi' was pronounced.

Nishi Babu said: What's the proof of you being Purna Brahma Narayan."

Instead of a clear answer a stream of *slokas* and *mantras* flowed eloquently from Ma's mouth. Ma asked Bholanath to be seated and then touched his '*Brahmatālu*' with Her right hand. The moment she touched him, Bholanath uttered "OM" and went into a deep, self absorbed meditation. He remained in that state for hours together. Bholanath's nephew, Ashu, became visibly scared. Janaki Babu and others requested Ma to bring Bholanath back to his normal self. Ma touched Bholanath's *Brahmatālu* again and he returned to normalcy instantly. Bholanath said, he was during this period, in a state of Supreme Bliss.

Nishi Babu asked Ma again, whether Ramani Babu was initiated. Ma replied "No. Not yet. It will happen after five months," She predicted even the date, day and time to the utter disbelief of Nishi babu. It was difficult for Nishi babu to comprehend how did Ma, an illiterate village woman, know about calculation of

time according to stars, movement. In fact, he knew little about this method and he confessed his ignorance to Her.

Ma asked him to contact Janaki babu who, she said, would now be fishing in the pond. This was another shock for Nishi Babu, as the pond was not close by, it was well out of sight from that place and secondly, Janaki Babu was supposed to be at his office during that time. But infact Janakibabu was there. When Nishibabu went to him and got the details about Ma's calculations of Ramani Babu's date of initiation, it was found correct.

(e) Bholanath's *DIKSHĀ*

When Bholanath heard about this, he decided not to take it on that day. He usually took his breakfast before going to office. On that fateful day, however, he left for office early without taking his breakfast, fearing to be held up on that pretext and compelled to take Diksha.

Meanwhile, the auspicious moment for the initiation ceremony was imminent. Ma sent somebody for Bholanath at his office, the collectorate. Bholanath first refused straightaway. But on second thought that Ma might Herself drop in, Bholanath preferred to return home.

Ma was taking a stroll at that time and *mantra* and *stotras* were being pronounced by Her. Ma asked Bholanath to bathe. When Bholanath came back after the bath and took his seat a *Beeja Mantra* came out of Sri Ma's lips. Bholanath on Ma's instruction brought his ear closer to Ma and he was told to repeat that *mantra*. In this manner, Bholanath's *diksha* took place at the time Ma ordained it, five months back.

In the annals of *Matri leela*, this was a unique example of '*Mantra diksha*'. The second example was that of Bhairji's *diksha* with Sanyasa mantra on the banks of the holy Mansarovar near Mount Kailash in 1937.

[To continue]

AFTER THE FIRST MEETING

—A European devotee

[Continued from before]

For the next 6 months I remained at Sri Ramanasramam, but once again by early July, 1973 I found I could at last go to meet her again. A couple of days before leaving for Kankhal - where I heard she would be for Guru Purnima - I had a dream that Ma would be in a place called "Rajgir". This seemed a strange name but I did find out that Ma had an ashram in Rajgir, near Varanasi; could this be the place?" Anyway I took the overnight mail flight to Delhi and was told that shared taxis could be hired near Kashmiri Gate. After waiting there a taxi became available and one of the other occupants was an old devotee of Sri Ma, Dr. Sen. The 5 hour journey passed quickly in the presence of the devotee. When we reached Kankhal we were soon ushered into Sri Ma's room for immediate darshan. This was unexpected to say the least, a result of being with this old devotee. We climbed the narrow stairs and there she was once more before me, a figure in spotless white, talking so sweetly to the people around. We took our leave and Dr Sen then offered to share a room with me and we visited several dharmasalas, but all were "full". He then told me they were "full" because they did not want to take a foreigner. This annoyed him but he was determined to find a place where we could both stay and we did find one near the Harki Pauri in Hardwar. It was enough - two string cots, a table and a "bath room", simply with a tap and bucket. The next day was Guru Purnima and being monsoon time it was cool and drizzling. Dr Sen kindly took me for a bath in the Ganga at the Harki Pauri and then we proceeded to Sri Ma's ashram in a cycle rickshaw. At that time only the old ashram buildings were there and I found one could sit in the courtyard under some upper floor rooms, which was where Ma stayed. So even though Ma was often not to be seen and one was waiting for hours, accompanied by a host of flies who sought refuge from the rain, actually one was very close to Sri Ma.

I found another quiet corner where I could sit undisturbed at the back of Didima's samadhi. On Guru Purnima day itself whilst there, I noticed that one of the ashramites came to sit nearby. Shortly after Sri Ma herself suddenly appeared and went to him holding a silver plate, which she wiped and then showed to him.

Soon he himself got up and left. I later came to realise that the plate was a mantra plate and Sri Ma had given him some sort of *diksha* by showing the mantra to him.

Nothing much else stands out in my memory during the 5 days of her visit except that Atmananda sang bhajans so beautifully one evening.

My plan had been to follow Sri Ma for some weeks and there were two Americans also with the same idea. However Ma was not saying where she was going after Kankhal. Atmananda tried very hard to find out for us but after she repeatedly asked the question Ma told her very firmly to keep quiet. All Ma would say was "wait until you hear". On the morning of Sri Ma's departure somehow I had been able to sit quietly outside her room upstairs. Coming in my mind again and again, I know not from where, were the insistent words "You must go to Rajgir, you must go to Rajgir, you must go to Rajgir". Ma left in the afternoon and a group formed round her as she sat on a chair on the station platform and we could all do pranam.

And then she left and there was nothing one could do but wait, and for how long? It was not an easy time as I had very little money and I used to visit the ashram daily, (which was almost empty after Ma's departure), and sit next to Didima's samadhi. After a few days of this I almost bought a ticket for Rajgir, but remembering Ma's words "wait until you hear", I could not bring myself to ignore her instructions. It later turned out that Ma had in fact gone to Rajgir and spent 3 quiet weeks in seclusion.

One of the Americans had remained in Kankhal also and at the end of 3 weeks we decided to go to Delhi so that we could travel more easily when news of Sri Ma's next move came. Soon it did-she was going to be in Ranchi, not too far from Rajgir, for Jhulan Purnima. We bought our rail tickets and then visited a Sufi saint, Rehana Tyabji (author of "Heart of a Gopi"), who was also very devoted to Sri Ma. We had an enjoyable talk with her in a darkened room. She gave sweets for Sri Ma. Then we went to the station. When we arrived we found to our great dismay that there was a rail strike and the railway staff were lying on the track to stop all trains. My heart sunk into my boots. The Americans had then decided to fly but I did not have enough money left for that. Had I now to go back South after waiting 3 weeks? Suddenly my woeful thoughts were disturbed by one of the Americans who offered to lend me money for the flight. Life became bright again and we made for Indian Airlines and were able to reserve flights for Ranchi on the next day.

We took off next morning and changed planes in Patna. The flight to Ranchi was on an ancient propeller plane, a Viscount. There was no air conditioning, and indeed no air, and for some reason the plane was waiting for at least 20 minutes on

the runway in the August sun - full of passengers. I have never perspired so much in my life! I was totally drenched. After that little experience we soon reached Ranchi and made for Sri Ma's ashram. We were told she would be arriving in about an hour and a half. And she did. After all the waiting we were with her again.

Ma's ashram had arranged accommodation for us at the nearby Self Realisation Fellowship ashram of Sri Yogananda. The inmates there were very fond of Sri Ma, and would visit her every day and she would accord them great hospitality, and indeed visited their ashram on one occasion. We three foreigners were given a comfortable room there in that lovely ashram.

There was tremendous excitement as many Bengali devotees had come from nearby Calcutta. Ma sat in the Kali temple of the ashram and all the ladies were doing "Ulla", the peculiar sound in the throat, made only by Bengali ladies on auspicious occasions. Ma was encouraging them with gestures into almost a Bengali frenzy ! Within a day or so we three foreigners were given a message from Sri Ma, that we could come for meditation to her room at 11 am. We had not asked for this but it had been in my mind. When we went upstairs to her room on the roof we were asked by Swami Bhaskarananda to sit in front of her, and she said in English "Five minutes", meaning 5 minutes for each of us, total 15 minutes. I remember the Bengali pronunciation clearly. I then remembered how I had overstayed my welcome in Poona; somehow Ma clearly did too! Whilst we were sitting before her my eyes were as it were being urged to open, but I kept them firmly closed. Later the others told me that they had opened their eyes and Ma had been looking at us in turn. When our time was up, we each had to pass right in front of Ma to leave, as the room was narrow. Ma's eyes were by then closed and I looked at the lids just before my face as I passed. Immediately her eye opened and we looked at each other. I remember her deep brown fathomless eyes.

Meanwhile I had taken some water to drink from the ashram tap, and it tasted so foul I spat it out almost immediately. I was told that in the monsoon season, with low water pressure, ground water with sewage etc quite often seeped back into the pipes. Anyway within a short time I had developed loose motions, a high temperature and splitting headache. I thought it might be typhoid. There was to be a late night program to celebrate Jhulan. Though I felt so ill I thought I would try to go, and sat near the back feeling miserable. Strangely enough at the end of the program I realised my fever and headache had left me. Still I went to the hospital and was prescribed Chloramphenicol, a powerful but weakening anti-typhoid drug, that is now banned.

