

ĀNANDA VĀRTĀ

*The Eternal, the Ātman—
Itself pilgrim and path of Immortality
Self contained—THAT is all in One.*

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Satsang means keeping company with the Lord who is Truth Itself. So long as you dwell in the company of the Wise and Holy, reflecting on Truth, listening to spiritual discourses—so long as you remain in this atmosphere—you are progressing on your pilgrimage toward Self-revelation.

—Sri Anandamayi Ma

* * *

Difficulties exist only so that you may become strong by overcoming them.

If you fail ten times, do not despair ; if you fail a hundred times, do not be disheartened ; if you fail a thousand times, rise up and march boldly. Failures are indeed stepping stones to success.

—Swami Sivananda

* * *

God has many ways of drawing us to Himself. He sometimes hides Himself from us ; but faith alone, which will not fail us in time of need, ought to be our support and the foundation of our confidence which must be all in God.

—Brother Lawrence



MĀTRI VĀNI

(Dictated by Sri Ma as letters in response to devotees' requests for personal advice and guidance.)

There is no need for him to do penance. The atonement has already been accomplished by his readiness to make amends. Tell him not to cause worry to anyone by worrying himself. Keeping one's thoughts centred in God puts an end to all worries and anxieties.

* * *

Often obstacles arise even while carrying out beneficial, auspicious work. But keep in mind, "I do not know by what method he attracts me to Himself. He is full of mercy, full of compassion and constantly floods me with His grace."

* * *

For direct perception of Truth to come about there must be vigilance, one's vision kept fully awake. Open wide the doors and windows of your house. Who can tell at what moment His touch may be felt in the heart.

* * *

Just as a child is after his mother even though she may be busy with other work ; even if he is slapped he vexes her again and again. Likewise one must never relax one's efforts to advance towards Realization. This is characteristic for a devotee : to pray again and again. There is no knowing at what moment the ONE will assume the shape of success.

* * *

Try to understand now what a human being's duty is ! Whatever anyone desires that indeed he receives : some choose to strive for self-realization, other prefer to remain in the ceaseless round of birth and rebirth and thus are subjected to blow after blow.

* * *

Having become a pilgrim towards God-realization one must resort to the *kriyā* (action) that will remove one's own obscuring veil. The One Himself has endowed man with this power and capacity. All the same, God cannot be revealed by human effort. He Himself provides the key for opening the door. That He is ever self-revealed will be seen when the door has been opened.

* * *

Human birth is a rare boon. Of all creatures the human being alone has the possibility to realize God. THAT alone is worthy of research—the Root-cause of all creation. When this profound mystery stands revealed, then everything is known, everything becomes possible in God's Kingdom. In His Kingdom the possible is impossible and the impossible possible.

* * *

In God's empire those who are anchored in truth are advancing towards Truth. For those who can speak the truth with a frank mind and a frank heart there is an easy, straight path to God. Telling lies and hypocrisy lead to sorrow, conflict and death. Man's duty is to aspire to Immortality : the scion of the Immortal must bring his own Immortality to light.

MĀTRI SATSANGA

Swami Bhagavatananda Giri

(Translated from Bengali)

After the conclusion of the Sanyamavrata in the New Delhi Ashram in 1957, Mataji remained in the Ashram for a few more days, and each night we had a wonderful opportunity of enjoying *Satsanga* with Mataji. I have tried to note down Sri Ma's exact words, but I cannot confirm with confidence that I have caught each and every word that emanated from Her lips.

In the *Devī Gītā* of the *Devī Bhāgavata* it is said, "In the whole universe who else is there but the Mother who can continue to put up with the errors the child commits at every step? Therefore all of you must take refuge with utmost devotion at the feet of the Supreme Mother. It is She who will fulfill the task you have undertaken."

New Delhi, 27/11/1957.

Devotees requested Sri Ma to sing kirtana, so She sang very melodiously in ever varying modulations :

"He *Bhagavān*, He *Bhagavān*. *Jñeya Bhagavān*, *Dhyeya Bhagavān*, *Śreya Bhagavān*, *Preya Bhagavān*, *Mangalamay He Bhagavān*, *Sāntimay He Bhagavān*, *Ānandamay He Bhagavān*, *Premamay He Bhagavān*."

The kirtana was so enchanting that all present started repeating in chorus after Sri Ma. The whole atmosphere became surcharged with divine love—as if all present were having *darśana* of the Lord. A heavenly joy was reflected on the faces of everyone.

Question : Ma, I should like to ask a question.

Mataji : What do you say ? Only one question remains, all the others have been answered ?

Question : I have heard that once upon a time, when you went to bathe in a pond. You felt like playing amidst its waters. You had the *kheyāla* to mingle with the water, becoming water yourself. Please explain how such a thing happened.

Mataji : In those times this sort of *bhāva*¹ (mood) used to arise. This body had then not heard any Scriptures. Nowadays of course, the speeches of mahātmās are being heard. It does not always occur to this body to listen. At that time I was a young woman in veils. We had not yet visited Dehradun and Raipur—long before that. In those days this body on occasions would dance in ecstasy at the sight of dense dark clouds. This body was then staying at Ramna Ashram, Dacca. The ashram was surrounded by fields. One day this body went to bathe in a pond. And there and then the *kheyāla* arose to mingle and become one with the water. In water 'this' (Mataji) was water, seeing waves it was waves, with the wind it was wind. Who is it that appears as water or wind ? HE and no other. In those days the play of various *sādhanās* was being enacted. Sometimes during kīrtana a *bhāva* would ensue in which this body would roll about like dry leaves being blown about by the breeze. Sometimes, as soon as this body sat in a yogic posture, yogic *kriyās* would start of their own. Now and then the whole body would

1 *bhāva*—Divine mood, also spiritual ecstasy, generally emotional in nature.

rise up. Then again this body would walk without touching the ground or even became invisible. Seeing all these strange happenings, Bholanath got frightened. This was the state of affairs in those days. On occasions, during kīrtana, such a mighty force would come into play that it became difficult to restrain this body even by application of considerable physical strength. People were afraid when taking part in kīrtana of what might or might not happen to this body. Didi once asked : "Ma, are you the same person as the one I saw in Dacca ?" In this manner were spent not a few days but year after year. It is difficult for people to believe all this.

Sometimes this body would hang by the index finger just a swing hangs from the boughs. At times there was such a powerful *bhāva* while singing kīrtana that this body would roll all over the room. In those days this body was clad only in a śārī which covered the whole body. Blouses were not worn by women of poor families. In winter as in summer nothing but a śārī used to be worn. This body's aunt once presented to me a black vest. Even while rolling about during kīrtana the śārī never slipped off. The Lord by singing whose name this sort of condition came about, protected this body through His name.

Chakrapāñiji Maharaj : In 1944, at the Triveni Sangam (Prayag) I witnessed such a *bhāva* of Ma. Her body was then rolling about during kīrtana.

Mataji : It was after several years, many years after leaving Dacca—that such a big kīrtana was

witnessed again. Thus a *bhāva* arose. It is not as if this may not occur again. If the *kheyāla* comes, it may take place even now. Bhaiji once asked me. "Why don't the *bhāvas* that used to come over you occur anymore? What has happened? All this must have come about during the period of your *sādhanā*. Once this stage has passed, perhaps such things do not occur anymore? Will they never be witnessed again?" This body told Bhaiji: "Why should'nt they?" Bhaiji replied: "The play of *sādhanā* proceeded stage by stage. Now this cannot be observed anymore, Can it be resumed? By sustained *sādhanā siddhi* (fulfilment) is attained. When by pursuing a particular line the goal is reached the play of *sādhanā* is over."

Question : Ma, why can't these states occur again ?

Mataji : This body talks in a topsyturvy fashion, being crazy, isn't it? This body maintains that by the protracted performance of worship a person may reach a condition where there is no more *triputi*, that is to say, the division into worshipper, object of worship and act of worship is obliterated. Then there are no more stages of existence. This here (Mataji) is only a tiny little child. When this body had the *kheyāla* to practise *sādhanā*, various *sādhanās* followed one after another. Even now, by a combination of favourable circumstances, such things may come to pass again. Everything is ever present. Just as when you were small you had to learn the A B C and later you appeared for the M. A. This capacity has remained with you. Even after passing M. A., can you not

write A B C ? THERE the question of higher and lower levels no longer exists. Some people say, "previously Ma used to be in exalted states of *bhāva*, now this is no longer the case ; so perhaps Ma has descended to a lower level ?" A few hold this opinion. Whatever anyone may say is all right. But there is no such thing as higher and lower levels.

Question : Well, Ma, please contrive to do something whereby we may become absorbed in *dhyāna* (meditation) !

Mataji : First of all you must sit down quietly. It is true that you all love this little girl. You have taken such pains to give her *darśana* in this manner. You are very gracious indeed.

Pandit Sundarlal : This is how you are deceiving us !

Question : Did you observe anything special during the meditation today ?

Mataji : Sometimes, when the *kheyāla* arises. I talk about it, but when the *kheyāla* is absent I say nothing. Something or other is always taking place in the presence of this body.

28th November, 1957

Question : Please tell us something about this Saṁyama Saptaha ! What was our meditation like ? What were our faults and failings ? Please elaborate !

Mataji : Haven't the mahātmās told you ?

Question : But we want to hear it from you !

Mataji : Words do not always come to this body. Neither does it deliver lectures. As you ring the bell so you hear the sound. As you play the instrument so you will hear music.

Question : Have we progressed in our *Sādhanā* or not ?
How many marks out of hundred have we secured ?

Mataji : Pitāji, you will yourself be able to say how great was your concentration and to what depths in meditation you have been able to attain.

Question : Ma, you know best. Please tell us !

Mataji : Leave this body out of it ! Whatever you are accomplishing is being accomplished by this body. Whatever I am saying is being said by you. Is there any place here for "you" and "me" ? Say as much as you can ! It is characteristic for the mind to be restless and to roam about. But by effort even the restless mind can be harnessed. The mind is like a child. Just as a child has to be coaxed in order to be taught, so should efforts be made to pacify the mind. As food is necessary to nourish the body, so is spiritual intake imperative to make the mind one-pointed.

Question : What will happen as a result of taking the Lord's name ?

Mataji : By taking God's name, by contemplating His lotusfeet, by meditating on God's glories, the mind will be purified. Try to make yourself pure and holy as you can.

Question : I have not the faintest idea of God's identity. How can I coteplate Him ?

Mataji : You try again and again to concentrate on God's lotus feet but *dhyāna* (absorption) does not supervene. Your mind continuously escapes towards sense pleasures. Why ? Because this kind of enjoyment has so far sustained your

body and mind. So, when trying to meditate the mind wanders away to sense objects, which are poison.¹ Sense enjoyment is 'slow poison' that by its very nature will lead you to death's door. You are scions of the Immortal, you are Ātmārām, you are the eternal servant, the eternal disciple of God. Having inherited the legacy of Immortality, why journey towards death? With single-mindedness concentrate on the lotusfeet of the Lord. In the Gītā the Lord has said in so many words that by constant practice (*abhyāsa yoga*) the goal will be attained. Those who live for transient pleasures are subjected to the covering screen of the opposites of temporary happiness and sorrow. If anyone wants to get rid of this covering screen, he must live a life of self-restraint. There by the mind is purified. Who am I? Where have I come from? This has to be pondered over. By constantly reflecting on these questions, sense enjoyment will dwindle. Initiation, study, strict observance of Guru's instructions and a disciplined life will lead to the revelation of man's true Self. Just now you have observed *Samyama Vrata* for seven days. Some have declared that they simply loved this week of self-restraint. If it did not belong to them of their own right, they could not have liked it so much. Where "mine" and "yours" has remained there is bound to be sorrow. By a life of self-mastery the road to realization of your true Self will be opened up.

On relative happiness—happiness depending on

1 A pun : *Viśaya* sense object, and *viś* poison, *hai* is.

anything—grief must follow of necessity. So your endeavour should be to become independent of circumstances. By self-control much can be gained. By observing *samyama* you will come to recognize your own short comings, such as that you cannot sit still, that you are unable to concentrate during meditation, and so forth. Only yesterday it was said : “Sit in such a manner, turn your mind in such a direction, eat the type of food that is likely to arouse your nobler qualities (*sāttvic bhāva*). Pursue a line whereby whatever you speak will transform your nature. Select the line that you consider the right one : there are infinite roads leading to God-realization.

Some people say that it is this body (*Mataji*) who has called into being the yearly *samyama saptāha*. But this is not so. The *samyama saptāha* was started by *Yogibhāi*.¹

Question : I was present during the *samyama Saptāha* of Vindhyachal. Everybody was immersed in bliss during the meditation there.

Mataji : Those who have performed this *vrata* several times know how to conduct themselves here. Newcomers are unaware. Only after understanding the rules one should sit down for meditation.

Question : Some people maintain that *japa* should be carried out during meditation. How is this possible ?

Mataji : *Japa* is also a kind of meditation. Mantra means that which gives deliverance to the

¹ *Mataji* had named the late Raja of Solan, Sri Durga Singh, “*Jogibhāi*”.

mind. The mantra may consist of one single syllable or of more, put together. *Akṣara* (letter) means imperishable. Thus the *akṣara* is God's *vigraha*.¹ Some people cannot visualize God's form unless they perform *japa*. Others resort to *japa* when the mind becomes restless during meditation.

Question : Is there any rule against the performance of *japa* during meditation ?

Mataji : Take a vote on this issue ! Those who want to meditate will do so and those who want to perform *japa* are free to follow their inclination. Some get more *ānanda* while immersed in pure meditation (*dhyāna*), others while absorbed in *japa*. Everyone should do what is most helpful to him or her.

Question : Whom should one contemplate at the time of meditation ?

Mataji : Each one should contemplate his own *Iṣṭa* (Divine Beloved). One should meditate exactly as the Guru has instructed.

Question : And those who have no Guru ?

Mataji : Those who have no Guru should repeat the name of God that appeals to them most and contemplate the Deity whose name they are repeating. Those who do not feel inclined even to take God's name, should sit absolutely still in a solitary place and ponder over "Who am I ?" One must try to know one's true self. Those who have no Guru may take on a Guru.

1 *Vigraha*—concrete External Presence as form.

Question : Some people say, the Guru will seek you out Himself. Is this true ?

Mataji : Your Guru will indeed find you. Be on the look out for Him !

Question : I do not like the idea that the Guru will have to take the trouble of seeking me out.

Mataji : The longing expectation "the Guru will find me" is also a kind of meditation. Consulting others will be useless. When you feel deep within yourself that you cannot proceed further without a Guru, when this kind of inner urge makes you desperate, then your Guru will Himself appear before you.

Question : We have all come to you, so we do not need any other Guru.

Mataji : It is no good discussing such things, whatever is necessary for each one will be done.

Question : Will all bad qualities be blotted out ?

Mataji : Do not speculate about what will remain and what will go once God stands revealed. We must try hard for the vision of God. God's ways are mysterious. He is of infinite names, of infinite forms and of infinite manifestation. Just as when someone addresses you as 'father' you respond ; someone else may call you 'uncle' or 'grandfather'—but you are one and the same person. So when the vision of God supervenes, it will be understood that everything is present in God. On obtaining God's uninterrupted vision all defects will be effaced.

(To be continued.)

MĀTRI UPADESHĀMRITA

I am only a child and do not know how to lecture or give discourses. Just as a child, when it finds something sweet and good takes it to its mother and father, so do I place before you what is sweet and good. You take whatever pleases you. Mine is only a child's prattle. In fact, it is you alone who question and you alone who answer. You beat the drum and you hear the sound

—MATAJI

(Mātri Upadeshāmrita, "the Nectar of Mother's Teaching", comprises excerpts from various sources of Sri Mā's spiritual instruction on selected subjects—compiled by Sister Uma)

(Continued from the last issue)

ON GURU

Question : How can we avoid the fruits of our previous karma ?

Mataji : Burn the karma.

Question : How to burn it ?

Mataji : Follow the advice of the Guru who has burnt his own karma.

* * *

Question : We can neither free ourselves from our worldly ties nor do we love God ; so what will be our lot ?

Mataji : Remaining in the jungle one has to clear it. Start clearing from where you are. By lighting a small fire the jungle will be burnt up. By coming to the Guru everything is achieved. If the disciple is patient and alert everything becomes possible.

* * *

A devotee : I like your teaching very much.

Mataji : This is very good. But you have to follow to the letter the instructions of your Gurudeva. With every breath, day and night, you should repeat the mantra received from your Guru. In the shape of the mantra your Gurudeva is always with you. Carry out his orders with great precision. Even if, since your receiving the mantra, your Guru has attained *Nirvāṇa*, still the guru-mantra will pave the way to Self-realisation.

Question : Should one have more than one Guru ?

Mataji : When you dig a well you have to dig in one place. Then only will you for all time be able to draw sweet refreshing water. If you start digging a well today here and tomorrow somewhere else, how can you ever get water ? We are told that the great Guru, Dattatreya, had accepted twentyfour Gurus. But these were instructors who taught him. *Dikṣā* (initiation) must be taken from one Guru only. The same path will not do for everyone. However, every person must specially bear in mind that the commands of one's Guru must be followed implicitly to the minutest detail. Whether one lives or dies, the Guru's orders must at all times be carried out with single-minded devotion. Without such devotion, how can anything be achieved in God's empire ? Wherever you may go, keep in mind that everything all around belongs to your Gurudeva. This attitude of a purified mind comes about of itself. One may certainly also profit from the teachings of other

mahātmās, provided they be in tune with those of one's own Guru. But if a mahātmā tells you something that clashes with the commands of your own Guru, it is not right to follow it. You should not even go near such a mahātmā, because this may prove harmful (*aniṣṭa*) to you. Do you know what *aniṣṭa* means? That which can never be *aniṣṭa* (harmful), that verily is the *Iṣṭa*. When you have the good fortune of meeting great men and of listening to their words, you should understand that these wonderful opportunities have presented themselves by the grace of your Sadguru, because you have taken refuge in him. Feel: "All this good luck is due to the mercy of my Gurudeva". One must try to see one's Guru and one's *Iṣṭa* in everything in the world. To obey the injunctions of one's Guru implicitly is the highest dharma (duty).

Question: If after having been initiated, one's Guru attains *Niryāna* and is therefore liberated, will the Gurudeva have to come back to get liberation for his disciple?

Mataji: If you think that your Guru has attained final release, then also he will find ways and means of helping and guiding you although you may not be aware of it. Your Guru is your all. When by his grace you will have found God then you will come to know this. When you desperately yearn for the vision of the merciful, adorable Lord and invoke Him with a sincere heart full of intense devotion, He will surely listen to your call. Appearing to you exactly in the form

in which you love Him most and desire to have His vision, He will give you complete satisfaction.

* * *

Question : How can *bhakti* be developed ?

Mataji : By following the Guru's instructions.

Question : If one does not feel like doing so ?

Mataji : Father, if one is ill one has to be made to go to the hospital by force and to take medicine. Quinine, although very bitter, has to be taken by malaria patients. Similarly, it is imperative to try and develop love and devotion for God by practising *sāadhanā* according to the Guru's instructions. This is how *bhakti* is kindled.

* * *

Whatever *sāadhanā* or worship the Guru prescribes for the removal of the mind's veil of ignorance, in that current a human being must at all times remain fully immersed.

* * *

How is it that my Guru may be said to be the World-teacher ? For the simple reason that this is the status of a Guru. Who for instance is a cook ? The word, "cook", surely does not denote the name of anyone in particular ; it means one who can prepare food. Likewise, when the status of a Guru becomes revealed, one understands that it has nothing to do with any person ; the Guru is none other than the World-teacher. If the power of the Guru can become effective, there will be the realization of "Who am I ?" He who is able to bestow that power is indeed a World-teacher. A

Guru is called he who, out of deep darkness, can reveal the hidden Truth. My Guru exists in many forms as the Guru of each and everyone, and everyone else's Guru is in fact my Guru. Now you see how the Guru has become One.

* * *

Where "something" is, there God is not. If Śiva's presence is felt, it cannot be a stone and if it is a stone it cannot be Śiva. Likewise, if the Guru is perceived as what he really is, he is no longer a human being, but if looked upon as a person, he is no longer a Guru.

* * *

Regarding Her own giving of *dīkṣā*, Ma has said :

"Much later these things started. Some people received a mantra from within and then came to Ma to have it confirmed or corrected or purified. Many came with a variety of problems, requests and experiences ; and according to the *śāstric* injunctions, Ma said or did whatever and in whatever way it came about (*jo hoye jai*). Some had been turned out by their Guru ; others were sent to Ma by their Guru. So, whatever and in whatever way they failed to understand was explained to them and the mistakes in the mantra were corrected (the mantra was purified). It also happened that the Guru had left his body and that the pronunciation of the mantra was impure and so Ma told them the correct way while respecting the instructions of their Guru."

* * *

Your true friend is he who shows you the path that leads to your Supreme Friend. One who takes you along the road of certain death, of sense enjoyment, is not your friend or well-wisher. He is your enemy. He is showing you the way to suicide. Avoid his company. He who urges you to take the path to Immortality, to go out in search of the Supreme Friend, he is your true friend. This body is the friend of you all, don't you think so ?

When one remains without thinking one understands another by means of the universal language of silence. Silence is ever speaking ; it is a perennial flow of language ; it is interrupted by speaking. These words obstruct that mute language. There is electricity flowing in a wire. With resistance to its passage it glows as a lamp or revolves as a fan. In the wire it remains electric energy. Similarly also, silence is the eternal flow of language, obstructed by words.

Sri RAMANA MAHARSHI

NETAJI WITH SRI SRI MA IN DAKSHINESHWAR

From : In Association with Sri Sri Ma Anandamayi

A. K. Dutta Gupta

(Translated from Bengali)

October 20th, 1938

(Continued from the last issue)

We came downstairs and were wandering about at random when Nagen called us to partake of the *prasāda* of Goddess Kali. So we all sat down on the veranda. Just then Netaji Sri Subhas Chandra Bose arrived to have Sri Ma's *darśana*. He partook of *prasāda* along with us.

After the meal, the manager of Dakshineshwar took Netaji to the *Pañchavaṭī** and other places of interest. We accompanied them. It was nearly 3.30 p.m. when we beheld Mataji proceeding to the *Pañchavaṭī*. An *āsana* was spread for Sri Ma on the platform below the *pīpal tree*. We all sat around Her. Netaji tendered his *praṇāma* to Ma and sat right in front of Her. Some time passed in silence. Neither Sri Ma nor Netaji spoke a word.

Then Bhupati Babu introduced Netaji to Ma who said : "I met your brother at Ahmedabad."

* *Pañchavaṭī*—A grove of five sacred trees, namely *pīpal*, *banyan*, *aśoka*, *bel*, *āmalaki* with a platform in the middle. It is considered a congenial place for meditation. Sri Rāmakriṣṇa is said to have obtained Realization in this *Pañchavaṭī*.

Netaji : So you went to Ahmedabad ?”

Mataji : Yes.

Again silence.

I indicated to Bhūpati Babu to ask Netaji whether he wished to put some questions to Ma. Netaji said he had no questions. Again silence. Sm. Bhramara sat next to me. At her insistence I at last had to introduce some topic. I said : “Ma can one realize God by service to one’s motherland ?”

Mataji : (to Netaji) Baba, do please tell us whether, God can be found by service to one’s country.

Netaji : Am I in search of God ? (Everybody laughs).

Mataji : (smiling) So what is it that you pursue ?

Netaji : But that question was not addressed to me ?

Mataji : It was raised in connection with yourself. (glancing at me) Was it not ?

I : Yes, Ma.

Ma (addressing Netaji) : Now please reply ! Well, why do you serve your motherland ? What do you gain by it ? If you explain to them the merits of doing so, they will all start serving their country. Nobody does anything unless he profits by it. You give such eloquent lectures, so do now speak, please.

Netaji (smiling) : But I have not come here to deliver a lecture.—I derive great happiness from serving my country, that is why I do it.

Mataji : In this happiness perpetual ?

Netaji : The meaning of the word 'perpetual' is not easy understand.

Mataji : That which remains all the time is perpetual. There is perpetual happiness in carrying out the dictates of one's true Nature (*svabhāva*). If service is performed in the right spirit, lasting happiness may be found. Is this so with you, Baba ?

At this point Sri Ma was interrupted by a lady who started talking about her own problems. I gathered from what she said that she was a teacher of the Calcutta Corporation School. She would from time to time in her dreams obtain glimpses of Sri Krishna and also His instructions. She had come to Sri Ma today also in obedience to His direction. It was her belief that Sri Krishna would perform some work for the world through her. However, off and on she would feel afraid and desperately lonely. So she implored Sri Ma to help her.

Ma said : "Since you are receiving His instructions, where is the need of help ? If you rely solely on God, everything will be all right." (Addressing *Netaji*) : "Baba, won't you say something ?"

Netaji : I have not come here to speak, I am here to listen.

Mataji : If this is so, will you then listen to what this little girl has to say ? Will you do as I tell you ?

Netaji : I cannot guarantee, but I may make an attempt.

Mataji : Look, all work performed in connection with worldly affairs is prompted by want (*abhāva*). Certainly when this want has been fulfilled one feels happy. But remember, the happiness obtained from accomplishing worldly work merely keeps the sense of want awake. Suppose you feel the need to acquire something and to fulfil this need you start on a certain course of action. As a result of your efforts you get rid of this want and therefore are full of joy. But along with this joy some other need will arise. This is why I maintain that all action connected with worldly affairs belongs to the realm of want (*abhāva*). But by following the dictates of one's true Nature (*svabhāva*) perpetual joy will result. You say it makes you happy to serve your motherland. To serve one's country is of course very good. Your heart is noble, very large, try to make it even larger. If you serve your country without enthusiasm, this will be work prompted by the sense of want and the happiness derived from it will not be lasting. But everybody desires unbroken joy, the joy that is endless. If you follow the dictates of your true Nature (*svabhāva*), this will lead to permanent joy and you will become established in bliss. Now you may well retort : "What is the use of bliss for myself alone when the whole world is full of gloom ?" The answer to this is that if permanent bliss is realized, it will be communicated to others.

Netaji : What exactly does 'Svabhāver karma' mean ?

Mataji : Action as such arises out of want

(*abhāva*) because without a sense of want there is no action. However, action that leads to permanent bliss can be called '*svabhāver karma*,' action prompted by one's true Nature. *Svabhāva* is that which is man's own through all eternity. Because the kernel of perpetual bliss lies hidden within yourself you desire this permanent bliss. You cannot want anything that is not already potentially within you.

Netaji : Is everybody's *svabhāva* the same ?

Mataji : Yes, all mankind basically desires constant happiness. In this whole universe there is but ONE without a second. When people serve others it is ultimately for their own Self. Happiness is derived from serving others because in essence all are one.

Netaji : You say that the true Nature of all is the same, but the Gītā states : *Śreyān svadharmo viguṇaḥ paradharmo bhayāvahaḥ*. "Better death in the discharge of one's own duty ; the duty of another is full of danger."

Mataji : What actually is *svadharma* ?¹ The dharma of your true Nature is your *svadharma*. *Sādhanā* is performed in order to fulfil one's *svadharma* (one's real duty). This body (Ma) has no learning, so it speaks in an incoherent fashion. The effort to realize your inherent wealth *svadhana* I call *sādhanā*. The words of the Bhagavad Gītā

1 Dharma—The law of being. It signifies the inner principle of religion, Man's dharma is to realize his innate Divinity.

are infallible indeed. To attain to the dharma of one's *svabhāva* is the aim of mankind.

Netaji : But it is also true that different people have different natures, Nobody knows where his real duty lies.

Mataji : Even though people's dispositions and inclinations (*samskāras*) vary, there is one dharma for everyone. Truth is one.

Netaji : But one cannot know by one's own efforts how to proceed.

Mataji : Having started working in this direction, if you continue steadily, everything will fall into place. Then, whatever tendencies (*samskāras*) have been lying dormant in each person are aroused. Look, children do not feel inclined to study. But if for some time you compel them to pursue their studies, you will observe that each child does well in a different subject. One may excel in English, another in mathematics. So also when people start on this quest, it is seen after some time that they are advancing each according to their inherent dispositions.

Netaji : But you have not yet indicated a definite path.

Mataji (smiling) : You will have to set to work. You must resolve : 'I will study !'

Myself : Ma, your reply is still unclear. You say everybody desires uninterrupted happiness. Netaji maintains he finds happiness by serving his country. So should we understand that by serving one's motherland one can attain to perpetual joy and to God-realization ?

Mataji : The service must be done with one's whole being. One must see to it that really genuine service is performed.

Netaji : There is a particular method for doing service. It is difficult to find the correct method.

Mataji : The difficulties of choosing the right path are considerable and on the path the maximum toil is required. But just as you acquire knowledge if you firmly make up your mind to study, so if you are totally and completely determined to realize THAT you are bound to find the right path.

Netaji : While groping in darkness it is difficult to find the correct path.

Mataji : Yes, but one has to start walking in darkness. Don't you call faith blind ? Taking recourse to this blind faith one must begin one's work. Later everything will be understood. When children start learning, do they understand anything ? Yet by protracted study knowledge supervenes.

Netaji : All the same, if the correct path is known precious time can be saved.

At this stage the lady teacher from the corporation School volunteered : "If all of you permit me I think I can explain the matter."

Mataji : All right, do !

Now the lady started talking on work free from desire for results as expounded in the Gītā. But Ma interrupted her, saying : "Oh Ma, all this is very well known to him," (Subhas Bose).

Whether due to these prequent interruptions or for some other reason, the conversation between

Shubhash Bose and Sri Ma did not gather any momentum today. We all felt somewhat frustrated, so that Jatish declared that he would try and arrange for Netaji a private interview with Sri Ma.

Before leaving, Netaji asked Sri Ma : "For how long will you be here ?"

Mataji : Nothing has been decided. This body has not been keeping good health for some time. Before coming here from Hardwar, the doctor examined this body and said, something or other had become excessive, so travelling was not advisable. Later when the trouble subsided somewhat, the journey to Calcutta was undertaken. There is some talk now of proceeding to Dacca, but the previous excess seems to have recurred. So I am waiting. They so very kindly take care and look after this body, so I have put the full responsibility on them.

These words Sri ma uttered like a little girl in broken sentences. How sweet this sounded I just cannot convey.

Subhash Bose tendered his *praṇāma* and took his departure. A little later Sri ma also was taken away from the *pañchavaṭī*.

PRAYER : ITS SIGNIFICANCE AND VARIETIES

Acharya Satish Chandra Mukhopadhyaya

(Dated 24th October 1940 addressed by S. C. M, to S. K. Jha. Subject : The Child-mother Relationship in Spiritual Evolution).

*Letter No. 2.**

I now propose to discuss the issue to which you refer in connection with Sri Satguru's sermon in "*Vakritā and Upadeśa*"—the issue which is brought out by you as follows in your yesterday's p. c.

[Here follows Bengali text which as translated by you runs as follows]

"Whatever a miserable man prays for with full faith and confidence, the Lord the Saviour, because of His very merciful nature, grants him. The Lord may be said to be like the mother who cannot help running at once to the aid of her child who is crying for something, although the latter has no idea about the rightness or the wrongness of the demand. The mother cannot bear the sight of her child crying, and therefore grants whatsoever the child wants or weeps for, be it ever so trifling in the eyes of the mother. Similarly, whatever the *jīva*, in his ignorance but quite innocently, demands and prays for, be it money or wealth, be it rain in times of drought or famine, be it freedom from affliction and adversity, or cure of diseases or ailments—whatever be the object of the prayer, it will be granted by the Lord Bhagavān, the All-Merciful, the Saviour."

* Letter No. 1, appeared in 'Ānanda Vārtā', January 1980.

The above represents your point of view and you have in support referred me to similar statements made by Sri Satguru in His "*Vaktritā* and *Upadeśa*". I have read them in the Bengali original, where Sri Satguru makes clear the relationship of the *Sādhaka* to the Divine Mother. (*Vide* Sermon dated Dacca 18th *Agrahāyana* 1293, Bengali Era). I grant that the passages in question may apparently lead the unsophisticated reader to believe that they do lend support to the thesis you are seeking to advance. Nevertheless I must say that you have failed to enter into the real significance of Sri Satguru's declarations. You have taken only a superficial view of Sri Satguru's statement. You have, for instance, taken for granted that the fettered *jīva ordinarily* enjoys the status of a child in relation to the Lord as the Divine Mother. To me it is perfectly clear that the fettered *jīva* praying for *achit* (worldly) gifts at the hands of the Divine Mother with his mind centred in worldly life cannot arrogate to himself the position of the Divine Child whose demands the Divine Mother is bound to grant. For the truth is that the type of spiritual relationship between Bhagavān and the *sādhaka* who is able to look upon the Lord as his Divine Mother, (which for the moment you have wrongly assumed as inherent in the life of the fettered *jīva*) belongs to a stage of spiritual evolution along the lines of *Bhakti Sādhanā*, where the *sādhaka* has shed all *achit* relationships of *achit* life. So long as *jīva* has not risen to that lofty height of spiritual evolution, it must not be assumed

that such child-mother relationship between the fettered *jīva* and the Lord has sprouted up at all. That you may have greater faith in my statement, I may tell you that this child-mother or better Divine Mother,—relationship was specifically a development of Sri Rāmakṛṣṇa's exalted life. I have carefully read "*Sri Sri Rāmakṛṣṇa Kathāmṛta*" by M,—where at several places Sri Rāmakṛṣṇa has made the positive declaration that His relationship with the Lord was that of the child with the Divine Mother. And that His first *darśana* or face to face vision of the Lord was His *darśana* of the Divine Mother is also a declaration from His own lips. Therefore Sri Rāmakṛṣṇa belonged to the category of exalted souls to whom you can attribute such relationship, the relationship between the Divine Child and the Divine Mother. And His whole life testified it. If He wanted anything, He would go and lay bare His heart to His Divine Mother and the Mother would respond. If you read His biography carefully, you will find Him in every detail of His life looking up to the Divine Mother for advice and help and even to resolve points of spiritual life which although known to Him as errors, were nevertheless sought to be impressed upon Him by people who were about Him. Then again very much in the manner of a child He would ask for worldly help and the Mother would respond. Thus He wanted His Mother to provide Him with a *Rasad-dar* (supplier of food) and the Mother responded by making Mathur Babu, the wealthy son-in-law

manager of Rāṇi Rāsamaṇi of Calcutta His *Rasad-dar*. Sri Rāmakṛṣṇa wanted to go on pilgrimage to Northern India and He prayed to His Divine Mother to help him to provide food to the famished children of the soil who met Him in the course of His tour ; and Sri Rāmakṛṣṇa was able to gratify his yearning to feed to His heart's content the *Daridranārāyaṇa* (poor) in the cities and towns He visited in the course of His tour. And so on and on.

Now let us remember that Sri Rāmakṛṣṇa's case was not an exception. For Sri Rāmakṛṣṇa's relationship was the kind of relationship that always exists between the Divine Child and the Divine Mother. The fettered *jīva*, with thousand and one *achit* (material) hankerings, with his face normally turned away from the Lord, is never the Divine Child when he prays for *achit* gratification. Such Divine relationship is attained in the case of a fettered *jīva* almost at the penultimate stage of *bhakti sādhanā*. At that stage the *bhakta* (devotee) knows nobody else to appeal to except the Divine Mother. Further, at that stage the *bhakta* is face-to-face with the Mother ; and even if the *bhakta* may have wants to be met, He does not depend upon himself or friends for their gratification. He can think of and knows nobody else except the Divine Mother as the person to be approached, who when approached is bound to come to His help and succour.

(To be continued)

AHAIUKĪ KRIPĀ

(Grace without Cause or Reason)

Lekha Sengupta

I don't know exactly when it was that Ma took me under Her wing. Incident after incident led me to believe that I didn't have to look for this shelter. Ma has always been my refuge. When my elder sister (Puspadi) started going to Ma, before she became a proper ashramite, I was only a tiny school girl. With Puspadi I used to visit the ashram and peep at Ma from a distance. I remember how one day she asked me, "Can you sing?" I said I could but that Puspadi could sing better. That was all. After that I lost touch with Ma. Sometimes, I used to pray Ma in my own school-girlish way and tell Her of my childish wants. Years passed. I finished school and then college and became a housewife. My in-laws didn't quite like talking about Sri Ma and that's why I lost touch with Her. But there was, inspite of that perhaps unknown to me, a deep attachment for Her in my heart. My love, however, didn't find much expression in my daily duties. Apparently, I had almost forgotten Her. One day, while my husband and I were at dinner, I had an experience which I can never forget. It was about 11 O'clock at night. We were both in a jolly mood and talked and laughed as if we had not a care in the world. There was no one in the flat excepting our servent who was serving us food. Suddenly a particle of food got stuck in my husband's throat. He struggled to remove it but gradually he stopped struggling. His eyes bulged out and his body

became limp. His face turned an unhealthy blue and his hands hung down limp and lifeless. The servant covered his face with his hands in dread. There was nothing that we could do. At that desperate moment, I suddenly appealed to Ma, 'What shall I do now Ma?' It seemed that I had never prayed with so much intensity and desperateness. And then I saw Her : Sri Ma, dressed in immaculate white, brushing past me into the room and the next moment vanishing into thin air ! I found then, to my utter surprise, that my husband's hands had regained their strength and that he was again trying to push his fingers into his throat to remove the obstacle. His almost lifeless body was once more fighting death. After a while I even heard him speak and tears rushed to my eyes. I thought—"Does Ma love me so much?" The doctor was called and after examining him said that it had been a narrow escape. My husband was on a liquid diet for a week after that. It occurred to me then that though I had forgotten Ma, She had an eye on me still.

About eleven or twelve years later, a cruel accident separated me for ever from my husband. I was left alone with my three years old daughter. It comes back to me now, that before this heart-rending incident took place, I used to constantly feel the presence of a higher being comforting me. After the tragedy I went to Ma. She said to me with Her gentle voice. "He hasn't left you at all. He is still with you. It's only that you can't see

him." I stayed on in Kashi on Ma's advice. I was sore in body and mind. I dreamt of Ma, telling me, "Come and rub my feet. Others may not touch my feet, when they touch, it hurts." Saying this She put Her feet into my lap. The gentle feel of Her feet was a soothing balm and my agony was a little relieved.

In this way, I felt Ma blessing me through ordinary incidents of my daily life. I found solace in Her. These memories are my priceless treasures. I won't disclose all of them, for I want them to be my own secret treasures. I'll only talk of a few, so that those who have come to Ma now for the first time, may be more eager to know about Her bountiful graces. Apart from what the doctors said, I knew I was not well and could not hope to live very much longer. I told Ma, if anything happened to me, my daughter would be all alone. Ma was full of affection like a near and dear one and replied, "You must do *"Japa"*. That gives you a lot of strength." Talking of my daughter, She asked, "Won't you get Rini married" ? I said I wanted to. "You will certainly be here to see her married", was Her prompt reply. What an assurance that was ! Years have passed and I am no longer afraid of dying. Whenever I leave things to Ma, I feel fearless and confident. I can feel Her blessings showering on me in profusion. We have, however, to endure the suffering that is in store for us. So troubles came and went. All through it was Ma who gave me courage. Perhaps, She can see the

danger that lies ahead and that is why Her warnings are many. Once when travelling alone with my daughter I was attacked from the window. I was in danger. I don't know exactly what happened but I was saved by Ma in a miraculous way. No harm was done. I noticed that the compartment was full of the sweet smell of flowers and incense. We had been talking of Ma only a moment before. It was as it should be. I remembered, then, that Ma had said, "Remember whenever you think of this body, it will be with you". Ma has given me courage and confidence countless times. One day while talking of my husband, I asked Her, "I know all of us have to die but why did he have to go in this manner? It was so sudden, none of us had even an inkling of it a moment earlier". I was again consoled by Ma. "He hasn't left you, it's only that you can't see him. You must keep his photograph with the deities you worship. Why are you so sad? You should be happy because *Ātmā* has become one with *Paramātmā*". While talking Ma's gaze had drifted as it were, to some distant world.

I felt that She was no longer with me, though Her form was standing before me. She said, "You must be happy and cheerful. See that no one comes to know of this grief. You should always smile and be gay". She gave me a yellow sari full of other colours and said, "You can wear all these colours". It seemed that Ma saw my wounded heart and nursed my wounds. This was no ordinary human love. I talked to Ma

about buying a house. She said I could buy one. She however specifically told me not make it an ordinary dwelling place. She did not want me to rent it to ordinary families, living a worldly life. Here was an indication that Ma wanted me to lead a pure and spotless, a blameless and dedicated life. There is no soul on earth who can stop a person from being blessed if Ma desired that he or she should be blessed. This is what is known as "*Ahaitukī Kripā*". One doesn't have to ask for such blessings. They come unasked.

Before ending this, I shall relate one more incident showing Sri Ma's benevolence. One day I found Her on the Kanyapeeth terrace, moving hither and thither in Her own busy way. She had taken care to hide under Her white robe Her hand which was full of sweets. She was looking for two unhappy creatures. "Where is Lekha? Where is Rini"? The place was crowded. I was watching Her from a distance. Hearing Her speak I moved closer to Her. One of Her children asked for a sweet. Mother stopped abruptly to give her one. Again she covered Her hand and walked along. I was moved. She had specially kept apart sweets for her unfortunate and wailing children. I can't see any of these incidents separately, I can only see them as part of a whole, bound together by love. This love seems to be limitless. Sometimes I wonder where such a love has come from! I have heard Sri Ma say, "Do you love me the way I love you? Can you feel even a tiny grain of all the love that I feel for you?"

SRI TOTA PURIJI MAHARAJ, NANGA BABA OF PURI

R. K. Banerjee

In the late 1950's, Bhavani and I had the opportunity of visiting Puri annually and of utilising our leisure there to explore the mythological and historical surroundings of the neighbourhood. Thus Bhavani discovered a famous *sādhu*, almost legendary by reputation, living in seclusion a few miles to the north of Lokenath Siva Temple, in the sand dunes and hillocks accessible only on foot or by bullock-cart.

Reputed to be very old, completely naked, of immense proportions, with a benign and fair complexion, he rarely spoke to anybody. His visiting hours were such that one had either to face the rigours of the hot sands, or else the dangers of darkness when returning. Some time in the summer of 1959, I went along with Bhavani and had a wonderful *darśana* of the Mahātmā. He looked verily like a true Man of God, with the effulgence of full knowledge of the Brahman radiating from his countenance. A single glance from his piercing eyes was sufficient to compel the visitor to humbly acknowledge with owe his divinity, his perpetual oneness with the Brahman. Sitting down he seemed as tall as an average man, but standing up he was nearly seven feet in height, with correspondingly huge girth. His matted hairlocks reaching

down to the ground, added to the impression of immense strength, dignity and majesty.

This was the famous Nanga Baba of Puri, known to be living in the sandy hillocks for the last fifty years or so. His age was alleged to be beyond two centuries, and he had maintained exactly the same appearance since he was discovered on the sea shore lying naked under the sky, come rain, sun, or storm. Later devout locals, particularly a pious woman, built some sort of a sanctuary for him, which subsequently developed into a small ashram, named by the Baba, '*Advaita-Brahma Ashram.*'

We were unable to go to Puri for a few years, and on our next visit, we learnt with a sense of loss and regret that the Mahātmā was no more.

My next contact with the deceased saint—and these divine souls are eternally active—was one of those predetermined factors which continued my association with him. In 1970, on reading the seventh volume of "*Bhārater Sādhaka*" by the late Shankar Nath Roy, 2nd Ed. 1969, I came across a fullfledged chapter on the "Nanga Baba of Puri", where he was identified with Totapuri Maharaj, the itinerant Vedantic *Sannyāsī* from the Punjab who had initiated Ramakrishna Paramahansa Deva at Dakshineshwar in 1864.

Then during Mataji's sojourn at Puri in May-June 1979, Brahmacharis Nirvanananda and Bhaskarananda, and Dr. Triguna Sen, visited the Baba's *Samādhi* and Ashram and brought back a

booklet in Hindi about him written by his disciple Sri Ramnandan Misra.

The present article is almost entirely based on the information given in the above mentioned two books.

To start with, let us try to reach some sort of an approximation of the saint's age at the time of his death at Puri on August 24th, 1961. My calculations are based on the following key factors.

1. In about 1766, when the countryside was pillaged by the Indigo planters, aided and abetted by the soldiers of the East India Co., Maharaja Rudra Singh of Darbhanga District was a well-known ruler near the Ganga in the old Narhan State. Nanga Baba had mentioned his clear recollection of this period in his rare conversations on personal memories and we can assume he may have been a young lad of 14 or 15 years during those troublesome times.

2. The Baba mentioned three significant visits to the old city founded by Job Charnock, i. e. Calcutta. The first occurred when he accompanied a large band of armed *Nāga Saanyāsīs* travelling by boat on the Ganges through the dense jungle that abounded on both sides of the river between North Chauringhee and the famous Kali Temple at Kalighat. This could have taken place in about 1777, when the saint was perhaps 26 or 27 years old.

Travelling in India was extremely difficult in those days, but the saint thought nothing of wandering on foot from pilgrimage to pilgrimage

for the next 36-40 years. On occasions the Baba would refer to his visits of such far flung places as Parasuram Kunda, the Caspian Sea, Tibet, Manas Sarowar. etc. His Narmada *parikrama* (walking from the source of the holy river to its confluence into the sea on one bank, and returning to the source via the other bank) took him over two years. This was the length of time it also took the late Sri Balananda Brahmachari Maharaj of Deoghar as recorded in his biography.

3. The Babaji's second visit to Calcutta took place when Fort William was being built, before the days of rail and electricity, round about 1820.

4. The Saint lived hazardously through the Indian Mutiny in 1856-57 and occasionally used to reminisce on those disturbed times.

5. On his third visit to Calcutta area in 1864, he came to the Dakshineswar Kali Temple, stayed there for nearly a year and initiated Ramakrishna Deva into *sannyāsa*. Before his departure he was converted from a worshipper of the *Nirguṇa Brahman* to acknowledge the living presence of the Great Mother of the Universe in the form of Goddess Kali. Electricity as well as railways and trams had then been installed in Calcutta.

6. Another historical incident fixes the time of the Saint's wanderings in company with a large band of *Nāga Sannyāsīs* led by Nāgadāsji in the northern Himalayas between Tibet and Sikkim, when Kumar Ramendra Narayan of Bhawal near Dacca, was poisoned by his enemies in Darjeeling in the early 1900's, and left for dead in the crema-

tion grounds near Darjeeling. A sudden thunderstorm forced the funeral party to desert the 'body' for the night. The *sannyāsīs* who happened to be in the vicinity under the leadership of Totapuri Maharaj and Nagadasji, were chiefly instrumental in reviving the almost dead Kumar, and of rearing him under amnesia for the next several years during their wanderings, until a sudden return of his memory enabled him to go back to Dacca with the *Sādhu's* blessings to claim his ancestral heritage.

7. In 1960, the author of '*Bhārater Sādhaka*' met in Varanasi an ancient Mahātmā called Vitaraga Baba who was then reputed to be 190 years old. This Mahātmā, at the age of 17-18, i.e., round about 1787-1788 used to seek the company of Nanga Baba, then living in a boat in Varanasi area. He was already quite well-known and held in great respect by all contemporary *sādhus*. Assuming that Nanga Baba could, perhaps, have been 50 years old at that time, his birth might have taken place as early as 1737-38 ?

8. The Baba's increasing age must have made it more difficult for him to live in the rigours of the northern mountains. So he naturally sought the warmer and friendlier climate of the seaside in the vicinity of the great pilgrimage of Jagannāth Dhām at Puri, also the abode of one of the four Sankarāchāryas set up in the four corners of India by the Adi Sankarāchārya in the 9th century.

But the spot which the Baba selected for his future abode was in the heart of Jhau and Casuarina

forests, surrounding a hillock a few miles north of Lokenath Siva Temple, some distance from the sea. The place had been used as a burning-ghat and enjoyed the reputation of having been inhabited by ancient Sādhus and Mahātmās. One such saint called Girnari Baba (hailing presumably from the Girnar Hills on the West Coast of India), was known to have lived in the neighbourhood over hundred years ago. From him the place derived its name Girnar Banta (hillock). Here the Saint passed most of his remaining 50 years until he took *Mahāsamādhi* in 1961.

His desciple Ramnandan Misra met his first in 1953. Strangely the meeting had been foretold already in 1927 by the late Acharya Satish Chandra Mukherji of the famous Anushilan Samiti. When his prophecy was fulfilled Satish Chandra was no more, having passed away in 1948. Ramnandan Misra had a natural inclination to seek out spiritual masters, such as Vijaya Krishna Goswami, and later Kali Guha Roy (or Kalida as more intimately known to the devotees Sri Sri Anandamayi Ma). He also encouraged Misra to go and meet his predestined Guru at Puri.

Some time between 1953-1958, the well-known European savants Jean Herbert and his wife met the Saint at Puri. Professor Herbert was the Head of Purāṇa in the University at Geneva, and his French wife an M.A. in three languages, as well as a devout worshipper of Lord Krishna.

When devotees gradually erected a small Ashram for the Baba, he duly built up a library where most

spiritual and religious books could be found, and his learned discourses covered Sri Krishn'a life, the Gītā, the Upanishads and of course Vedanta. He spoke eloquently with inner perception on the *Mahāvākyās* (great sayings) such as "*Tat Tvam Asi*". "*Aham Brahmāsmi*", *Ānandam Brahma*", the vedic Santi Suktas, etc.

The Mahātmā shunned society and never encouraged his visitors to stay, but when he sensed that they were genuine seekers after Truth, he would expound from one or the other of the religious books at his disposal.

The Baba used no clothes, bedding or mosquito-nets and took four baths daily. His visiting hours were fixed at 7-10 Am. and 2-5 Pm. He did not believe in the display of miracles but could apparently perform whatever he desired when the emergency arose.

In autumn 1949, a celebrated Mahāyogī visited Puri, and said to his intimate disciples during Satsanga : "You are completely unaware of what a wonderful Mahātmā you are harbouring in your midst. The Nanga Baba hails from Punjab and none other than the famous Tota Puriji Maharaj who initiated Sri Ramakrishna Deva at Dakshineswar."

Here are a few typical anecdotes covering this legendary Mahātmā :

During Nanga Baba's early days at Girnar Banta, a local *goala* (milkman) called Madhusudana used to present to the Baba a pail of milk every morning and evening. He was always accompanied

by his son Bansidhar who was blind from birth. The boy used to place garlands round the Baba's neck and bow reverently to him in *praṇāma*. One day Madhusudana plucked up sufficient courage to voice his unspoken prayer, with tears in his eyes, he entreated "Baba I have nobody but my son, won't you have pity on him?" In a merciful mood, Nanga Baba beckoned to the boy, exclaiming, "Yes, yes, open your eyes. You are no longer blind. You will be able to see perfectly from now on." And so it was.

Once Nanga Baba left Girnar Banta for a tour in S. India. On returning, instead of going to his Ashram, he remained in the open on the sands in front of the Maharaja of Cossimbazar's house near Svarga Dwar, in the close vicinity of Flagstaff House. The presence of a naked *Sādhu* so near the precincts of European Civil lines must have stirred the citadel of official-dom. Presented with a report from the Police Superintendant, the District Magistrate, an Englishman, eventually come to investigate. Bewitched at his very first glimpse of the majestic Saint, he bent down low in deep reverence. The Mahātmā at once exclaimed, "My mother, your wife, has already been here. She prayed to me for your son's success in his examination. Has your son not already passed well?"

The magistrate replied, "Yes Father, by your grace he has passed well. Now I am sending him to England for Civil Service. He is coming here for a few days before leaving." At these words the Mahātmā became grave.

When after two days, the son reached Puri, the joy of the parents knew no bounds. They came to pay their respects to the Baba, who continued to remain aloof and silent. At the repeated insistence of the parents he remarked in a grave voice, "Let four days pass, then come back to me."

Within three days the Magistrate's son was struck down by a dreaded disease, and in spite of all possible medical aid, he passed away. After this tragic incident, the fame of the Baba spread far and wide.

Nanga Baba left Girnar Banta for the neighbourhood of Sākṣi Gopāl near Puri, but he did not stay there very long as presumably the surroundings were not to his liking.

Round about 1921 he returned to Puri and remained there with interruptions for nearly forty years. Once the Baba went to the mouth of Ganga called Sagar Sangam. Somewhere near Rishra he spread his *āsana* under a big tree. The local rich zemindar Lalji happened to pass by and was at once fascinated by the Mahātmā. At his repeated entreaties, the Baba agreed to spend a few days under a tree in Lalji's garden. One day Lalji was bitten by a poisonous snake and turned blue in the face. On the point of death, he somehow managed to stagger and fall down at the feet of the Mahātmā who sprinkled some water of the Sagar Tirtha from his vessel on Lalji's face, who in due course recovered. But as crowds began to gather after this miraculous incident, the Baba deemed it time to remove himself, although between

1921 and 1926 he did sometimes visit the small Ashram which the grateful Lalji had built in his honour in his garden at Rishra.

Once Sri Kumud Bandhu Sen, a well-known devotee, visited the Baba at Girnar Banta in mid-summer. When he arrived, the Baba immediately called his disciple and asked him to bring a fresh coconut full of water. Strangely the disciple did not respond. It transpired that only one single coconut was left in the Ashram which the zealous disciple was scrupulously keeping for the Baba's use. However the Mahātmā compelled his disciple to offer the coconut to Sri Sen who thus could quench his thirst.

Within a few minutes, a bullock cart laden with green coconuts, sent by a well-to-do devotee, arrived at the Ashram gates. The Baba used this opportunity to point out to everyone present that we are all residing in the bosom of the Almighty who is intent on our welfare. But by our exceeding greed, lust and pride, we usually upset all the arrangements, He so carefully has provided for us, and this is why we suffer.

At the Baba's Ashram at Puri, Tulsi Devi, the wife of the local Zemindar, daily used to perform *ārati* of the Baba who put up with it, willy nilly, in spite of the fact that he did not like a show of devotion. When the Baba suddenly left Puri for an unknown destination, Tulsi Devi was so deeply affected that she resolved to go on a fast until she could again have the Baba's *darśana*. This was miraculously kept up for two years, when

suddenly news was received of the Baba residing in some jungle near Bhagalpur. When the Baba was informed of Tulsi Devi's vow, he at once in person went to her home and made her break her fast in his presence.

Once a party of famous kirtanias from Calcutta, on a periodical visit to Puri, went to sing before the Baba. On being informed of their wishes, the Baba said, "What is the use of shouting loudly like animals? It is true that *bhajans* and *Kirtans* are a help in praying to God, but do not make a show of it."

One day during *Satsanga* a significant revelation was made by the Baba, from which we can all learn a lesson. In reply to a devotee's question on true knowledge of the Self, the Baba declared, "Once full knowledge of the Self supervenes, the body is superfluous and can be dispensed with." "Then Baba, how is it that your body is still alive?" The Baba's face flushed with inner revelation and he replied in a sonorous voice, "How can you, a mere boy, understand the wonderful significance of this mystery? Suffice it to say that the Lord Himself beseeches with folded hands the fully enlightened Seer to maintain his body, so that the Lord can utilise it for mysterious purposes of His own."

How much light these words of Nanga Baba throw on Ma's Lila !

Once a well-known Reader of Philosophy in the Calcutta University, Dr. Anil Roy Choudhury arrived at the Baba's Ashram. Deeply moved, tears began to flow from the professor's eyes.

Nanga Baba called him and put his arms round him. Dr. Choudhury went on crying incessantly. Therupon the Baba exhorted him : "You are lucky, you have no ties no wife, no family. Your tendencies are good. So why waste any further time ? Come and stay in the Ashram." But the professor declined giving as his excuse among other things his incomplete duties in connection with the Asiatic Society. He returned to Calcutta a changed man. Often he recalled the kindness of the Baba and his eyes would fill with tears. Within a few weeks Dr. Roy Choudhury suddenly died in his Calcutta residence. It appears that Nanga Baba had foreseen this and has tried to change the course of the professor's life.

Inexorably, the end drew near to over two centuries of this great Sage's sojourn on earth as a fully Enlightened Being with a mortal body. "Twelve years before his death, he had taken upon himself the pernicious diseases of diabetes from a sorely ailing devotee who recovered. His chief disciple Jñānānanda used to remonstrate from time to time with his Guru over this vexed question. But the Baba would reply, "Jñānānanda, this is merely an arrow in my quiver, which I can employ as and when necessary, when the ultimate time comes." (Compare this with Thakur Ramakrishna Paramahansa's end, who is said to have taken upon himself the incurable cancer afflicting Girish Ghosh.)

And so it came about that the external cause for the Baba's death was diabetes. On August 24th, 1961, in the secluded Ashram at Grinar Banta

on top of the sandhills, the light that had lit so long the divine lamp near Puri Tirtha was extinguished ; but the Baba's teachings and doings are reverently remembered and perpetuated by his trusted followers.

The Sage had reached the pinnacle of Advaita Vedanta at a fairly early age. Later contact with the divine Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa had melted his heart with compassion through close touch with the Great Mother, so that his last 40-50 years were spent in the welfare and uplift of his numerous householder devotees, while for over 150 years he had kept company mostly with ascetics. Thus Nanga Baba was a remarkable and rare ancient Sage that the present generation had the good fortune of coming in contact with.

Other Mahātmās of comparable status that come to mind are :—

1. The Nanga Baba of Uttarkashi whom I met in 1973 between *Mahālayā* and *Durgā Saptamī* while Ma was present at Bhagat House, Kharkhari, Hardwar for the Pūjās. The saint was known to have been recruited among the first batch of Rajputs by the British after the Indian Mutiny in 1856-57. Assuming his age to have been 25 then, the Baba must have been nearly 140 years old when I saw him. He spent his time doing *tapasyā* at Gangotri in summer and at Uttarkashi in winter. I believe he is no more, but I am not sure.

2. The late revered Sri Narsing Giri Maharaj of Varanasi, who was of the same age and a colleague and friend of Balananda Maharaj who

passed away in 1937 at the age of 108. So Narsing Giri Maharaj must have been about 150 years old at the time of his death in 1978. He was a contemporary of the great Sri Mangala Giri of Kankhal, the Guru of our beloved Didima Sri Muktananda Giri.

3. Sri Krishna Ashramji, the Guru of the late Rai Bahadur G. L. Modi, another legendary saint, was well-known in the regions of Gangorti and Uttarkashi for his *tapasyā*, standing naked in the freezing waters of the Ganga. I met him in the shivering winter of January 1963 on the open roof of the garden-house of the Modi family in Modinagar when Sri Ma was there for a festival. The saint had no clothes on, his hair was thick on his arms and the skin was equally thick and burnt black by the sun. I saw him climb up unaided to the top of a standing elephant to be carried in procession. The saint died a few years later. He was 108 years old when I saw him.

4. The famous Mauni Baba of Calcutta and Konnagar in W. Bengal. When he entered his *Mahāsamādhi* a few years ago, it became known that he had been the leading disciple of the famous *Sannyāsi* Sri Bhagwan Ganguli of Bengal. The saint was then known as Benimadhav Brahmachari a contemporary and co-disciple of Shri Lokenath Brahmachari of Barodi (E. Bengal), another miraculous saint. Mauni Baba was probably of the same age as Lokenath Baba, who was 160 years old when he died in 1890. So Mauni Baba must have been over 245 years of age when he left his body a few years ago.

Bhavani and I met him once in the house of Sri Nirmal Chakravarti, a devotee of both Sri Ma and Sri Mohanananda Brahmachari of Deoghar. The late Dr. Sachin Sarvadhikari, who was President of our Agarpara Ashram, used to meet the saint frequently at Konnagar.

Perhaps readers of *Ānanda Vārtā* will be generous and write about one or the other of these Saints. We owe it to posterity to keep the memory of India's 6000 years old culture and tradition alive with the living memory of successive generations of these God-like enlightened Beings, with whom this holy land has been blessed from generation to generation by the great mercy of the Almighty.

* JAI GURU : JAI MA *

*Let him that seeketh cease not till he find :
And when he finds, he shall wonder !
And wondering he shall enter the Kingdom :
And entering the Kingdom, he shall be at Peace !
The Kingdom of Heaven is within you
And whoever knoweth himself shall find it.*

T. L. VASWANI

EARLY LIFE OF MA ANANDAMAYI: A MIXTURE OF OPPOSITES

Anil Ganguly

In the latest book on Didima we read that when Ma was only nine or ten months old, She was revealed to a mysterious stranger as the embodiment of the Holy, "the wholly other". The stranger was a sādhu with a striking appearance and a powerful personality. One day he visited Didima's house at Vidyakut and found her baby crawling on the floor. In no time he became very friendly with the little sprightly creature, fondled and caressed her and then bowed down to Her in adoration, as it were. Didima thoroughly enjoyed the scene. The sādhu suddenly vanished, leaving a message for Didima : "Whom do you see here ?— the MOTHER, the indwelling Spirit not only of men and women but of the whole Universe and Beyond. She is not destined to be confined to a household."*

In course of time, Didima's angelic darling, the light of village Kheora, stepped into her teen-age. According to the social custom prevailing in those days it was high time for her parents to arrange for Nirmala Sundari's marriage. An eligible bridegroom was found in Ramani Mohan Chakravarty

* *Svakriyā Svarasāmrita* Part II, by Brahmacharini Chandan, Purāṇāchārya.

of village Atpara (now in Bangla Desh), who later became known as Bholanath ; also as Pitaji (father). The sacrament of marriage was observed in 1909 when Nirmala Sundari was not quite 13 years old.

To Bholanath Nirmala Sundari was, from the very beginning, a mystery—a wonder of wonders. His mind seems to have been puzzled by a conflict of ideas. She was completely unresponsive as a wife. Bholanath felt she would be all right in course of time. But that time never came. And how was Bholanath received by Ma ? She saw in him a little child, the embodiment of Gopal (a name of Lord Krishna as a child) and inspired in him a feeling that she was his mother. Bholanath often wondered : “Is she a goddess in human form ?” Indeed, theirs was a unique relationship poised on a spiritual plane beyond the comprehension of ordinary humanity. It reminds one of the relationship between Thakur Sri Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa and Mother Sarada Devi. Let us approach the subject with due reverence.

During the first four years after Her union with Bholanath, Ma lived apart from him—with Her parents for some time and then in the house of Bholanath's eldest brother, Revati Mohan, a Railway Station Master, posted at different places including Sripur and Narundi (both in Bangla Desh). Bholanath's mother had died before his marriage and Pramoda, Revati Mohan's wife, took the new bride under her care. Pramoda was a hard task-mistress. But that was no problem for Nirmala Sundari. In the role of an apprentice

housewife She was equal to any task that might have been assigned to Her. At the tender age of thirteen or fourteen She had to do various chores, some involving considerable physical labour, such as fetching water from a pond and washing and scrubbing, besides cooking and serving meals to various members of the family. As usual with Her, She did everything to perfection and to the satisfaction of Her elder sister-in-law.* The secret of Her success lay in absolute dedication to duty—unstinted and self-effacing. To Her work was worship.

Equally efficient in all kinds of work, Ma was most enthusiastic in one particular duty—looking after Pramoda's children. And the children, in their turn, found in Her a mother, more motherly than their own mother. In fact, Pramoda's eldest daughter, Labanya, would make no secret of her feeling. Once she felt prompted expressly to say to her aunt that she felt like calling her *ma* and not aunt and wanted Her permission to do so. Pramoda, amazed at such an unnatural attitude in her child, scolded her for the preposterous suggestion. Hardly could Pramoda then imagine that little Labanya's feeling would, in the fulness of time, be shared by many others all the world over.

Pramoda's little son Ashu also was deeply attached to his aunt; but one day he revolted

* *From the Life of Sri Anandamayi Ma*—by Bithika Mukherji, Chapter Two.

against Her and created a fuss when She tried to feed him. It was discovered that Ashu had been repelled by some kind of abrasive affliction on his aunt's fingers, presumably caused by too much washing and scrubbing. The condition of the sores was deplorable. But nobody had heard even a word of complaint from Ma.* Really speaking, She never felt any grievance. Besides complaint was foreign to Her nature.

Though the surroundings were not congenial, Nirmala Sundari was at peace with Herself. But She was misunderstood by many. Her indifference to personal discomforts and inconveniences, Her intense dedication to work even of a boring nature and Her excessive endurance and submissiveness were often misconstrued as evidence of a lack of intelligence. Besides, She was queer in many respects. Once She was found lying on kitchen floor unconscious, while some food under preparation on the oven was about to be scorched. Incidents like this caused almost a consternation in the family. But all abnormalities on the part of this simple girl were condoned, because She was so charming and obliging. By Her loving nature, Her spirit of service and sacrifice and Her devotion to duty She won the hearts of Bholanath's elder brother and the members of his family.**

Such was the first phase of Ma's life as a

* *from the Life of Sri Ānandamayi Ma*—by Bithika Mukherji
Chapter Two.

** *Sri Sri Ma Ānandamayi*—by Gurupriya Devi, *Avatarāṅkā*.

housewife, lived in a house which was not Her home, but only the training centre for Her Outer manifestation. Her Inner Being seems to have remained practically unrevealed during this phase. Little Labanya was lucky enough to feel just a touch of it even then.

Bholanath and Ma stayed together at Astagram from 1914 to 1918, except for a period when Ma was in Vidyakut with Her parents. In Astagram Bholanath was an Assistant in the Settlement Department, to start with, and then in the Estate of the Nawab of Dacca. From 1918 to 1924 the couple lived in Bajitpur where Bholanath worked as an employee in the Nawab's Estate. Both the places are now in Bangla Desh.

In the two places named above Ma's Outer manifestation kept house for Bholanath with consummate skill and built a happy home. From the very beginning, glimpses of Her Inner Being were occasionally seen, by Bholanath in a remarkable manner under unimaginable circumstances.

The occasion for the earliest revelation of Ma's Inner Being was *kirtana* sometimes sung by neighbours and strangers. On hearing the name of God, Ma would become fully absorbed in something indescribable and would lose body-consciousness. In the early stages She kept this fact a close secret, but took Bholanath into confidence. One evening Her reaction to *kirtana* took a more serious turn. Although there is no contemporaneous record of the event, a vivid description of Her experience was later given by Ma at Varanasi

to Professor Sudhir Gopal Mukherjee.* Once at Astagram Gagan Rai, a well-known singer, together with his party, had been invited by Bholanath. Ma prepared varieties of dishes for them and then attended their *kirtana*. Frequently, however, She briskly moved to and fro from the place of *kirtana* to the kitchen, ostensibly to see if the cooked food was safe and secure, but Her mind was not there. Nobody noticed that after some time Ma had collapsed and was lying on a couch provided for the women folk. As the *kirtana* was over, it was time for serving meals. But Ma was not in the kitchen. What was more serious, the kitchen door had been kept open and a dog had spoiled the food meant for the guests. Bholanath felt greatly upset. He started frantically looking for Ma till he came to the spot where She was lying in a trance. In spite of repeated efforts he failed to call Her back to this world. Ma seemed to have left Her body which appeared lifeless. So, Bholanath could not find anybody to scold. With distinguished guests kept waiting for dinner, he was very much embarrassed. Some friendly neighbours came to his rescue, hastily cooked some food and somehow saved the situation. Ma remained in the same condition the whole night and for hours the following day. Her reaction to Gagan Rai's *kirtana* had created consternation. People thought Ma was suffering from some sort of hysteria. Bholanath felt mentally disturbed. He wrote to

* Diary of Amulay Kumar Dattagupta dated 28.7.49—
Ānanda Vārtā, Vol. I, No. 3, pp 89-90.

Didima who, however, did not take a serious view of her daughter's so-called illness. On the contrary, Didima thought that Ma should be left alone in Her spiritual world.

It was noticed by Bholanath that while repeating the name of Hari (a name of Viṣṇu), Ma frequently used to lose control over Her body and to develop certain abnormal symptoms. He advised Her a change—from Hari to Śiva, particularly because Śiva happened to be his family deity. Ma's Outer Manifestation now uttered *Jai Śiva Śankara Bam Bam Hara Hara*. To her Inner Being, however, there was no difference between the two. The name Śiva produced the same effect as that of Hari.*

The paradox of Ma's so-called "married life" was mystical enough in Astagram. In Bajitpur it manifested itself more intensely. Attending to all the duties of a housewife, Ma also proved Herself to be Bholanath's friend, philosopher and guide. At night, however, She would take Her seat on the floor of the bed-room and would be transported to a world of Her own, completely oblivious of Her surroundings. Lying on his bed, and often wide awake, Bholanath would watch with awe and wonder. It was simply breath-taking and bewildering.

And what did he see in the dim light of the room? Ma was sitting inert like a statue, but

* *Ananda Vārtā*, Vol I, No. 3, p, 93.

suddenly Her limbs would be in brisk motion. Her body would perform various *āsanas* and *mudras* in quick succession. Her complexion also changed from time to time. Quite often the speed of her respiration assumed frightening proportions and occasionally it appeared to Bholanath that She had fainted or might even be on the point of breathing Her last. A solitary spectator to all these nerve-racking transformations repeated night after night, Bholanath knew not what to do ; but eventually he got used to all this and meekly submitted to the inevitable.*

All the same, the fact remained that Ma had become a problem to Bholanath and he was at his wit's end. Ma's condition, suspected to be pathological, became a subject for gossip in the locality. As advised by well-wishers, Bholanath consulted an exorcist of evil spirits (*ojhā*) and a physician, but in vain. The experts themselves conceded that cure of the supposed malady was beyond the powers of doctors or *ojhās*. Some of his near and dear ones suggested that Bholanath should marry a second time and lead the life of a normal householder. He refused to accept the suggestion.**

In 1924, Bholanath was appointed Manager of the Shahbag gardens in Dacca owned by Nawabzadi Pyari Banu and settled down in Dacca with Ma. Here Ma's Outer Manifestation

* *Ānandamayi Ma*—by Bibhupada Kirti pp. 19-20

** *From the Life of Sri Ānandamayi Ma*—by Bithika Mukherji, p. 20

underwent a remarkable change. She was found to be indifferent to household duties and almost always seemed to remain immersed in Her Inner Being, living in a world of Her own. Even while engaged in domestic duties. She would often lose control over Her limbs. Thus, when serving meals Her hands would suddenly become motionless and while washing utensils in a pond She would lose Her balance and for an indefinite period lie in an exalted state, half immersed in water. Again, on some occasions she just escaped accident from the kitchen oven. Notwithstanding all this, Ma would not spare Herself in doing work which would please Bholanath. He was fond of delicious dishes and Ma was unsurpassable in the art of cooking. Again, Bholanath loved to invite friends to dinner and Ma never grudged entertaining them.

Thus, the mysterious housewife was a mixture of opposites. Household duties were usually performed by Her to perfection. But She was unpredictable. Her 'actions' were not the result of any thought on Her part. They were prompted by *kheyāla* which is inscrutable. *Kheyāla* has made Her mysterious in every role She has played on the stage of life.

Man learns his first lesson of love by loving a human being ; but in reality love is due to God alone.

Hazrat Inayat Khan.

SRI SRI MA'S BIRTHPLACE IN VILLAGE KHEORA

Dr. Anil Kanti Das

(Translated from Bengali)

The Vedas declare : "God is." The Srimad Bhagavata says : "God is." The Tantras go further. They proclaim that God not only 'is', He appears as the Mother and sheds tears of compassion. So we find that Parabrahman, taking the form of a daughter, helps *sādhaka* Ram Prasad at Halisahar in Bengal to repair his hedge. Again at Dakshineswar appearing as the beloved Mother of Thakur Sri Ramakrishna talks to him and shares his food. At Tarapith the Mother gets chidings of love from Vamakshepa, the God—intoxicated saint. Or in the guise of the untouchable girl She admires the songs of devotion sung by Kamalakanta, the poet-saint. Then again She takes on the form of a human being and blossoms forth as a daughter-wife-mother. Thus Sri Ramakrishna said : "Whom you call Brahman I know as Mother". Mother is a sweet name, Mother is the embodiment of all loving kindness. The *sādhu* Nāg Mahāśai, Sri Ramakrishna's, *līlā* companion, used to say about Mother Sarada : "She is much more benevolent than Father."

When the human child in distress calls the divine Mother, She cannot help coming down

into the World. So it is that Sri Ma Anandamayi says: "What you all have desired you have received." Thus the sari-clad figure with conch-shell bangles whom we see before our eyes is actually a manifestation of Parabrahman. The manifestation of motherhood whom Swami Vivekananda named the living Mother Durga has been called in Bengal "the human Mother Kali" (*Mānush Kālī*).

Today I want to tell you about the holy birthplace of our human Mother Kali, Sri Anandamayi Ma.

On the 10th of May, 1979, *Akṣaya-Tritīyā* day, Sri Tapan Nag, a devotee of Ma, and myself visited Kheora. We were not sure how exactly to get to our destination, so somewhat anxiously boarded the bus for Brahmanberia, starting from Chittagong. When the bus was about to start, a gentleman wearing a *lungi* and shirt came and sat next to us. After a while we started conversing with him and found that his name was Dhiren Saha. We were pleased and quite surprised to learn that not only was his home in Kheora itself, but members of his and his father in-law's families were the caretakers of Sri Ma's ashram and birthplace.

We alighted at Khanera Station which is on the C. and B. road, near Brahmanberia in Comilla District. From there we walked about two miles on the rough village road and reached Mataji's ashram at Kheora at about 8 P. m. First of all we offered some sweets in the temple. A number of well-known persons of the village along with

some Muslim devottes of Sri Ma, came to receive us and looked after us with much care. We shall ever cherish the memory of their open-hearted and loving behaviour.

Eventually we started for the spot where the holy Mother Anandamayī has taken birth. We found it in the midst of a large meadow. At present high walls have been erected to protect the sacred place.

After Sri Sri Ma and Her family had left Kheora, this holy place fell into the hands of Muslims. Quite a number of years later, namely in 1927, Sri Ma, Her parents, Bholanath, Gurupriya Didi and her father and a few other devotees came to Kheora on a visit. Even Sri Ma's mother and father were unable to indicate the exact spot where Sri Ma was born. So everyone turned to Ma and requested Her to be so gracious as to point it out Herself. Thus Sri Ma went to backyard of a Muslim's house and, lifting up a handful of earth from near the cow-dung heap, She started crying so profusely that Bholanath and others felt quite worried. After the Divine Mother had stopped weeping, She declared that this was the spot where She had taken birth. Then She called the Muslim villagers and told them: "For your own good keeps the sanctity of this place intact. If you pray here with a pure mind your prayers may be fulfilled."

We are grateful to Dr. Ansari, the well-known physician of Dacca, who when he found that the place had fallen into the hands of Muslims,

resettled these people elsewhere and rescued Sri Ma's birth place.

* * *

A few years ago, two men came from an adjoining village and tried to steal the tin sheets from the roof of Sri Ma's ashram. One of them was a carpenter. As soon as he scaled the wall and stood on the wooden beam of the roof, it broke and the man fell down to his death. Another strange thing was that the wood fell on his companion who was standing below and one of his legs was fractured. He still lives as a witness to this incident. The villagers told me that some time ago he wrote and asked Sri Ma's forgiveness.

* * *

At present there is a photo of Mataji in the temple which was taken during one of Her birthday celebrations. There is another photo next to it. About fifteen or twenty years ago a man, named Abdul Zalil had stolen this picture. On reaching his home he had an attack of black fever. Doctors could not cure him and he eventually succumbed to his illness. Before dying he returned the photo to the ashram and so everyone came to know of the incident. It is worth mentioning that when his father-in-law, Mohamed Maujuddin, came to know of the theft, he was so annoyed that he had his daughter divorced and brought her back to his home in Kheora village, This shows what profound veneration he had for Sri Sri Ma.

* * *

A Technical School dedicated to Sri Ma has

been started in the ashram court-yard. Classes six to nine are functioning. The tenth class is to be started next year. In the beginning, when the school had no building, Dr. Mujibar Rahman, a Mohamedan devotee of Sri Ma, donated to the school a thatched hut in which he had hitherto had his dispensary. For the establishment of the school Prof. Tajjul Islam and Mohamed Nurul Haque Saheb contributed substantially. The contributions of the teachers are also praiseworthy. For the last three years they have been serving without any remuneration. Up to now the students are being taught without any fees.

A number of obstacles had to be overcome before recognition by the Government could be obtained. The school is named 'Sri Sri Anandamayī Technical School.' Within a mile is the Deli Pataisha High School, within one and a half miles the Jamshedpur High School, two miles away the Khadera High School. Considering all this, there seemed to be no scope for another school to be started here. Yet, Sri Ma's *līlā* makes the impossible possible.

A clerk of the Education Department of Comilla who lived in Deli Pataisha village used his influence to prevent the District officer from giving recognition to this new school. The school Inspector Jalaluddin Saheb was also strongly against it. But it seems to have been Sri Ma's *kheyāla* to establish the school, so all the difficulties dissolved of their own accord.

Jalaluddin Saheb was transferred elsewhere. In

his place Mahamed Zahirul Alam Choudhury was appointed. Then the education officer of Comilla decided to inspect Sri Ma's school, but he planned to go to Deli Pataisha School first. However, he became bed-ridden with high blood pressure and so Zahirul Alam Choudhury Sahab who was in favour of giving recognition to Sri Ma's school came for the inspection. Thus things came to a happy end.

Sri Sri Ma's birthplace is in Kheora. By the wear and tear of time the ashram has fallen into disrepair. We feel strongly that Sri Ma's sacred birthplace should be kept in good condition. We, Sri Ma's devotees of Bangladesh and the Hindu Muslim devotees of Kheora wish to take up a scheme to protect the sanctity of this place. Therefore, we of the "Manava Kalyana Sangha" and the villagers of Kheora appeal to all devotees and to the Office bearers of "Shree Shree Anandamayee Sangha" to extend a helping hand towards the materialization of our plans.

Blind as we are we hinder God and stop the current of His graces. But when He finds a soul penetrated with a lively faith, He pours into it His graces and favours plentifully ; there they flow like a torrent, which, after being forcibly stopped against its ordinary course, when it has found a passage, spreads itself with impetuosity and abundance.

—*Brother Lawrence*