

Some Memories of Ma

Ram Alexander

I first met Mother on a mid-October night in 1972 at the Naimisharanya ashram. I had come from Delhi with my friend, the American Swami Nirmalananda whom I had joined a few days earlier in Delhi.

Before embarking on my journey to the East, I had been living in the ashram of an Indian yogi in America where I had studied and taught Hatha Yoga and attempted to practice the basic disciplines of meditation and Raja Yoga for more than two years.

The trip to Naimisharanya was a leap into the unknown. The long train journey brought us to Hardoi well after dark. From there we took a two hour bus ride to Naimisharanya. The final two kilometers to the Ashram were made by bullock cart, dreamily ambling along through the moonless star-filled night.

We reached Mother's ashram at about 10:45 P.M., dazed and disoriented, expecting to find everyone asleep, but were pleasantly surprised to see Mother sitting outside, giving *tilaks** to all as they made *pranāma* to Her. It was the eve of the ten day Durga Puja festival and Mother sometimes observed a tradition of giving *tilaks* to everyone on this night. All day long on the train, Nirmala-

**tilak*, a mark on the forehead.

nandaji had been telling me how Mother is God. Now, here I was, face to face with God who was sitting in a chair with a yellow towel over Her head, giving out *tilaks*, laughing, talking, inquiring after people's accommodations, giving minute instructions for the *pūjā*, and seemingly awaiting our arrival. "Why not?" I thought, and following Nirmalananda's lead went to make my *pranāma*. As I rose up Mother smiled and with Her divine finger placed a small red dot of *kumkum* on my forehead. We were then shown to our tent where we quickly retired for the night. It was only later that I learned that all *darśana* of Mother were not conducted in the same manner as my first one.

For the next ten days and for several weeks after that, I saw Mother for many hours daily as the fantastic, spectacular festival of Durga Puja was under way. I was struck by the divine glamour, queenly dignity and the supernatural beauty radiated by Mother paralleling that of the Goddess Durga Herself. This was no humble saintly hermit, but a veritable living Goddess. I found that whenever I attempted to meditate in Mother's presence, my mind turned deeply and powerfully within. To be with Her was to spontaneously become aware of God, of one's highest ideal, more constantly and intensely than ever before. Further, the more I basked in the light of Her spiritual presence, the more refined and receptive I became to the God-awareness which She constantly generates.

After a few days, I discovered to my horror that the intensity of Mother's darshan was filling

my head with, or rather, churning up from deep within me, all sorts of impure thoughts which I had not been consciously aware of before. Nevertheless, I continued to stay around Her as much as I possibly could as I felt this to be a purification process ; although I was unable to look Her in the eyes during this period which lasted for about two weeks. I felt afterwards all the more receptive to Her grace.

One day toward the end of our stay in Naimisharanya, Nirmalanandaji told me he would be having a private with Mother and asked me if I would like to speak with Her. At the time I still had my Guru in America and did not feel I had anything to ask Mother and so declined the offer. A few days later, however, as Nirmalanandaji was going for his private, I had the thought : "If She is really as great as everyone says, may be I should go and ask Her those basic burning questions concerning the ultimate meaning and purpose of life with which I had always been obsessed." I caught up with Nirmalanandaji and said I would like to join in his private.

Once seated before Mother, I realized I must state myself as briefly and concisely as possible. I quickly told Her of my search for Truth and of the obstacles which I felt were beyond my control and thwarted me. She gave me a clear, specific answer as to what to do in order to attain to my ultimate Goal. Later Nirmalanandaji told me that it was as though She had known me for a long time. (And in fact several years later in a private with

Mother, in response to my query regarding a very important spiritual experience I had had as an adolescent many years before meeting Her, She indicated clearly that She had been aware of that experience at the time it occurred ! After my first question I suddenly felt inspired to ask something else. I blurted out : "Please grant me the grace to never forget you, not even for a second" ; for I knew that if I could remember Mother I could remember God far more intensely and profoundly than I could do on my own. Indeed, to think of Mother is to be in the presence of God. It is *Ātmā darśana* or as Mother says : "I am your own Ātman". How absolutely true !

After my private with Mother, I felt as insignificant as ever around Her although Nirmalanandaji assured me that I had received Her '*kheyāla*'. It was only several months later after my return to America that I realized the full truth of this.

After Kali Puja in Naimisharanya, I followed Mother to Hardwar for *Samyam Saptah* and then to Vrindaban and Benares. During this period I attempted to meditate as much as possible in Her presence, and became increasingly aware of an ever-growing receptivity to Her spiritual power. Still I felt that my relationship with Her was totally impersonal, that She was not particularly aware of my existence.

Thus, shortly after Nirmalananda's departure for America, I decided also to be on my way. I was holding a 'round-the-world' plane ticket which allowed me to stop anywhere and everywhere on

the way. I was determined to take full advantage of it and in no hurry to return home. Besides there was still much of India I wanted to see. It seems, however, that Mother had other plans for me.

Since I did not feel that I merited, or perhaps did not even desire at that time a personal relationship with Mother, I did not feel it appropriate to formally say good-bye to Her. Therefore, one day in Benares I simply *pranāmed* from a distance and left, not at all sure I would ever meet Her again. Later I learnt that for several days after my departure, Mother had enquired about me and had even asked people to look for me.

The day after I had said goodbye to Mother I became sick and when the illness persisted, I saw a doctor who told me that I had jaundice. I somehow made it to Calcutta and a plane that took me back to the U.S.A. My parents to whom I returned were surprised but relieved to see me, as I had been sending them exotic descriptions of my proposed adventurous round-the-world itinerary.

Shortly after my return home, I came down with a bad flu on top of the jaundice. For about a week I ran a very high fever of 104 to 105 F. for which I, perhaps stupidly, refused to take any medicine. Then one morning I awoke to find that I was completely cured,—the fever was gone and I had more or less regained my full strength. At the same time I was filled with a startling awareness that I had a completely new body—that every molecule was new and pure. Furthermore, I fully

realized that this total rebirth was due to Mother and to having had the *darśana* of so many sacred places in holy India while travelling with Her. For several days I would look at my arm or hand and marvel at it for I *knew* that my entire physiological being was wholly new and that Mother had caused this.

After this time I began to meditate for a minimum of six hours daily,—2 or 3 times as much as I had done previously. Furthermore, I became increasingly convinced that I would devote my life to the practice of *sādhana*.

During this period I faithfully followed my Guru in America. There was no question for me of conflict between him and Mother. However, the closer I tried to get to him, the less I felt it was where I belonged. For several months I lived alone in the Guru's private hermitage in the country where I spent as much time as possible in *sādhana*. One afternoon I was meditating, and as was then my custom, did one mala of "Om Ma" while looking at a picture of Mother. After finishing this I said within (or, perhaps even out loud) to Mother: "If you can really hear me, prove it." At that very moment a small whirlwind about two feet tall came in through a large open window and began to violently spin around the place where I was sitting. "Go away, go away," I yelled, more than a little terrified; and Mother, disguised as the whirlwind, again graciously granted my petition. In the silence that followed I felt the room reeling with Her Kālīesque laughter. How many

times since was I graced to see Her divinely beautiful physical form, like a storm, thundering forth that mercilessly liberating Laughter !

Shortly after this incident I returned to India and Mother in time for Durga Puja of 1973. In a private I told Her that I was confused regarding my *sādhana* and She replied : “Don’t worry, I shall put everything right.” A few days later I received *dīksā* from Ma. I felt that this was the most important moment of my life for at last I had a specific tool. I had full faith in its appropriateness, efficacy and power with which to carve out my self-liberation. Here I should add that Mother says, it is the Guru or the Guru’s grace which does everything for the disciple including his *sādhana*. Also, in retrospect, I realized that my real initiation by Mother must have occurred earlier, perhaps the first time I saw Her. It would seem that this initiation, or transference of spiritual power from Guru to disciple is a continuous process. At any rate I am convinced that the type of *sādhana* given is wholly secondary to the transference of the Guru’s shakti and the incorporation of the chela into the cosmic body of the Sad-Guru. Whatever mantra or Iṣṭa-devata, be it Hindu or Christian, etc. into which one is initiated, that form of God to which one is devoted must ultimately merge into the Sad-Guru’s *swarūpa* which in turn ultimately reveals itself as the *sādhakā-chelā*’s own *Ātman*. As Mother has said again and again : “I am your own *Ātman*. I am Darshani”,—one who gives darshan (in this case of the *paramātmā*).

Shortly after my *dīksā*, I had a strong desire to return to America. I had not consciously planned to remain permanently in India, however, Mother suggested to me during a long private that I should consider doing so and that I could construct a room in the new Kankhal Ashram if I desired. My inclination to live in the West immediately vanished and, almost miraculously, from that time on I found myself totally adjusted to the food and climate of India which had previously been quite troublesome for me. From that day to this I have been determined to remain in India near Mother for the purpose of doing *sādhanā* in spite of innumerable obstacles.

After that fateful private with Ma at the end of 1973, I returned to the U.S.A. for a short visit. One day out of sheer desperation and boredom with what I considered the spiritual waste-land of the West, I entered a Catholic church and knelt before an image of the Virgin Mary. To my amazement I found it identical with having Mother's *darśana* just like being in India with Ma : the same Shakti and spiritual inspiration ! For some time thereafter I recited the traditional devotional prayer to Mary on the rosary and I found tremendous spiritual power therein ; but I was well aware that it was Mother who had opened this door for me ; that there is only one Truth and that Mother was my *entre'* to its myriad manifestations.

The Kumbha-mela of 1974 at Hardwar was a revelation to me. I particularly enjoyed walking alongside Mother who was carried in a palanquin

during the various processions. Here more than ever She radiated that Divine regal majesty and the atmosphere was charged with a special spiritual intensity. This experience was even more profound three years later at the Allahabad Kumbh. How many times must I have gazed upon Her and felt that all the pain and suffering of human existence were worth enduring if only for the privilege of catching a glimpse of Her. No amount of hardship was too great if one could see Her once during the day—even if it was from a distance and only for a second. For to see Her was to catch a glimpse of one's own true Self, i.e. God. To be in Her presence was to become aware of the Ultimate Reality to a degree that would normally be beyond one's personal ability. Usually when I would *pranām* to Mother I would be slightly afraid because it was a leap into the unknown. The rebellious ego must temporarily die at Her feet, drowning in the purifying nectar of Her radiant love—time, space, ego, the world temporarily ceased.

One of the rare instances where my resolve to remain physically close to Mother wavered was shortly before the construction of my *kutir** was to begin. I expressed my doubts to Mother who told me I could do as I pleased. The next day I told Her that I had reconsidered but I was not sure to what extent I would use the room and asked Her if it was alright to go ahead and build. She told me: "You may come and go as you like

**Kutir* cottage.

but know that you will always have a home here.” This was said with such intensity, penetrating my soul, that all my doubts were immediately dispelled. By giving me the maximum amount of freedom rather than trying to constrain me, She had effectively caught me.

Once after my *kutir* was built and I was living in it, Mother was passing by on Her way to the *sādhu kutir* and noticed that the tulasi growing around the *kutir* was tied up tightly with a cord to keep it from falling over. Mother told Gadadhar and myself to untie it because God (tulasi is thought of as a divine plant) should not, cannot be bound and, furthermore, an ashram should be a place where there is a minimum of compulsion and where there is complete ease. Finally Mother gave instructions for the tulasi to be loosely bound in such a way so as to give it a maximum amount of freedom while at the same time protecting it from falling. During the years I lived in the ashram I came to greatly appreciate Mother’s rules which may appear unreasonable to outsiders, but without which the esoteric work that leads to complete freedom would be severely impaired.

One of the many and main ways in which I am aware of how Mother differs from other ‘gurus’ I have known is that She allows you to become uniquely your own self rather than a kind of slave to the ‘guru’s’ work or organization or slavishly imitative of the ego-personality—no matter how highly developed—of the so-called ‘guru’. Because

in Mother's case there is, without a doubt, no question of ego, the more one attempts to cling to Her transcendent personality, the more one approaches the uniqueness of one's own *Ātmā*,—of one's own inherent and unique divinity. In other words each one's way to that ultimately non-dual, monistic absorption in Brahman must be his own. One cannot do another man's dharma, Mother is the light that reveals to each one his own unique path to the supreme, undifferentiated One. In describing Her own awareness, Mother explicitly states that it is uncompromisingly non-dual at all times. Thus it is not by chance that a *mūrti* of Adi-Shankaracharya, the great proponent of advaitic philosophy, graces the Kankhal ashram.

Mother's physical manifestation, Her "personality" is so irresistably attractive to those who are chosen to be Her devotees that it effectively entices them away from their worldly attachments and establishes them in that higher but more subtle spiritual reality that Mother epitomizes. The more they are weaned from the world for Her sake, the more intimate and ecstatic becomes their devotional relationship with Her. Much like Sri Krishna's *rās līlā* with the gopis, each devotee feels that Mother is dancing only with him,—that She is uniquely his or her own ; that She is there only and especially for him. The point of this attachment to the external Guru is not to engender an unhealthy dependence but to establish the disciple on firm spiritual ground. Then when the disciple is ripe, and this I think is the ultimate greatness of any

true Guru, Mother dissolves the dualistic relationship and reveals Herself as one's own true Self, the supreme Guru, the *Paramātman*.

One of the main things I feel Mother has taught me, at least to some measure, is the necessity of truthfulness in thought, word and deed. Most of us are so much in the habit of being dishonest and lying that we are usually not even aware of it. This unconscious, socially acceptable dishonesty is often considered 'worldly wisdom'. So to prefer truth to falsehood is to sincerely desire the supreme Truth rather than to grovel in some transient worldly egoistic gain achieved through cowardly deceit. Obviously one who is at all established in, aware of and striving for the eternal reality of the spirit will not stoop to falsehood and deception and thereby jeopardize their everlasting spiritual gold for the cheap ephemeral junk of this world. Frequently people with spiritual pretensions boast of being in the world but not of it—but this is so often just empty words.

What I consider to be one of the most beautiful aspects of my relationship with Mother is that She did not try and pretend with me that by remaining in the world and practising 'karma yoga'—a popular euphemism for slave labour in the Guru business today—I could ever attain to any genuinely deep spiritual realization. Instead She provided me with all the tools and facilities to engage in *sadhanā*, real inner exploration—something that only those who have done their practice in sustained seclusion, aided by the grace of a true Guru,

can understand. It seems that many people often like to think of Mother as a sweet, gentle Bengali lady who advocates *grihasta* ashram, sings beautiful Vaishnava kirtan and preaches *bhakti marga* but the Mother that I know, like Siva, prescribes the yoga of complete and uncompromising renunciation (a renunciation that is, no doubt, the by-product of true devotion); and like Kali, mercilessly destroys all egoistic illusions which keep the *jiva* enslaved and are the ultimate source of suffering.

Once after calling out to Mother intensely in my meditation for several days, I asked Her in a private if She always hears me when I call Her from within. Suddenly She turned toward me and with tremendous charm and intimacy—a sort of cosmic coyness—as if giving a conspiratorial wink—said: “what do you think?” On countless occasions She proved to me that She knew what I was thinking.

One evening in the Vrindaban ashram I was sitting with Mother and a small group of devotees on the raised area in the garden next to the mandir. It was dusk and the air was fragrant with the intoxicating scent of jasmine. An occasional conch or temple gong could be heard in the distance punctuated by the cries of wild peacocks. Mother was at Her majestic best,—epitomizing and embodying all the beauties and powers of nature. Although there were not many people present, I purposely sat a little away from the others, lost in my own reverie. Suddenly the thought entered

my mind : “Perhaps it is time to move on. After all my motivation has never been particularly religious but has been driven more by the search for adventure. This has been a grand adventure but perhaps there is something else over the next horizon.” Suddenly, in what can only be described as a timeless moment, I lived out—mentally experienced—every possible adventure my mind could conceive of to the point of complete satiety. Then I saw that all sense experience was a type of fantasy and that real adventure lies in going beyond the entire mind ego-conditioning. I saw that Mother, like *Mahāmāyā*, held the keys to all mental-sensual ego experiences and that She also was the key to the Ultimate Reality beyond the cinema of the world. My desire to move on vanished. I was sitting in front of the ultimate adventure ! By this time it had become dark and Mother suddenly got up to go to Her room. Very much dazed I walked along beside Ma when She suddenly took the torch She was holding and shined it in my eyes only a few inches from my face. “*Tik hai ?*” “Is it all right ?” She asked me, and then burst out laughing. It was the same Kali-like laugh I had heard within while meditating in America with a miniature tornado whizzing around me two years earlier. “*Tik Hai, Ma.*” I somehow managed to murmur. This was the first time She spontaneously spoke to me.

In what was perhaps the last private I ever had with Mother, in Bhimpura, shortly after my marriage, Mother spontaneously said to me, repeat-

ing with great intensity as though pointing Her finger at me : “Nothing between us has changed. Nothing between us has changed. Nothing between us has changed”, and so it is.

“At all times keep your mind immersed in the thought of God so that there may be no possibility of straying into a path that leads to misery.”

—Sri Ma Anandamayi

Mother the All-knowing

Chaitanyaben Divatia

In 1978, Durga Puja was celebrated in Ma's presence in great style in the Durbargarh at Gondal and Lakshmi Puja in the Hawa-Mahal there itself.

When I went for Ma's darśana in the morning, Ma said twice to me : "I have to talk to you, sit down." So I sat in Ma's room for at least an hour or more and thoroughly enjoyed Her *darśana*. People were coming and going constantly, so Ma got no chance to say a word to me. After some-time She told me "Go and have your lunch and then come again." After having had my meal I tried to see Ma but nobody was allowed to enter Her room as Lakshmi Puja was being celebrated that very evening.

At last, when the festivities were over, after 10 p.m., I could go to Her room. Only a few people who were leaving Gondal came to bid farewell to Ma and within half an hour I got the opportunity to be alone with Her. With great love Ma told me what She had the *kheyāla* to convey to me. Then She touched my head and back and Her loving gaze rested on me. I was drowned in bliss. I did *praṇāma* and left in a mood of great exultation, which I cannot describe.

The next morning, a party of four of us started for Ahmedabad by bus. Mataji had asked us to

take Beenadi, a Bengali devotee with us. She originally was to go in someone's car, but that person had left for Rajkot the previous night.

Before starting we had Ma's *darśana* and received *prasāda*. We partook of it as soon as the bus started and then I got busy doing *japa* with my eyes shut. After having driven a few miles beyond Rajkot, our bus driver, when trying to overtake another bus, lost control and our bus with three big jerks fell into the gutter by the side of the road. We all jumped up shouting "Ma, Ma", loudly. Only Beenadi who was lying on the bench behind the driver's seat fell down. All the passengers, in great fear, tried to get out of the bus by the back window. The bus half rolled over and stopped with a jerk. We also managed to get out with our luggage. I had been injured and blood was running down my forehead and cheeks but I had remained fully conscious repeating Ma's name. Some people helped to carry out Beenadi. Someone produced benzoin-iodine which was applied to the wound. The bus driver ran away! The conductor offered to take us to Rajkot hospital, but we refused at our own risk and signed his paper. We told him to wait for the next bus going from Rajkot to Ahmedabad and prayed silently. Our prayers were heard; within fifteen minutes a De luxe bus arrived in which there were three vacant seats for the three of us. Beenadi could not sit and so was kept lying. Nobody objected. By Ma's grace all passengers had been saved and the four of us reached Ahmedabad. My

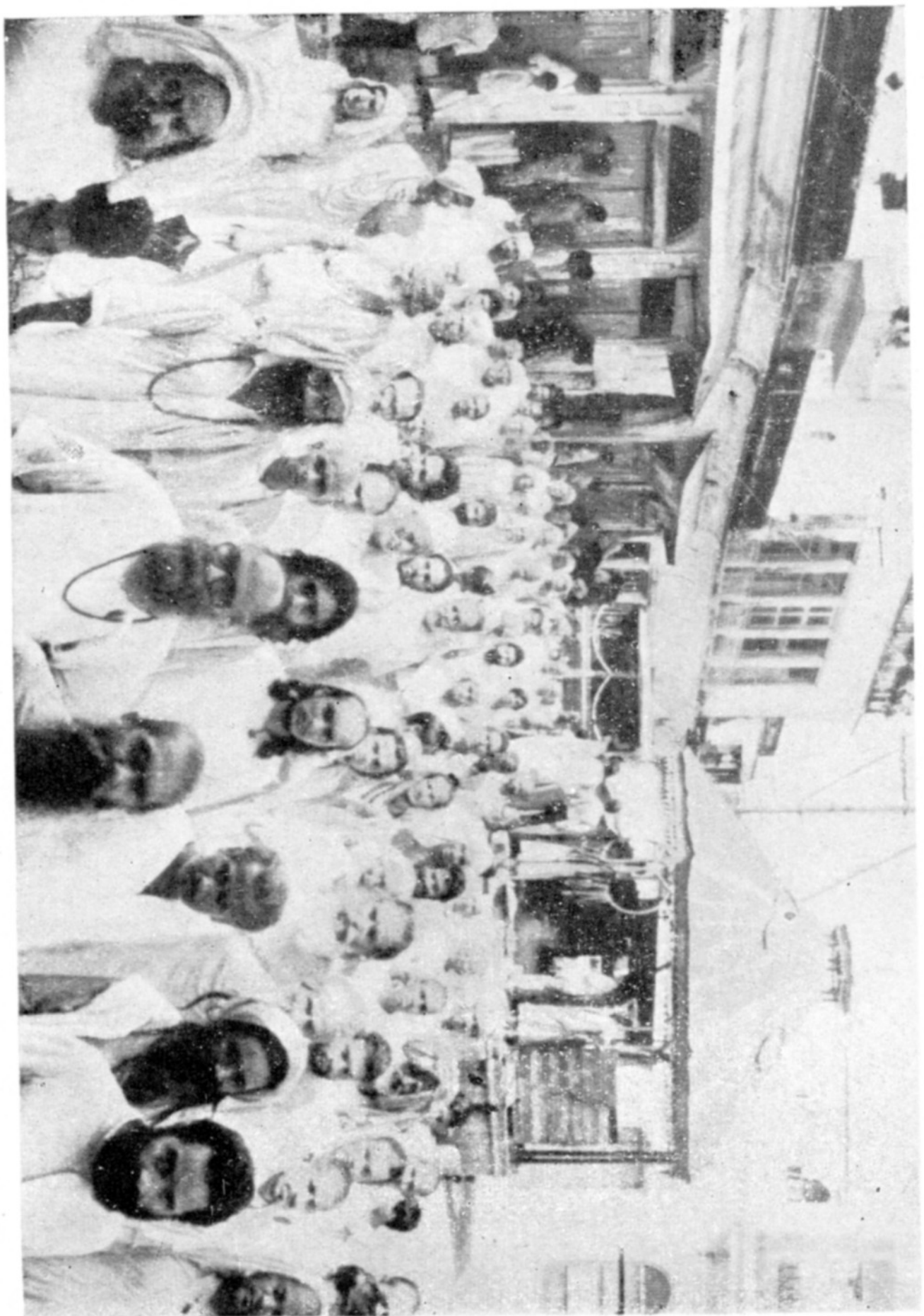
companions felt worried about my wound and so one of them went to Munshaw's place and phoned to my home. The other one was walking with difficulty but was not wounded so could get to her home easily, while Beenadi and I were taken to the V. S. Hospital in our car. Beenadi had fractured her back and so had to be put into plaster. Mr. Munshaw wired to her son.

The next day Sri Ma received the news of our accident. She at once decided to go to Ahmedabad and She visited the V. S. Hospital. Since Beenadi was unable to get out of bed, Mataji intended getting out of the car to see her, but there was no time as She had to catch the train for Delhi at Baroda. It was my good fortune that I could be taken for Sri Ma's *darśana* in a chair. She gently stroked my neck, forehead and back. How deeply happy I was to be blessed by Her loving touch. She said a few words with great affection. With folded hands I bowed to Her. She then consoled Beenadi's son and left for Baroda.

Within three weeks the *Samyam Mahavrata* was scheduled to be held in Nadiad. I was eager to participate in the *Samyam Vrata* and was praying to Ma. My spinal chord had been affected by the accident and I had to wear a collar round my neck. Within two or three days my brother came from Bombay to see me. He told me that Swami Virajananda was coming to Bombay for a short visit. With great difficulty I wrote two sentences to Ma and asked my brother to entrust my note to Virajanandaji who was going to Delhi from Bombay.



Sm. Indira Gandhi, amongst others, paying her last homage to MA



A View of Procession

Within a few days my health improved : my wounds were healing and I was able to go to Nadiad the very day Sri Ma reached there. At night we had Her *darśana*. As soon as I stepped into Her room I garlanded Her and then sat down at Her feet, saying : “Ma by your blessing I have come !” Ma said : “Received your letter. Are you better now ?” I was so overwhelmed with emotion that I could not utter a single word ! Ma gave us *prasāda* and I left Her room with my two sisters. Then we went to see Swami Virajananda to thank him for conveying my note to Ma. He laughed and said : “Your letter is still in my pocket, Ma wired to me to stay in Baroda and I joined Her only today. There was no chance to read your message to Ma.” I was amazed to find that All-knowing Ma received my message although it had not been read to Her. Ma is omniscient and all-pervading and knows the working of our minds and hearts. Ma is the Goddess, THAT, the ONE. Jai Ma.

Silent japa should be engaged in at all times.

—Sri Anandamayī Ma

Ma : My Beloved Master

Ma Das

Omniscient, Omnipotent,
Full of bliss and Omnipresent :
This is Ma, my very own,
And I'm ever Thine alone.

Unbounded Thou, the luminous sea,
Beyond the world of 'you' and 'me'
Immortal ONE amid the transient,
Ever-seeing, ever silent.

Un-created Source of all,
Manifest as big and small,
In play divine endlessly,
In disguise peerlessly.

Compassion Incarnate, full of nectar,
Lord Supreme, My Beloved Master,
Holy blessings flow from Thee,
All the time, for all that be.

Abode of peace, and so near :
She, in heart, resides brother,
And reveals to those who care
To really love and seek Her.

Lost in dreamy worldly splendour
Man forgets the sacred grandeur
Of the gracious miracle-worker :
The immanent dearest mother.

No words there be which can describe
Thy love for all of every tribe,
Of every creed, of every race,
Showered with Thy causeless grace.

My Real Self, My Saviour Thou,
Hast always been, indeed, as now,
My sole Refuge, my all-in-all
'Ma Das' is at Thy beck and call.

In Association with Sri Sri Ma Anandamayi

Amulya Datta Gupta

(Translated from Bengali)

(Continued from A. V. Jan. 1982)

Dacca, Tuesday, Oct. 25th, 1938.

While the photographer of Dacca was getting ready, Ma related the following :

Rādhārāni's Marriage

Sri Ma remarked smilingly : "A girl has got married." I waited patiently, hoping to hear more, but Sri Ma did not speak. Khukuni Didi said : "Don't you understand ? This time at Mussourie Sri Ma was married to a certain girl and Ma has named her 'Rādhārāni'."

Mataji (langhing) : The girl has passed her examinations but looks so small and innocent that nobody would believe that she is earning her livelihood by teaching at school. It was the girl's wish to forsake everything and come away with me, but this was not to her father's liking. He does not earn anything and moreover is addicted to the bottle ! So how is his upkeep to be met if he relinquishes his daughter ? Since the father objected, the girl could not accompany me. But she told me, "Ma, perhaps there will be a day in future when I shall not be deterred by any obstacles."

Wednesday, Oct. 26th. 1938.

Today Sri Ma is leaving Dacca. I went to the Ashram very early and found that She had gone with the girls to bathe in the pond. Dr. Pant had objected to this because of Ma's health but She had pleaded him into acquiescence. On Her return from the pond we did *pranāma* to Ma and the girls were treated to *prasāda* of various sweetmeats. We also obtained our share.

I was watching the crowd from the temple veranda, when Sisir came and said : "Dada, please go to the veranda of Annapurna Mandir, you will see something unheard of." On reaching there, I beheld Kalachand¹ going round and round the image of Annapūrṇa inside the temple at a quick pace. No one was allowed to enter the temple except Brahmīns. Kalachand was a Kayastha. I had no doubt that it was with Sri Ma's permission that he had entered the temple and was circumambulating the image. So I wished to ascertain why Ma had overstepped the general rule which had been observed for so long. However, I watched for a while and then came down from the veranda. A little later, Sri Ma came out of the temple accompanied by Gurupriya Didi and another lady. Referring to the incident of Kalachand entering the temple, I said : "Ma, what does all this mean ?"

Mataji : : You all know that previously a lot was said concerning entry into the temple. Many stipulated that since at various other places all

(1) Kalachand A very senior ashramite who passed away a few years ago at Kankhal after taking *samnyasa*.

castes were permitted to enter, why should not this temple follow suit as well. But here the prohibition for all and sundry to enter the temple is for your own good. There are tombs of several mahātmās below this temple. If you enter the mandir your feet will step on those *samādhis*. Why should you be subjected to the inauspicious consequences of this? For this reason the temple is thrown open to all without distinction only one day every year. All the same, if anybody observes strict brahmacharya he becomes qualified to enter the temple.

Kalachand has been a brahmachari for a very long time and has thereby earned the right (*adhikāra*) to enter the temple. He is allowed to clean it but not to touch the images.

Sri Ma and Professor Upendra Gupta

Later Sri Ma came to sit in the kirtan hall and many did obeisance to Her. We sat down near Ma and were eagerly waiting for Her to speak some words of advice. Professor Upendra Gupta was among us. By way of introducing him to Ma, Abani Babu said : Ma, he is a great philosopher."

Mataji (laughing) : Baba, what is called philosophy ?

Upendra : What do I know of it ?

Mataji : O ! You know so many things ! You are teaching boys. (Looking at me) Does he not ? Is he not a professor ?

Myself : Yes, Ma, he used to teach ; now he has retired.

Mataji (laughing) : So you are an experienced teacher. Tell me, what does philosophy mean ?

Upendra : I shall be able to speak only if you ask me to. Why don't you speak ?

Mataji : Have I studied anything ? You tell us !

Upendra : To speak of something of which one has no knowledge is called philosophy.

Mataji : Can one speak without knowing anything ?

Upendra : Although one does not know, one pretends to know.

Mataji (laughing) : Yes, this is knowing something without understanding it. But Baba, you have spoken very well indeed.

In order to know Him you must enter into your true nature. But you are dwelling in the realm of constant wanting. Whatever you do produces only more and more want. There can be no peace unless you change from the state of wanting (*abhāva*) to your true nature (*svabhāva*).

Upendra : So what then should we do ?

Mataji : I repeat what I tell everybody : start with your studies ! Whatever is due to happen will take place of itself. Look, when children begin to study they usually excel in a particular subject. Similarly when someone starts out on the quest of realizing God, whatever has to be done becomes revealed from within oneself. This is why God is said to be Self-effulgent. He Himself shows the path that leads to His realization.

What is necessary for you is merely to start on the job—to commence your studies.

Very frequently you complain that your mind is roaming and that you cannot possibly make it steady. But then the mind is restless by its nature. This is why I look upon the mind as a child. Intelligence and Iness (*ahamkāra*) are the parents of the mind-child. Just as father and mother coax their wayward children in various ways to persuade them to learn reading and writing, so should you by discriminating with your Iness and intelligence try to make your mind one-pointed. All work must be carried out with patience and single-minded zeal. Otherwise there will be no results. Just as when you want to extract water from the earth you have to dig patiently in a selected spot and not dig a little here and a little there ; so also in order to realize God you have to exert yourself for a long time with single-minded devotion and the utmost steadfastness.

Often one can hear it said that however many sins the greatest sinner may have committed, they can all be washed clean by pronouncing Rama's name even once. This is very true indeed, because a single spark of fire can consume more goods than man can ever accumulate. Whether you recite His name or worship Him, whatever you may do to realize God, if you do it with unwavering patience and single-minded devotion, you will find the way to lasting peace. By clearing the forest you get an open field—you don't have to create a new field. You often repeat "I—I" (*aham*)

or "I am He" (*soham*), don't you? Do you know what this leads to? It is like the tree and its shadow; if you follow its shadow you get to the tree. Similarly by concentrating on "*aham*" you will come to "*soham*".

Dacca, Wednesday, Sept. 16, 1939.

In the evening I was sitting at home when Amiya Roy came to inform me that Sri Ma had arrived at Dacca. Immediately I started for the ashram with Bhupati Babu. It was raining and the wind was blowing hard. In the ashram I found Sri Ma sitting in the kirtan hall. *Āratī* was being performed in the temple. We bowed to Ma in *praṇāma* and sat down near Her. Ma was looking somewhat emaciated but there was a wonderful radiance in Her eyes and face. While *āratī* was going on there was no conversation.

As soon as it was over, Ma asked Bhupati: "Where did you hear of my arrival?"

Bhupati: I heard it from Amulya Babu on the road.

Mataji (to me): Where did you get the news?

Myself: Amiya informed me at my home.

Mataji: In Calcutta I was told that there were two parties at Dacca. If one party were informed, the other one might be dissatisfied. This is why I have come this time without letting anyone know. But God seems to have found a way of spreading the news.

And Ma started laughing.

Trying to ascertain how long Ma would remain in Dacca, Sri Ganesh Chandra Sen asked : “Ma, you are of course always present in Dacca, but for how many days will you be visible here this time ?”

Ma (making a play upon words) : What is *dhaka* (hidden) remains of course hidden and what is manifest is indeed visible.

Sriman Anāth : For how many days shall we see you with these our insentient eyes ?

Mataji (laughing) : Does the insentient have eyes ? Its eyes are of course also lifeless.

Anath : So, how long shall we see you with these eyes of ours ?

Mataji : You see whatever your eyes are capable of perceiving. For this body nothing is pre-determined. Whatever is to happen takes place. From Calcutta I went to Arjungunge where I had never been before. Where I would stay was not known. Someone mentioned a *dharmasālā*, so we went there. On arriving I saw a large hall. People started coming in ones and twos from various places, some from Berhampore, others from Jamshedpur. Then kirtan was performed. It was to continue for six hours, but later it was decided that it should be kept up from sunrise to sunset. Then it was seen that the kirtan went on all day and all night and even beyond that. From Arjungunge we proceeded to Calcutta. Khukuni Didi was with me. I told the others to drop me at Bandel and go on to Calcutta. This was what happened. The *kheyāla* arose to go from Bandel to Naihati. Now I have

come to Dacca. From the steamer I wired to Didi my intention to go to Dacca.

A devotee : Will they come to Dacca ?

Mataji : Let us see what they do.

Sri Ma was accompanied by Abhaya, Sisir and Ruma Devi. At 8 p.m. Mataji proceeded to Siddheswari to spend the night there.

Ramna Ashram, 17th August 1939

The Necessity of a Sadguru in Spiritual Life

I raised the topic of Sobha Ma, saying : “Sobha Ma maintains that without taking initiation from a Sadguru one cannot get anywhere in religious life. But you don’t say so.

Mataji : I too say this.

Myself : But not all the time.

Mataji : Whom do you call a Sadguru ?

Myself : Him who has realized the Brahman.

Mataji : Yes, he has been established in the Brahman. Look, one finds a Sadguru after acquiring a great deal of merit. You know, I lay much stress on the repetition of the Lord’s name and maintain that everything can be achieved by His name. You must thoroughly understand the spirit in which I assert this.

Look, you teach in a College, but not everybody can do so. One can teach in a College only after having acquired the capacity and the necessary degree. But one cannot ignore someone who teaches A, B, C in a primary school, for this is also not in vain. Because the knowledge of A, B, C is necessary also for B.A. & M.A.

Similarly there are different levels on the path of *sādhana* leading to the knowledge of Reality. A person can only speak from the level he has reached at that time. So on all these levels a Sadguru is relevant. You know this body's ways, don't you? It never discourages anyone. If somebody is told that he can never make any progress without a Sadguru, he may be so discouraged as to remain quite inactive. This is why I always advise constant adherence to the Name. By repeating the Name great yearning for Him will ensue and the keen desire for a Guru will awaken.

Perhaps even after having found a Guru one's longing may not be appeased. Then you may possibly notice that some aspirants move from the shelter of, one Guru to that of another. 'Step-by-step initiation' is also mentioned in the *Śāstras*. This is something similar. Guru, mantra, *Iṣṭa* are all one. From the worldly point of view one may perceive several Gurus, but in Supreme Truth they are all one. Although there are thousands of waves in the ocean, they are all nothing but water. I behold everything as one ; I cannot speak of anything in division.

The essential thing is a real thirst for the Divine to prepare the ground properly. The body is just the soil. If it has been prepared well, then as soon as the seed is sown the tree will start growing. So as to increase the desire for Truth, to prepare the soil properly, I advise the repetition of a sacred Name.

(Pointing to Herself) For this body everything has happened of itself. Perhaps in one in a million or in a billion everything may take place spontaneously. So under these circumstances, how can I declare that nothing can be achieved without a Sadguru? However, it is preferable to avoid mentioning how it was with this body.

Again, viewing it from another angle of vision, suppose somebody does not have recourse to a human Guru and starts practising the Name or a religious rite. Although it may appear from the ordinary point of view that he has no Guru, I will say that what he does is certainly due to the Guru's prompting. When referring to a Guru we mean God Himself who is the root cause of all thought, feeling and action. In a case like the one just mentioned, I would say that it is the Guru residing in his heart who is inspiring him to engage in those practices. So in this sense you can say that nothing can be achieved without a Sadguru. But the real purport of what people say about the necessity of the Sadguru's shelter is that once you have been accepted by a Sadguru there is no more downfall. For he inculcates divine power into the mantra so that it is never destroyed.

Nevertheless you may find that many aspirants, even after having been initiated by a Sadguru, look for another Guru because their eagerness to find God is so intense that they cannot place full reliance in their Sadguru. About this kind of thing, I will maintain that their keen anxiety, this having recourse to one Guru after another—even

this is due to the will of the Sadguru. Eventually one reaches a stage when the Guru, His grace and all the rest disappears—all is merged in the One. Surely, there is also a state of existence without Guru, is there not ?

Myself: How can I tell? I have not yet reached that state.

Mataji: But you have read the *Sāstrās*.

Myself: Yes, I have previously heard of such things from you.

Mataji: Yes, as soon as the sense of duality vanishes, then such a state supervenes. Who then is whose Guru? Who showers grace on whom?

Myself: Ma, you have previously said that it is only as a result of many meritorious deeds that one obtains a Sadguru. Why then can no special improvement be noticed in oneself even after having been blessed by a Sadguru?

Mataji: Not only as a result of one's good deeds does one secure a Sadguru. His mercy is also without cause or reason. This is why some obtain quick results after being blessed by a Sadguru, while others are faced with delay.

Myself: Is the delay due to the disciple's tendencies and inclinations brought over from previous births?

Mataji: The Guru's power can achieve everything. He can burn to ashes everything in a moment; He may also cause delay.

Myself: Sobha Ma declares that having once been blessed by the grace of a Sadguru, one attains to liberation within three births. This may be

applicable to persons with lesser qualifications. Is this correct ?

Mataji : It does not occur to me to reply to this question just now.

The Attainment of the Brahman and Ultimate Fulfilment

Myself : Sobha Ma also says that not more than nine Sadgurus can live simultaneously in the world. It will not do to have one more or one less.

Mataji : Does Sobha Ma say so ? But I cannot say anything of the sort. You must consider that there is an infinite variety of experiences in the spiritual world. Everything is possible. In this sense the simultaneous existence of nine Sadgurus is also correct.

Myself : After attaining to fulfilment does not the viewpoint of everyone become equally valid ? So why do some speak in a clear and definite way while others hint vaguely at the Infinite ?

Mataji : Look, fulness is made up of both the pieces and the whole. When you see something in a piecemeal fashion, how can you have seen the whole ? If you want to behold anything properly, you cannot confine it within any boundary.

Myself : Therefore should I understand that not all who have realized the Brahman are fully enlightened ? For instance the various authors of our *Śāstras* are said to have been knowers of the Brahman and the *Śāstras* indicate definite paths to fulfilment—they are not vague.

Mataji (laughing) : This can be replied to in two ways : On the one hand it may be said that they have described only their own experiences, so it must be a partial exposition of Truth. On the other hand it may be argued that they have written to educate the public. Thus the authors of the *Śāstras* who are supposed to have been knowers of the Brahman may have been fully enlightened or not. Now you have understood, haven't you ?

Myself : Yes, I have in a way, but not really.

Mataji (laughing) : You are trying to find out who has reached what particular stage, but nothing of this kind of topic will be divulged by this body.

Sri Sri Ma's Words of Assurance.

Pramathanāth : Ma, I want to ask you something : Besides our mother who gave us birth, we are told to have another Mother who understands our joys and sorrows, to whom we can submit our unreasonable grievances, who puts up with our egotism and helps us in times of danger and distress—does such a Mother really exist or not ?

Mataji : She does.

Pramatha : Then why is this Mother so unattached and devoid of affection ?

Mataji : In what way ?

Pramatha : Just now you were comforting Rajkumar¹ with the remark that in family life one

(1) Rajkumar Bhattacharje, the husband of Bholanath's niece who had recently lost his wife.

has to endure sorrow and bereavement. If someone lives among thorns he is bound to be scratched. What kind of a mother is she who cannot save us from the scratches ?

Mataji : Don't you know ? You are also the parents of children. You let your children play games because you know this is good for them. While playing they sometimes hurt themselves falling down, or get covered with mud and dirt. But when you scrub and clean them they start crying loudly. Similarly when in your family life you suffer pain and sorrow, remember this is nothing else but your Mother cleaning you of dirt.

Pramatha : But do we understand this ? When the mother beats her children they know it is their mother who is beating them. This is why, even when they weep they are crying "Ma !"

Mataji : No, this is not correct. When children cry while being cleaned they resent the discomfort of it. Later they come to understand that their mother has given them trouble in order to rid them of dirt.

Having started on the simile of children's education, I can also point out that the Mother does not entrust all things to her children in spite of loving them. She carefully puts away articles that are of value, otherwise they might be spoiled by her children. When the time is ripe the mother entrusts those things to her sons and daughters. So there is no cause for despair. Continue to perform your work. If you do not see quick results, remember your labour is not wasted. The Mother

is preserving everything and at the right moment will hand it over to you.

Pramatha : So we can rely on the Mother ?

Mataji : I assure you you can be entirely free from all anxiety. Just go on practising your japa or whatever other spiritual exercise you may have chosen.

Rajkumar : Why do you insist on *nāma japa* or similar practices ? Our worldly mother does not insist on anything for ensuring the well-being of her children.

Mataji : This Mother is somewhat different from your worldly mother. This Mother wants Her sons and daughters to develop all virtues. They should become endowed with Her qualities and become like Her. This is why She tells Her children to resort to the Name. Besides you can observe that the worldly mother also prevails on her children to take the trouble of studying well so that after education they may be able to look after their parents' properly. But that Mother wants to mould Her children in her own image. She wishes to inculcate into Her children all Her virtues and qualities, so that these may be revealed to them by their own experience. For these reasons this Mother is somewhat different from the worldly mother.

At these words of confident assurance from Sri Sri Ma everyone present appeared to be relieved. There was a look of joy in their eyes and faces. But how long would this wonderful feeling last ? We are not even aware of when the

clouds of doubt and disbelief arise and darken our dimly lit horizon.

The Benefit of Sri Ma's Company

The time of our departure had come. Sri Ma said to Rajkumar: "Your way is now clear. With single-minded determination continue to tread this path."

Rajkumar: I wanted to take the spiritual path from the very beginning. It is you who induced me to get involved into family life with all its complications.

Mataji: Good—to get a taste of life in the world has cleared the atmosphere. This is the peculiarity of having approached this body. Had you gone elsewhere many things would have remained hidden within you; but having come to this body everything has become revealed. This is for your good. Is it safe to keep snakes in your caverns? Who knows when they may raise their hoods? It is far better to extract these reptiles once for all and clear the road for further progress.

On listening to these words of Ma I recalled something that Gopinath Kaviraj had told me. One day he was explaining to me the difference between keeping company with someone beyond the range of the three *guṇas* (*guṇātīta*) and a mahātmā endowed with all the nobler qualities (*sattwa*). He pointed out that in associating with such mahātmās one could get considerable help in one's *sādhanā*, because by their *sattvic* influence, one's evil tendencies are temporarily subdued, so

much so that they don't seem to exist anymore. At that time it looks as if close proximity to these mahātmās has brought much success in one's *sādhana*. But these undesirable qualities have not been completely uprooted, though temporarily subdued, and in due course, given the opportunity, they will awaken once more. Whereas association with Sri Sri Ma, who is beyond the three *guṇas* has not at all this effect. The company of such an exalted Being does not stimulate the nobler or baser tendencies at all, because such a Being is completely beyond the attributes (*guṇas*) of matter and so does not influence anyone by the qualities of *sattva* (luminosity, harmony) or *rajas* (ceaseless activity and movement). Quite often it even appears as if there were not only no progress but rather retrogression. This is due to the fact that association with a being beyond the qualities or attributes (*guṇas*) of matter brings to light and may even temporarily enhance suppressed tendencies and inclinations. They rise up with full force only to be destroyed for ever and by their annihilation noble qualities and inclinations are awakened and established for good. But at the early stage a dreadful experience has to be gone through by the *sādhaka*.

The above mentioned words of Sri Sri Ma seemed to vindicate the substantive truth of Sri Gopi Baba's philosophy.

“Juice or Bliss in Essence”

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“Raso Vai Sah Rasam Hyavayam Labdhvanandi Bhavati Ko Hyevanyat Kah Pranyat Yadesa Akasa Anando No Syat Esa Hyevanandayati.”
(Taittiriya Upanisad-2. 7.)

“रसो वै सः। रसं ह्येवायं लब्ध्वानन्दी भवति। को ह्येवान्यात् कः प्राण्यात् यदेष आकाशात् आनन्दो न स्यात्। एष ह्येवानन्दयति।”

(तैत्तिरीयापनिषत्—२।७)

“He is Juice or Bliss in essence. By tasting this Juice or Bliss, one becomes blissful. For, who would have lived, who would have breathed, if there were no Bliss in the Sky? He alone gives Bliss to all.” (Tait. Up. 2. 7.)

Thus, in all our Indian Scriptures, Brahman or Isvara, the Absolute or God is taken to be Bliss in Essence : Ananda-Svarupa. He is, of course, described by all philosophers as “Saccidananda”—“Existence-Consciousness-Bliss”. But here, “Sat” or Eternal Existence necessarily leads to “Chit” or Eternal Consciousness—as, He who is eternally existent, must also be eternally Conscious, for mere material or unconscious existence can never be eternal—because, it is sure to break into pieces soon, and finally, disappear for ever. Again, “Chit” or Eternal Consciousness necessarily leads

to Eternal Bliss—as Consciousness or Knowledge is, naturally, the greatest source of Bliss to us all. In this way, the Divine Nature reaches its climax or perfection or fulfilment in “Ananda” or “Bliss” alone. Thus, “Ananda” or “Bliss” combines within itself all the divine Guna-Saktis, all the divine qualities and powers,—the very Svarupa of Divine Svarupa, the very Nature of Divine Nature.

That is why, it has been pointed out in our Vedas and Upanisads that Brahman or Isvara creates the Universal Souls and Matters out of Himself, or transforms Himself, embodies Himself, manifests Himself in this vast and variegated Universe of ours, joyfully and playfully.

Hence, as Brahman is Bliss in essence, the Brahmanda, too, must of necessity be so, undoubtedly, i.e., Bliss in essence.

But alas, why do we not realise the same at all, why do we suffer from so many pains and privations, so many sins and sorrows, so many failures and frustrations, and what not ?

So, what to do here ? —Only one thing—one supreme, sublime thing : Remove the veil of Avidya or Ajnana—Ignorance and Delusion and then look around, look inside and outside, look everywhere. What will you see ? Bliss, Bliss, nothing but Bliss.

But then the question of questions is—who will teach and enable us to remove our veils of Ignorance and realise fully, realise solely, realise eternally our own souls to be what they really are.

There is only one such person—a Guru or a Spiritual Preceptor.

Again we ask—who is a Guru or a Spiritual Preceptor, precisely? He is a divine messenger and a divine incarnation : Isvara-duta and Isvara-Avatarā—as a representative of the All-merciful Divine Being, stretching out His loving hands towards us for our salvation, for our perfection, for our happiness.

And how fortunate are we all, indeed, to sit at the holy lotus-feet of such a great and grand and glorious incarnation of the Divine Being on earth—with a most appropriate soul-stirring, heart-touching, life-lifting name—“*Anandamayī*” ; and her Ananda or Bliss was a full and perfect combination of all the Guna-Saktis, all the qualities and power, as found in a perfect soul. Thus, she as a supreme, sublime, sweet and soft, emblem of loftiest and loveliest Divine Bliss, was a wonderful synthesis of Satya, Siva, Sundara ; Truth Beauty Goodness. Jnana, Bhakti, Karma : Knowledge-Devotion-Service ; Saundarya-Madhurya-Aisvarya : Beauty-Sweetness-Grandeur—representing Amrita Brahman to us in a most wonderful form—

“स वा एष महानज-आत्माजरोऽमरोऽमृतोऽभयो ब्रह्माभयं वै
ब्रह्माभयं हि वै ब्रह्म भवति य एवं वेद ।”

(बृहदारण्यकोपनिषत्—४।४।२५)

“He is the Atman—the Soul, Supreme and Unborn—without old age, without death, without birth, without fear. Brahman is alone without fear. He who know this, becomes Brahman, the Fearless.” (Brihadaranyak Upanisad, 4.4.25).

In this way, our most beloved, our very own, dearest and nearest Mother—Mother Unique,

Mother Merciful, Mother Lofty poured Ananda or Bliss on us all in million streams and lovingly showed us the way to Ananda.

Now, what is that "Way" ? That is the supreme and sublime way of Samya-Aikya-Priti-Maitri-Seva-Tyaga : Unity, Universality, Love, Fraternity, Service and Sacrifice.

This way is the only way to Salvation, the only Mukti Patha, which the All-Blissful Sri Sri Anandamayi Ma of ours embodied in her own Blissful Divine Self for the peace and bliss of all.

Again, we say, how very fortunate are we all !

And listen, listen reverentially, listen joyfully, listen hopefully to Sri Sri Anandamayi Ma's exalting direction—

“धर्म कि ? याँके सकलेइ चाय, ताँके पाओयार सहायक ये कर्म । ताइ धर्म । ताइ स्वभावेर कर्म । ये दुःख अशान्ति आने, ताइ अभावेर कर्म । ताइ अधर्म ।

(श्री श्री माँ आनन्दमयी)

“What is Dharma ? Dharma is that which enables one to attain Him whom everyone desires for—and that is very natural for us. The Karma which brings about sorrows and perturbances is Adharma, and this brings about want and emptiness in our lives. This alone is Adharma.”

(Sri Sri Ma Anandamayi)

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The Pull of the Unmanifest

B. C. Bose

On 28th August, morning newspaper's published the P.T.I. news—"Anandamayee Ma died after a prolonged illness". This was, to say the least, misleading. There were persistent queries from the curious readers as to what was the cause of Her death or rather of leaving the physical body. The fact is that She did not have any illness, which ordinarily means some disease affecting the body. She Herself said to Sri Jagatguru Sankaracharya of Shringeri, Sarada pith, who visited Her nearly two months earlier—"Ye sharir ka koi bimārī nahīn hai". "*There is no disease in this body*" (referring to Herself). If one does not believe this phenomenon, one may be amazed to learn that Ma Anandamayi took only extremely small quantities of liquids for more than four months, not to speak of any solid food. It is a puzzle to the medical authorities as to how a human body can survive so long with hardly any intake of liquids and no solids.

Moreover, She never took any medicine all Her life. Illness to an ordinary human being means, absence of ease, pain, discomfort, and last not least, absence of happiness. But, "Ma Anandamayi", said Sri Arobindo after looking at Her photograph, "remains in a state of *Sachchidānanda* (Ever existent, ever conscious, bliss). So *illness* cannot be

associated with Her. She radiated bliss and peace, being the inexhaustible storehouse of both."

One can unravel the mystery of Her disappearance from the visible world by referring to the Bhagavat Gita explaining the advent of God in human form. In the IVth Chapter, the Lord says : "*Prakṛtim Svām adhisthāya, sambhavāmyātma māyayā*" "Establishing Myself in My own nature, I come into being through My power (māyā)"— (Translation By Dr. Radha Krishnan). According to the Hindu belief ordinary creatures are born again and again, as a result of their karma (deeds). They have no free will. They are sleeped in ignorance. But The Lord assumes a human form out of His free will and with full consciousness. Those who have some knowledge of the life and līlā (play) of Ma Anandamayi know that She was fully conscious from Her birth. She Herself said : "This body was not born to suffer or enjoy the fruits of past deeds" (*Prārabdha*). There were many such indications in Her early life, the full implications of which were not understood by the people around Her, who, of course, could see that She was not an ordinary child. In 1936 She said to Paramahansa Yogānanda, when he visited Her in Calcutta : "Before I came to this earth, Father, I was the same. As a little girl I was the same. I grew into womanhood, but still I was the same. Ever afterwards though the dance of creation changes around me in the hall of eternity, I shall be the same." "Her Self-Knowledge, said late Mahāmahopadhyāya Dr. Gopinath Kaviraj" we

are assured, did not arise under the impact of an extrinsic element outside of Herself—it was always with Her, being the state of Her nature.” To Her, knower, knowledge and object of knowledge merged into one.

What has Ma indicated about Her departure? Two great mahātmās came to Ma, at Dehradun almost at the same time in the beginning of July to entreat Her to recoupe Her health and strength so that She could bestow spiritual benefit on humanity for a longer period. The one was the ninety-two year old saint Baba Sitaram Das Onkarnath who flew from Kanyakumari, where he was observing “Companionless silence” (*Nihsangha Mauna*). The other was Sri Jagat Guru Sankaracharya referred to earlier. Their efforts to persuade Ma to get well failed. In fact, Ma’s body refused to accept any food. When Ma heard that Baba Onkarnath on returning to Kanyakumari had also stopped taking water, She accepted one or two spoonfuls of water. But it was vomited. Mother’s body this time did not respond to the presence of the Mahātmās, to prayers and the recitation of the Rāmāyanā etc. which were uninterrupted upto 27th August at Dehradun.

In Her conversation with Sri Jagat Guru Sankaracharya, Ma expressed by raising Her hands upwards : “*Yeh Avyakt ka tarah keich rahā hai*” meaning thereby that there was a pull from the Unmanifest Absolute. This statement of Ma is very significant and full of spiritual import. We have to take recourse to the Gita again to grasp

something of it. The Lord says in the 7th Chapter '*Avyaktaṃ Vyaktim āpannam manyante mām abud-dhayaḥ, param bhāvam ajānanto mamāvyayam anuttamam*'. ("Men of no understanding think of me, the unmanifest, as having manifestation, not knowing my higher nature, changeless and supreme") (Translation by Dr. Radha Krishnan). God assumes human form (*Param Brahma Narā-kṛiti*) whenever He considers it necessary. Ma Anandamayi used to say "everything happens with this body (as She referred to Herself) spontaneously according to what you people need." In fact, She did not do or say anything out of personal will. It was the Divine will—Her '*kheyāla*, an expression to which Ma 'attributes most of what She does or refuses to do.' This time it was Her *kheyāla* to leave the body. The necessity for continuing in the world of manifestation was over. It is, however, to be understood that, whether with form or formless (*Sākār-Nirākār*) whether with attributes or without them (*Saguṇa-Nirguṇa*), She is the one Unmanifest Eternal (*Pūrṇa Brahma*). As Dr. Radha Krishnan says—"only Pure Being is unmanifest, everything else belongs to the world of manifestation". Ma Anandamayi is "*Śuddha Sanātani*—Pure and Eternal. Ma says, "There is only One and nothing but the One. Everything is in the One and nothing but the One". She is all pervading. She once said to Gurupriyadidi Her most intimate companion in simple Bengali "I have no space even to turn aside". She is '*pūrṇa*' (whole) and no part can be separated (*akhaṇḍa*). She

personified the upanishadic concept of '*Pūrṇasya pūrṇamādāya Pūrṇamevāvaśiṣyate*—(If the whole is taken from the whole, the whole remains).

Ma before leaving Her human form did not say anything by way of direction regarding the disposal of Her body or the future of almost thirty Ashramas which have come into existence around Her. This is the grand finale of Her manifest self. There is only one parallel in history. When Crito asked : "In what way shall we bury you Socrates" ? Socrates answered : "In any way you like, but first, you must catch me, the real me". Ma has, by departing from the world of manifestation, focussed the attention of all Her devotees on the search for Her within. *Ma*, means *Ātmā*. Self-realisation means realisation of Ma. "*The Ātmā of this body is everyone's Ātmā*" She is everywhere, within human hearts and outside. That is what She meant when She said : "*This body has only one āshram (abode) that is the entire universe ; where is the second ?*". She reverbrates the quintessence of *Saptaśati Chandi* (Puranic exposition : of Tantric philosophy), where Mahadevi says "*Ekaivāhaṃ Jagatytra, Dvīṭīa Kā mamāparā*". "I am the only one in this universe, where is the second other than me."

Now is the Time

Elwood Decker (U. S. A.)

I was told, "MOTHER has left Her body!" I understood the shocking statement immediately, yet felt it was impossible. It is only the illusion that comes and goes. The Spirit Abideth Forever, not a spirit like a ghost, but the Eternal Spirit That changeth not, and Is The Substratum, The Primary Wholeness of CONSCIOUSNESS From Which and Into Which the Phenomena of the physical, astral, and causal universes appear and disappear as The Play of The One REALITY. For many of us MOTHER IS THAT REALITY, WHO DESIGNS and MAINTAINS This School where Her children may learn to evolve back Into Her ABIDING PRESENCE. It is not mere play for us. It is education, adventure, art, science, discipline, meditation, and much more beyond words to describe. So, though it sounds odd and illogical, I accept the statement, "MOTHER has left Her body., while believing at the same time that the entire present Universe is only a swiftly passing phase of Her Body Which comes and goes momentarily as well as during and after Pralayas ad infinitum. So much for general interest.

What really is our immediate concern is that as long as MOTHER SRI SRI ANANDAMAYI is devotedly remembered on earth, and Her Pure Advice wholeheartedly heeded, there will be those who will commune, and SEE with enlightened sight Her so called "earthly" form Transfigured and Divinely Immortal as any.

Has Ma really left us ?

Anil C. Ganguli

“.....the pure spirit shall flow,
Back to the burning fountain whence it came,
A portion of the Eternal, which must flow
Through time and change, unquenchably
the same”.

—*Shelley*

In the early hours of the morning of August 28, 1982, a “sister” rang me up to say : “Ma has just left us for good !” The news was stunning and unbelievable. Its first impact gave me a rude shock and I almost lost my bearing. *Mātri Vāñī*, often the solace of my life, shed rays of light on my irresistible tears and, therefore, I felt prompted to share my feelings with fellow-mourners. Let us all have a purifying bathe in the life-giving showers of Ma’s memorable words—that will certainly sustain us in our sorrow.

“I am ever present with you all, but you have little yearning to see me. What can I do ? Know it for certain, I have my eyes fixed on what you do or fail to do”.

“Here is a little wayward daughter who stoutly refuses to move away, even if asked to do so, who never has moved away and who will stay out”.

“You wonder whether the vibrations of your thought reach ‘this body’. Well, yes, yes, yes !”

“I find the whole world to be a vast garden ; you are all flowers blooming in this garden with your individual beauty and grace. I move from one corner of it to another. What makes you sad when I leave you, only to be in the midst of your brothers over there ?”

“Ma means *Ātmā*. All space is *Mā-moy* (pervaded by Ma’s Presence)”.

“There is only one *Ātmā* ; You are the *Ātmā*, I am that *Ātmā*, every one is that *Ātmā*. So, wherever you may be, I am with you.”

Ma’s omnipresence in the Vedantic sense, too subtle for ordinary mortals to realise, hardly offers us any consolation. We cannot help feeling the pang of separation from the Universal Mother, revealed to us as our Ma, irrespective of our credentials. The entity referred to by Her as “this body” was to us the object of our deepest adoration, the one living source of inspiration and the only unfailing guide in our voyage across the storm-tossed sea of life. It is shuddering to think that we have lost for ever any further opportunity for Ma’s *darśana* and that there is no chance of repetition of Ma’s *līlā* on this earth—Her sweet words and soothing glance ; Her soft touch and soul-stirring gestures ; Her jokes that filled our hearts and Her so-called indisposition that from time to time upset us.

Perhaps the drama of Ma’s *līlā* was completed so far as this world was concerned. She had scattered broadcast seeds of spirituality all over our land and abroad and these will germinate in

the fullness of time. If we have any 'filial piety', it would now be our sacred duty to nurse these with tearful prayers into healthy saplings finally to grow into spreading trees to offer shade and shelter to all mankind. Therein lies also solace for our sorrowful hearts. Let us not weep for Her, shed no idle tears and waste no time in disconsolate grief. Mother is still with us. If She was always with us in life, She is more so after Her Great Departure when the thin barrier has been removed. Is it not incumbent on us to carry on with greater enthusiasm and faithfully to perform the duty assigned by Her to each one of us? Her watchful eyes are still fixed on us—let us fully realize this truth—and let us not be caught betraying Her trust.

The Universal Mother is naturally claimed by the whole world. She preached no particular creed, nor did She encourage any sect. Hers was an all-embracing message of love and peace inherent in all religious beliefs and acceptable to all. All people, irrespective of caste or creed, belonging to Mother India or any other country, or professing fanatically their own religion as the only true religion, found refuge from rain and storm under Ma's sheltering umbrella. She had no formal education beyond the elementary stage. Still, most learned scholars and men of realisation were simply amazed at Her profound wisdom that found expression in Her spontaneous answers to the most abstruse questions of religion and philosophy. They have no second to turn to in their need.



MA After Mahaprayan



MA just before Maha-Samadhi

During Her life on earth two world wars wrought gigantic devastations in the material world and ushered in a period of moral degeneration on such a wide scale as to make it an age of utter darkness. Groping in that blinding darkness, bewildered mankind desparately cried for Light and Life. Hence the advent of the Universal Mother as Anandamayi Ma. She responded with overflowing love and held aloft the golden taper burning and revealing the road to Love, Joy and Peace. The light She kindled still shines like a star and can never be extinguished. Did not Ma Herself declare at Vrindaban only the other day that it was possible still in this age to listen to Lord Krishna's flute and see the shepherd boys—lucky companions of His childhood—leading their herd homeward at dusty dusk? It requires, of course, seeing eyes and listening ears.

Is it possible for us, ordinary mortals, now to see Ma, to hear Her voice and to touch Her body as we had been accustomed to? Swami Paramanandaji's answers to these questions have given me consolation and guidance. Swamiji, a man of action and of meditation, speaks from conviction. It was in the perspective of Ma's universal existence in the totality of space at all times that Swamiji's observations such as follow become so full of significance.

“Ma's body exists no more. But Ma has always been and still is, all-pervasive and omnipresent”.

“It appears to me that one whose mind is free from worldly thoughts and thus purified, can achieve anything.

“If one can remain deeply absorbed in Ma, and if that condition becomes fixed and solemn, seeing and touching Her, as before, may become a reality.

“Many of us have failed to act according to Ma’s directions. The secret of *shanti* (peace) in the future lies in everyone translating into action what Ma asked him to do.”

Epitaph for our Ista

Ma has finished Her earthly Dance,
 All the stars shine in remembrance.
 Knowing Her as Innermost Self
 Free from sensuality’s pelf.
 Ever playing Her Holy Part
 In the core of every heart.
 Source, Saviour, Space of each soul,
 Beyond our words, the Silent Whole.

Elwood Decker

Mātri Līlā

Ever since Mataji returned to Kankhal on April 10th after Her strenuous trip to Agartala and Calcutta, Her body seemed to be ailing although nobody could diagnose Her illness. She would take neither solid food nor milk or milk products. Even liquids only in tiny quantities and those also were vomited almost daily.

For the first time in all these years, She did not take part in Didima's *Sannyāsa Utsava* on April 14th, neither did She attend any of the functions of Her birthday celebrations from 3rd to 11th of May. During the evening *Āratī*, which was the only daily public *darśana* of Sri Ma, we invariably found Her reclining on Her couch on the veranda. To greet visiting *mahātmās* She would occasionally sit up for a short while and again lie down. We have reported about all this in the July issue, but perhaps it was not clear how frail Her body had become.

It is well-known to Her devotees that Her body rejected every kind of medicine. Many years ago, Ma once for some reason agreed to take Dr. Pitamber Pant's medicine. It cured Her high fever in no time but this was followed by severe heart trouble that caused much anxiety for several months. For many years now, it had been known that Mataji's *kheyāla* alone could cure Her from any illness. On former occasions She had also

made it clear that we could help by doing *japa* and keeping our minds concentrated on God. So, whenever She was not keeping well we used to perform extra *japa* and *kirtan* and pray to Her to cure Herself. This time however, whenever She was requested to get well, She would consistently reply : “*Kheyāla nahīn, jo Bhagavan Hare.*” “*There is no kheyāla, Whatever God does (is all right).*” When during his visit to Ma at Kishenpur, His Holiness Sri Sankaracharya of Sringeri Math on July 1st requested Mataji earnestly to get well soon, She replied : “*Baba, ye sharir ka koi bimari nahin hai. Yeh Avyakt ka taraf khīnch raha hai. Jo kutch dekh rahe ho usiki anukul Kriyā.*” “*Baba this body has no illness at all. What is happening is due to the pull of the Unmanifest. All that you notice is due to that.*”

Here we have to apologise for reporting incorrectly in the July issue, due to wrong information, about Sri Sankaracharyaji’s conversation the next day, July 2nd, when he took leave. He asked Ma to come to Sringeri for Durga Pūjā. Ma replied : “*Baba, agar ye sharir rahe to is sal Kankhal mey rahne ka vachan diyā.*” “*Baba, this year, if this body remains, it has agreed to be at Kankhal for Durga Pūjā.*” When Sri Sankaracharyaji before leaving, again repeated his request that Mataji should visit Sringeri, Mataji said : “*Yeh sharir Ātmā rūp se hamesha tumāre sāth rahegā.*” “*As the Ātmā, this body will always be with you.*”

Mataji had arrived in the Kishenpur Ashram, Dehradun, from Kankhal early morning on June

26th to be present during the *Bhagavata Saptaha* although She had told Sri Vishnu Ashramji Maharaj that She would have to listen from Her room upstairs. When the *Bhagavata Saptaha* was successfully completed on July 4th, Mataji, on July 5th, moved to Her cottage at Panchavati in the compound of Sri and Srimati M. L. Khaitan next to Kalyanvan. There She stayed in great quiet and solitude in Her lovely, large room overlooking the hills. Yet no improvement could be noticed in Mataji's health.

On July 6th, Guru Purnima was celebrated very beautifully. Puja was performed by Br. Bhaskaranda to the accompaniment of sweet music on the terrace adjoining Mataji's room. Mataji was lying on Her bed. Her *darśana* had been fixed from 9 to 11 A.M. Two long queues were formed in the spacious garden and devotees could enter Sri Ma's room by one door, do *pranāma*, place their gifts on the carpet near Mataji's bed and after receiving *prasāda* from the attending girls would file out by the other door. A few devotees who had arrived later in the day from other towns were allowed to approach Ma in the evening. The following day also there was *darśana* since many people were leaving for other towns.

Mataji Herself then declared that henceforth *darśana* would be only on Sundays for half an hour in the evening. Ashramites, however, and those coming from far off places for short visits, were allowed to see Ma on week days also for a few minutes in the evening.

Already for several months Mataji had refused to listen to letters. Occasionally very urgent messages were conveyed to Her, such as when someone passed away or had an accident. She would then either reply by a few words or ask the person who brought the news to reply himself. However, that Ma invariably responds to sincere prayers inwardly has been experienced by many. Here is a striking example : A devotee from a very distant country wrote an urgent letter to Ma, requesting an ashramite to read it to Her. She wrote : "I am going through the most difficult time in my life. I need to hear from Ma so desperately." The ashramite informed her that Ma was not attending to correspondence anymore and therefore advised the devotee to pray to Ma and try to receive replies in her meditation. The following is quoted from the devotee's answer : "My answers are indeed coming from within more and more. Everything you wrote was as though Ma wrote through you... I have received comfort and blessing from Ma within when I meditate. It is stronger than ever before and I am feeling all the sorrows and burdens being taken away by Ma. She is with me always and I remember that more and more through Her grace. I have prayed fervently and She has come to me ! Jai Ma !"

Private interviews had stopped completely already at Kankhal. In very exceptional cases, Br. Bhaskarananda would ask Ma a question and then convey the reply, if any, to the questioner.

This is how compassionate Ma weaned us very gradually from Her physical presence. We now understand that this was Her Divine Grace (*ahetuk Kripā*) to accustom everybody to seek Her *darśana* and Her guidance in their hearts.

Every *Gurupūrnimā* letters, wires and gifts arrive from devotees who are unable to be present in person. Ma usually would give a message that was sent to everyone in reply. This year also Br. Bhaskarananda succeeded after about seven days to get one sentence from Ma's mouth : "*Sri Gurudeva kripa varshan pūrna howar prārthī howa.*" "*Become a supplicant for the fullest outpouring of Sri Gurudeva's grace.*"

On Sunday evening, July 11th, was the next public *darśana*. A large crowd assembled from Dehradun, Mussoorie, Rishikesh and Hardwar.

Early that afternoon, the Prime Minister, accompanied by her son, daughter-in-law and grandchildren paid a short visit to Ma, having heard about Her indifferent health. They had flown by helicopter to Dehradun via Mussoorie and came from there by car. Mataji sat up for a few minutes and talked to them a little bit. This was the last time She sat up of Her own accord and gave *darśana*.

On July 20th, Ma Yoga Shakti accompanied by two attendants came from the U.S.A. to see Ma. She had dreamt that Ma was not well and so hurried along. She appeared to be greatly moved and concerned.

Quite a number of devotees arrived from distant places just to get a glimpse of Ma. Mataji said

very little and that only occasionally. Everyone had to wait for the appointed time in the evening and then sit in silence at a distance for a few minutes in front of Ma.

One evening two Indian devotees who had come all the way from London were invited to have their meal in the house where Mataji stayed. When they were called, Ma asked : “*Have you done your sandhya (evening prayers) ? Don't eat without performing it !*” They went outside and obeyed. To Her last breath Ma taught : “*Bhagavan ke niye thako*” “*Live in God's presence !*”

On July 23rd at about 9 P.M., Mataji called Her hostess and said to her : “Tomorrow morning this body will shift to the Kishenpur Ashram.” She gave no reason. Later we came to understand what the main reason had been.

Two days earlier, Mataji had called Panuda in private and said : “*Ei shorir ki awastha to dekhte patcho. Ei shorir ke ekhane rakha thik hobe na.*” “*You can see in what condition this body is. It will not be right to let this body remain in this place.*” When Panuda inquired whether Ma would like to go to Kankhal, She said : “*Kankhal ke niye jete parbe ?*” “*Will it be possible to reach Kankhal ?*” Then Ma kept quite and after a while said : “*Take me to Kishenpur.*”

On July 24th at about 9-30 A.M. Ma was brought to the Kishenpur Ashram by car. In the courtyard She was put on Her chair and carried straight to Her room upstairs without stopping to visit the Ashram temples as She had usually

done on all former occasions. She never left Her room at all until Her body was carried downstairs in the morning of August 28th.

For several years Ma had always slept on a veranda, never in a room. But this time, already for a few days before moving from Her cottage at Panchavati, She had not been strong enough to walk the few steps from Her room to the covered terrace.

No sooner Mataji had taken up residence in the Ashram than a period of ceaseless religious functions and activities began in the Ashram Hall. A poster with “*Susvāgatam*” (“*Hearty Welcome*”) embroidered in gold on bright red silk was placed above the main entrance to the hall. On July 26th, *Akhandā Rāmāyana* (Uninterrupted recitation of Tulsidas’ Rāmāyana) started. It continued until after midday on the 27th, which according to the Bengali calendar happened to be the anniversary of Didima’s *mahāsamādhi*. (It had actually occurred on Aug. 8th, 1970.) This was commemorated by a special pūjā in the Matri Mandir and a feast for all present.

On the 30th evening the *Jhulan* (swing) festival started and was celebrated in the hall every evening until quite late accompanied by kirtan. Many had come from Kankhal Ashram for the occasion. But Mataji’s condition was far from satisfactory. On some days She would not even drink water until the evening. On August 2nd fell the anniversary of Bhaiji’s *Tirodan* (passing away) at Almora in 1937 (Which was then August 18th). This too was

observed by special *pūjā* and *sādhu* feeding *Jhulan Pūrnimā* which fell on August 4th is also the festival of *Raksha Bandhan*. The question of tying *rākhis* (bracelets) to Mataji's hand in Her condition did not arise at all. However, although it happened to be Thursday, not Sunday, there was a short *darśana* from the veranda adjoining Mataji's room. Devotees handed their *rākhis* (bracelets) to the two girls that were guarding the door to Ma's room. They touched Ma's bedsheet with the *rākhis* and returned them as *prasāda*. At midnight silent meditation was observed in the hall for half an hour, preceded and followed by kirtan which continued all night.

Four devotees had with considerable difficulty come from Bangladesh in the hope of receiving *diksā* during those auspicious days. At first they were told that it was impossible, but at the last moment their wish was fulfilled on the day before *Pūrnimā*. The daughter-in-law of Justice Banerji of Allahabad High Court had also the extreme good luck to receive initiation on full moon day itself. Mataji said to her : "This body gave itself *diksā* on this very day." (Namely on August 3rd, 1922.) This was the last *diksā* that Mataji gave.

On August 12th *Janmastami* (Sri Krishna's birthday) was observed by midnight *pūjā* and kirtan. Mataji, always lying in Her bed, at times seemed far removed, and then again fully attentive, observing everything and everyone around Her.

Already some months back, whenever someone tried to convey a message from a letter to Ma, She would reply "*Bhagavat Smaran*" "*The remem-*

berance of God" or "Remember God Constantly !" This has always been the pivot of Ma's teaching. Some years ago, when She visited Bengal after a long interval, many came who had passed through very severe trials and were in great distress. Mataji said to them : *"This body tells of one sovereign remedy for all ills : God. Put your trust in Him, depend on Him, accept whatever happens as His dispensation, regard what you do as his service, think of God with every breath, live in His presence. Leave all your burdens on His hands and He will see to everything ; there will be no more problems."*

On July 29th, Dr. Udupa, the famous surgeon of the Medical College of the Benares Hindu University arrived. He had been sent from France by Swami Chidananda, the Head of the Divine Life Society, Rishikesh, whom he had met in France and who was feeling concerned about Mataji. Dr. Udupa examined Ma's body and gave some advice as to Her diet, since medication was out of the question. Mataji took the juices which he prescribed until the end, with one or two exceptions.

Dr. S. C. Seth, the renowned physician of Nanavati Hospital, Bombay, who had treated Gurupriya Didi, was summoned twice by Sri B. K. Shah who also came himself. The first time Ma had still been in Kankhal. On that occasion, Dr. Seth, after examination declared that none of Ma's organs were diseased. Thus he had confirmed what Mataji said afterwards to Sri Sankaracharyaji. However, when he arrived for the second

time on August 23rd, he found Her condition very serious indeed. He asked Mataji whether She suffered much. Mataji replied: "Not at all." There was not the slightest identification with Her body. She watched it as an unconcerned spectator. Of course, some people who saw Mataji in the last days had the feeling that She was suffering. Since Ma is in Oneness, anything and nothing can be said about Her. "*.....the veins are myself, the nerves are myself, the movement is myself, and the witness of it all is also myself. Of course the word "myself" is used only because some language has to be employed.*" (Matri Vani, II, 351.)

When Dr. Seth took leave of Ma on the 26th night, he prayed to Her to have *kheyāla* on Her body. Mataji said in reply: "*Paramananda ko samālna !*" "*Take care of (Swami) Paramananda.*" This was the last instruction Mataji gave about anything. She did not leave any instructions about the running of the Ashrams, since She had never had anything to do with the organisation.

Uninterrupted *japa* had already been kept up from the time when Mataji moved to the Kishenpur Ashram. From August 9th, Tulsidas' Ramayana was chanted in the hall continuously day and night without a break until August 27th evening. Devotees from Dehradun would come every day at the appointed hour, and ashramites as well as neighbours during the night, and recite with great zeal. The principal of a college, ten miles distance from the Ashram, would arrive daily without fail on his scooter, chant enthusiastically and loudly

“so that Ma could hear it” from 6 A.M. to 9 A.M. and then ride back in time for his office. This is just one typical example.

None of the people who took part could go upstairs for Ma’s *darśana* but everyone felt Ma’s benign presence. The weaker Her body the more powerful and tangible became Her presence. “*Darśana* is not with the eyes,” a great *mahātma* has said. Before taking *Mahāsamādhi*, Mataji taught us this great truth very effectively without saying a single word. In fact, whatever Ma does or leaves undone at any time, in the past, present, or future is invariably a blessing ; notwithstanding appearances to the contrary on rare occasions, this is nevertheless a supreme fact.

The hall remained open day and night and several devotees, Indian and Western, availed themselves of this opportunity to sit in meditation in such a hallowed atmosphere, some for hours on end.

Any number of religious functions were performed for Ma’s health, such as *Maha Rudrabhisheka*, *Satchandi*, *Mrityunjaya japa* etc. etc., not only in Kishenpur but also at Kankhal, Varanasi, and other towns, even Madras. But it seems to have been Ma’s *kheyāla* to give up the body at this time.

About the middle of August, the Governor of the U.P., Sri C. P. N. Singh and the Health Minister Sri Lokpathi Tripathi, both devotees of Ma of many years’ standing, sent a team of highly experienced Ayurvedic physicians from different parts of the U. P. to examine Sri Ma’s condition and

prescribe some herbal juices which She might not object to. Out of this team, two renowned Ayurvedic physicians, the Principals of the Govt. Ayurvedic Colleges at Pilibhit and Hardwar remained at Dehradun until the end. One of them took up residence in our Ashram and was available day and night, whenever his services were required. We wish to offer our sincere thanks to them. They were feeling helpless because Ma would not take medicines of any kind.

On August 19th, on hearing about the condition of Ma's health, Dr. Channa Reddy, Governor of Punjab, came to see Ma. Before he left on the 20th afternoon, Mataji said to him : "*Jaisa hamesha āte ho, vaisā āpnā samajkar āte rahna.*" "*Just as you always used to come, keep on coming, considering this (place and these people) your own.*" We feel that this was Ma's last injunction to all devotees : to continue the activities that were started while Ma was still visible to our eyes.

On August 23rd in the afternoon, Sri Swami Krishnanandaji, General Secretary of the Divine Life Society, Rishikesh came with two Swamis and Dr. Aruna Mudolkar to pay a visit to Ma. They had to wait for a whole hour before it was possible to let them enter Ma's room. Swami Krishnanandaji had an inner urge to perform Ma's *pūjā* as Rādhā on the occasion of *Rādhāstami*, which fell on August 26th. The 23rd was Rishipanchmi, a Monday, so even more auspicious. He personally performed *ārati*, which he never does, and offered a costly blue silk sari, a large basket of fruit, etc. to

Ma. He repeated several times : "Ma, what service can we render to you ?" Ma said three times "*Nārāyana*", and then : "*Jo andar se āye*" "*Whatever comes from within.*" Thereupon some religious functions were started the next morning for Ma's health in Sivananda Ashram, Rishikesh.

We are told that when Swami Krishnanandaji left Ma's room, he had the feeling that this was his last visit to Ma. His pūjā was the last pūjā done to Her before She breathed Her last. Immediately after returning to Rishikesh, the Swami spontaneously wrote the article : "Anandamayi Ma Enters the Cosmic" published in this issue.

For the last four or five days Ma's vomiting stopped, but She had severe breathing trouble for the last three nights. On August 25th at about midnight She told some of the attending girls : "*Je jekhane achho bose porte bolo.*" "*Tell everyone to sit down wherever they may be (for japa and meditation).*" Thereupon all the girls sat down to obey Ma's order. Ma inquired several times on which day the anniversary of Didima's *mahāsamādhi* had been observed this year. It had been on July 27th.

On the 25th after midnight Mataji suddenly said : "*Namo Śivāya*" and then repeated "*Brihaspativār*" (Thursday) three times.

On the 26th morning Mataji looked comparatively better. But in the night the breathing difficulty became acute and everyone felt concerned. After 2-30 A.M. Her condition became alarming. The Ayurvedic doctor was called and advised

massage which was continued all day long on the 27th. Hands and feet became warmer and the breath somewhat quiet. On Friday the 27th morning the girls heard Her utter "*Nārāyan Hari*" several times in almost a whisper. These were Her last words. After 3-30 P.M. She suddenly opened Her eyes and gazed with full attention for about a minute. At about 7-45 P.M. She opened Her eyes again and gazed upwards. Within a few minutes She took Her last breath.

Kirtan was started immediately and was continued all night, interrupted only by the recitation of the entire Bhagavad Gita.

When after a while the girls dressed Her in a silk dhoti that She used to wear for pūjā and put a mark on Her forehead, Mataji's face became young and radiant as it had been until Her body became frail recently.

The District Magistrate of Dehradun and other high officials rushed to the Ashram immediately, reaching there by about 8-30 P.M. In their presence it was decided to take Ma's body to Kankhal the next morning after 10 A.M. They very kindly offered to make all necessary arrangements for the journey. They also took the responsibility of sending radio messages to the Prime Minister's house and to other important persons. Due to their immediate action the news was flashed through the T.V. from New Delhi already at 9.15 P.M. and broadcast by the All India Radio at 11 P.M. and again the next morning several times,

also through the B.B.C. This enabled many devotees to reach Kankhal in time for the *Samādhi* even from very great distances. Some took the night planes from Calcutta and Bombay and reached Kankhal already on the 28th afternoon.

The Prime Minister returned to New Delhi from her trip abroad on the 27th at midnight. She suggested to send a helicopter to Dehradun to take Ma's body to Hardwar and offered to reach Dehradun herself on the 28th morning. This proposal was later dropped for various reasons and it was decided to take Ma's body in a van to be supplied by the Police department.

On Saturday, August 28th, after 7 A.M. Ma's body was carried downstairs and made to lie on a wooden coach on the front veranda of the Ashram. Everyone was allowed to approach for *darśana*, do *pranāma* and offer flowers. An enormous crowd assembled, from all over Dehradun. Kirtan was kept up all along. The first car from Delhi, carrying Mataji's only brother, sister-in-law and others had already arrived at 6 A.M.

At about 10-45 A.M. Ma's body lying on the wooden couch was placed into the covered van which was open at one end. Several of Ma's girls and 5 or 6 male devotees accompanied Ma in the van itself, singing kirtan all along. The van was followed by a special bus, two station wagons and several cars. Many people stood on the road everywhere. From Hardwar onwards crowds were waiting on both sides of the road and many were greeting from every roof. The whole procession had to stop

every few yards to allow people to do *pranāma*. At about 1-15 P.M. the van reached Sankaracharya Chowk at Kankhal where sadhus from all *akhāras* offered garlands and from there accompanied the procession. Many people joined on foot.

At about 2 P.M. the Kankhal Ashram was reached. Mataji's body was taken to the hall and placed on an elevated couch in front of Adi Sankaracharya's Mandir within the enclosure. Soon the hall was opened and everyone was allowed to approach Ma's body, do *pranāma* and walk around it. Many people remained in the hall throughout the night keeping vigil and meditating. *Darśana* continued without interruption until Sunday, 29th August at about 2-00 P.M., when Ma's body was laid in *samādhi* in the courtyard near the Sādhus' building, just where the banyan tree had been.

It is interesting to note that over a year ago the tree was leaning over to one side so that the adjoining buildings were in danger. Therefore large branches had to be cut off. Then Mataji had the *kheyāla* that the tree should be cut down and the roots removed. She said that the wood should be used for *havan* (fire sacrifice) and that the site could be used for functions and ceremonies. The *Samyam Vrata* last November was held in that courtyard and it was also the site for the *Rāsālīlā* during Ma's birthday celebrations last May.

Mataji's body had been in lying position until Saturday midnight, when according to the wishes

of the *mahātmās* of various *akhārās*, Mataji's body was put into a sitting pose, so that *samādhi* could be given strictly according to the injunctions of the *Śāstras*. Strangely Ma's body was very soft and flexible even after 28 hours, so it could be made to sit quite easily. At 3-00 A.M. several *sādhus*, led by Sri Mahant Girdhar Narayan Puri arrived and performed the *Panchāmrita snāna* (ceremonial bathing in milk, curds, honey, *ghī* and *gangajal*.) Then Ma's body was dressed in new clothes and given new bedsheets and a new *āsana*. Mahantaji himself and the *sādhus* performed *āratī*.

Devotees kept on arriving in large numbers by cars, trains, buses and aeroplanes literally from all over India, even Madras and Travancore, including several foreigners who happened to be in India. A continuous stream of people from Hardwar, Rishikesh and other nearby places for several hours on Sunday morning entered the packed hall by one door and after *darśana* and circumambulation filed out by another door. A large consignment of police including a few women police made elaborate arrangements also in the hall and especially on the road, as the Prime Minister and several other dignitaries were expected. At 1 P.M. a specially beautiful huge wreath of flowers was offered on behalf of the Governor of the U.P. Sri Govind Narain and Dr. Channa Reddy, the Governors of Karnataka and Punjab had also arrived with their families to pay their last homage to Ma. At 1-15 P.M., the Prime Minister arrived straight from Delhi along with the Senior A.D.C.

of the President of India and a host of high officials. They offered garlands also on behalf of the President.

At 1-30 P.M. Ma's body was lifted up high so that every single person in the hall could have a last *darśana* and was then carried by mahātmās to the *samādhi* ground, where final *pūjā* and *āratī* were performed by them amidst chanting from the Vedas and the singing of kirtan by Ashram girls. Mataji's body was thereafter put down inside the *samādhi* pit which was lined with white marble slabs. Five hundred pounds of rock salt were put into the cavity and afterwards a marble slab was placed on top as a cover.

Hundreds of devotees were weeping at the thought that they would never again be able to see or touch Mataji's divine body. The Prime Minister and some top V.I.Ps. also were found shedding tears. As soon as the function was over Srimati Indira Gandhi did her last *praṇāma* and then left. One by one all the devotees performed *praṇāma*. This continued for hours. Then the *samādhi* ground was enclosed to preserve the sanctity of the place. A solid enclosure was built within a couple of days and a temporary roof of silk and canvas above it was provided.

Most ashramites and some devotees had fasted since the 27th.

On Aug. 30th early morning the girls spontaneously started an elaborate programme of religious functions, somewhat similar to what Mataji had devised after Didima's *Mahāsamādhi* in 1970. From

5 A.M. to 9 P.M. satsang was held daily without interruption near the *samādhi*. It started with *Mangal Āratī* and *Usha Kirtan* ; at 10 A.M. *Gītā*, *Chandi*, *Vishnu Sahasra Nāma* was recited, in the afternoon *Stava* and *Rāmāyaṇa pātha*. In the evening elaborate *āratī* was performed by one of the brahmacharinis accompanied and followed by exquisitely beautiful kirtan led by Km. Chhabi, Puspa and other excellent singers. In the intervals “*Om Ma, Sri Ma, Jai Ma, Jai Jai Ma*”, was sung throughout. Simultaneously *Śiva Purāna* and *Ramayana* were recited in the hall by different people taking turns day and night and *akhaṇḍa japa* was being performed as well. After the *Śiva Purāna*, other *Purānas* were read one after the other. All this continued without a break until September 22nd.

Video films of Ma’s *Mahāsamādhi*, 1981 Birthday Celebrations, *Ati Rudra Mahāyajñā*, etc. were shown in the hall from 8—9 P.M. for several days, over and above the other functions that went on simultaneously.

From September 11th evening till 12th evening a *Nāma Yajñā* was performed round the *samādhi* with : “*Om Ma, Sri Ma, Jai Jai Ma.*” The women sang all night and the men all day. It rained for some time in the night which the canvas roof could not stand and we got quite wet. The kirtan of course went on without interruption. Ma’s blissful presence was so palpable that it was impossible to deny it. Altogether, Ma’s presence is so unmistakable that everyone feels irresistibly attracted. One

has to literally tear oneself away from the vicinity of the *Samādhi*.

On September 13th morning an elaborate *pūjā* which continued from 7—10 A.M. was performed by Brahmacharini Chandan. It was accompanied by Km. Chhabi's enchanting singing. This was followed by short talks of Mahamandaleshwaras and other leading Mahātmās who offered *Shraddh-ānjali* (homage) to Ma. Some of the talks were very inspiring. The number of Mahātmās was larger than ever before.

According to Śāstric rules 16 leading Mahātmās were offered special *pūjā*. (In 1950 Mataji had had the *kheyāla* to have a similar *pūjā* performed at the conclusion of the *Savitri Yajña* at Varanasi.) Each Mahātmā was presented with a set of silver utensils, a set of silk clothes, a rudraksha *mālā*, a basket of fruit and cash. Forty-one special *Mahātmās* were also offered sandalwood garlands, silk clothes and fruits. At about 1 P.M. the Mahātmās were entertained to a feast in the hall and thereafter also all the assembled devotees and guests. About 600 devotees had come from all over India.

Although Sri Ma was not a *sannyāsī*, all the rituals connected with Her *Mahāsamādhi* had been performed according to the wishes of the heads of various *akhāras*, strictly following the Śāstric injunctions observed when a *sannyāsī* leaves his body. It is important to note in this connection that Ma had not, at any time, left any instructions or even hints about what should be done with Her body.

Here also Ma's maxim : "*Jo hoye joy*" (*Whatever happens is equally welcome*) was in force.

Some devotees had thought that Ma would not leave Her divine body like any ordinary mortal but would just vanish. However, this would not have been in keeping with Ma's ways. All Her life She had, as far as possible, kept concealed Her divine powers. In fact, many years ago, She had once said that She would leave Her body in "the most ordinary of ordinary" manners ("*sadhāran se sadhāran*") and so it happened.

* * *

As the number of sādhus and Mahātmās is very large at Kankhal and Hardwar, it was decided to entertain the members of each order (*akhāra*) on a different day, so that they could be served with due reverence, as Ma had always enjoined on us to do. Therefore, from Sept. 14th to 23rd, Dandy Swamis, Sādhus belonging to Nirvani, Niranjani, Yuna, Udasin, Nirmal, Naya Udāsin Akhāras, as well as sādhus belonging to various other orders, also 108 Kumaris, 150 brahmins and over 250 *Daridra Narayan* (Narayan in the guise of the poor) were fed sumptuously and presented with cloth and *dakshina* (cash).

On Sept. 13th, elaborate pūjās were also performed in most of Ma's other Ashrams, followed by Kumari Puja, the feeding of sādhus, brahmins, *Daridra Narayans* and all devotees present. In Varanasi the functions continued for 4 days. At Calcutta it was estimated that about 20,000 flocked to the Ashram from early morning till night.

Feeding went on from midday till 8 P.M. Many people cried bitterly.

On September 18th the Governor of Haryana, specially arrived by plane at Kankhal from Delhi for a visit of a few minutes, to pay his homage to Sri Ma's *samādhi*. He expressed his sincere regrets for having been unable to be present on August 29th.

* * *

This report would not be complete without mentioning that we have received letters from devotees in various countries, who all feel more or less similar. They are grieved at the thought that they will never be able to see Ma again, but they one and all feel Ma's presence more than ever before. One example : "We heard of Ma Saturday morning. We now feel Her presence here very strongly. We have got together for meditations and we know beyond the shadow of a doubt that Ma is with us stronger than ever. We feel very light and surrounded by Her love. Jai Ma !.... "It is sad not to have Ma in India to go to, but She has filled us with such a peaceful feeling that I for one know She has not gone...."

* * *

Samyam Vrata

In the last issue of A.V. we announced that the next *Samyam Mahāvratā* would be observed at Jalandher at the invitation of Mahamandaleshwara Swami Niranjanananda. Preparations for the function had already started. However, most of the

Ashramites requested the Swami to kindly agree to hold the function at Kankhal near Sri Ma's *Samādhi*. So *Samyam Mahāvratā* will take place at Kankhal from November 23rd to 30th this year.

* * *

Mātri Līlā has always been worldwide, but it was centered in Ma's activities in Her body. Only rarely hints could be given about what was taking place at a distance. That *Mātri Līlā* will continue with ever increasing vigour all over the world is certain. How much of it we shall be able to report remains to be seen. It was always difficult to collect the necessary information. Now this will become more and more a collective task. We wish to request all devotees to assist us actively by communicating to us whatever experiences or incidents connected with Ma of the past, present and future they may be able to share for the benefit and delight of all. Also photos of Ma that are not known. We shall try our best to communicate to all whatever interesting information about Ma we can collect.

* * *

Never again shall we behold Ma's radiant countenance except in dreams, on photos and on films. Never again shall we listen to Her entrancing voice, except through tapes and records. No more can we get Her advice directly from Her mouth. We have to derive solace from Her words recorded in books or otherwise. Yet, for all times She is and remains our Divine Mother residing in our hearts, ever intent on our highest Good, ever

responding to sincere prayers and petitions. All we have to do is follow Her instructions and direct our gaze inward.

“Exert yourself to the limit of your power however feeble it may be. He is there to fulfil what has been left undone.”

Whoever truly seeks Ma’s guidance will receive it, wherever he may be, and those who can open themselves to Her grace will be blessed abundantly. There is not the shadow of a doubt about it.

Question : What is the supreme purpose of human life ?

Ma : “To realize one’s Self, to know one’s Self—the first-hand experience that you are ever poised in your own true Being.”