



गुरुप्रिया देवी चरिटेबल ट्रस्ट

VOLUME II

Gurupriya Devi



Sri Sri Ma Anandamayi

VOLUME II

GURUPRIYA ANANDA GIRI
(Sri Gurupriya Devi)

Translated by Tara Kini



SHREE SHREE ANANDAMAYEE CHARITABLE SOCIETY
CALCUTTA

1986

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Published by

Shree Shree Anandamayee Charitable Society
57/1, Ballygunge Circular Road,
Calcutta-700 019

First Edition

1986

Price : Rs. 22/- or ~~Rs. 4.00 or \$ 2.00~~

Printed at

The Eureka Printing Works Private Limited
76, Bepin Behari Ganguli Street,
Calcutta-700 012

PREFACE

By Sri Sri Ma's grace the English edition of the 2nd volume of "Sri Sri Ma Anandamayi" by Brahmacharini Gurupriya has just been published.

All efforts have been made to produce as authentic a book as possible.

If the devoted reader obtains joy and peace in reading about Sri Sri Ma's wonderful life, then the publisher will be more than amply rewarded.

March, 1986

The Publisher

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SRI SRI MA ANANDAMAYI

Volume II

CHAPTER VII

While Ma was staying at Siddheshwari, she had instructed me thus : “For a few days come and meet me only once a day and then go away. Do not remain here.”

Ma's journey
to Tarapeeth

On reaching there the next day I found that Ma had received a letter from Bholanath who was at Tarapeeth. The letter had been brought by Surendra Nath Mukhopadhyaya. As per Ma's orders, I met her and came away while the rest of the people remained sitting near Ma. Ma had come out of her room by noon. When Father returned home at night I came to know that Bholanath had written to Ma to come to Tarapeeth and had sent Surendra Nath Mukhopadhyaya only to escort her. Ma was leaving the very next day. Since she had forbidden me to meet her more than once daily, I realised that even if I were to go to her again that day I would not get darshan. Hence I spent the night somehow or other and early next morning, Father and I went to Siddheshwari. Jyotish Dada was already there. Ma came out of the temple. After a little while she again went inside the room where I followed her and began to weep bitterly. Ma consoled me, but she was going away, so words of consolation had no effect on me. Meanwhile Father and Jyotish Dada were making arrangements for Ma's journey.

The luggage was meagre. After Bholanath's departure, Ma had made a small bedding with a couple of old, tattered blankets without a pillow or anything else. Even earlier, Ma had hardly ever used a pillow, but it was kept with her bedding.

Soon it was time for Ma's departure. I fed Ma with great difficulty and then returned to the small room and cried. Ma came and sat by me, saying, "If I write to you 'come,' only then should you come." Ma went to the Kali temple and caressed the image as if she were taking leave of Kali. No one else was present, only I saw Ma do this. A little later, all the people went to the station with her. A big crowd collected there. Ma sat in the train which was to leave in a few minutes. Ma was gazing at all the people and they in turn were craning their necks and looking at Ma endearingly. A few moments before the train left, Ma suddenly began to cry terrifyingly loudly. I had never witnessed Ma cry in this way when going anywhere. Seeing Ma weep, all the people present had tears in their eyes. As it was, everyone was miserable because Ma was leaving, and now seeing tears rolling down Ma's cheeks, no one could remain unmoved. The train started just then. Some of us accompanied Ma till Narayanganj where she boarded a steamer.

Ma stepped aboard the steamer, and removing two bangles from her arms, said, "Have five rings made from these bangles and give them to Sitaram, Jatu, Amulya, Makhan (Chintaharan Bandopadhyaya's son) and Subodh." I think Ma gave the bangles to Joytish Dada. These boys used to sing a lot of kirtan at that time. People would give Ma many ornaments, and she

Ma removes
her ornaments

wore them for few days and then took them off. Father had once had a garland of skulls made and had put it round Ma's neck. Many people in Dhaka called Ma 'Kali Ma.' In Calcutta also people called her 'Mānuṣ (human) Kali'. This is why the garland of skulls was put round her neck and all were pleased to see this. Observing Ma with this garland, people who came for her darshan commented, "This is right. A garland of skulls is suitable for Ma's neck." This garland remained on Ma for many days, but hardly any other ornaments adorned her at that time. Joytish Dada had had a diamond nose ring made and Ma wore it. Niranjan Babu's wife had tied on an iron bangle and put a necklace of a single row of beads round Ma's neck. Ma had removed the necklace, but she wore the iron bangle. Later on Ma took off all her ornaments, only the conch shell bangles and the iron bangle remained. Ma had a number of bangles on her hands and a thin, one-stringed necklace around her neck, which Bholanath had got made long ago. The steamer left. We all returned to Dhaka feeling forlorn.

After a few days a letter from Bholanath arrived saying that they were thinking of going to the south, and whoever wanted to accompany them was to join them at Tarapeeth. He wrote also that we should take Matari *Pisima* and Maroni with us.

Nobody else went from Dhaka. Father and I left for Tarapeeth with Matari *Pisima* and Maroni. Reaching there in the evening we found that several devotees had arrived from Calcutta. A very blissful atmosphere had been set up since quite a few days. On that day *kumāris*, *sadhvās*,

Bholanath's proposition to travel to the south with devotees

and others had been given a feast. Ma had cooked the food herself. She had still not eaten. We felt extremely joyful to see Ma after so many days. I noticed a big red *tilaka* on Bholanath's forehead. I fed Ma, and Bholanath also ate. Then we all received *prasāda*.

Tarapeeth is a large burning ground. In the midst of it is Tara Ma's huge temple and a temple of Śiva in which Ma, Bholanath and Yogesh Dada stayed. That night I occupied the place near Ma's feet in the Śiva temple. It was decided that we would proceed to Calcutta the very next morning and that the trip to the south would not be undertaken just then.

Father and I sat up at night and listened to many stories from Ma and Bholanath. We heard that while Bholanath used to sit in Siddheshwari for his spiritual practices, he had a vision of Kali, but She was headless. When he told Ma about this she said, "Go to Tarapeeth." Ma had never been to Tarapeeth, nor did she know whether an image was there or not. Because of this instruction from Ma, Bholanath went to Tarapeeth and spread his *āsana* on the veranda of the temple of Tara Ma. Bholanath saw that when the image of Tara Ma was being bathed, the head made of silver was detached. Every night, the head was removed and kept aside. The next day, after the bath, the head was replaced and decorated with apparel. On seeing this image of Tara Ma with the detached head, Bholanath realised that it was just like the vision he had had of Kali in Siddheshwari. The reason why Ma sent Bholanath to Tarapeeth on hearing about his vision seems obvious from this.

The history
behind Bholanath's arrival
at Tarapeeth

Two people had accompanied Bholanath from Calcutta. After a few days they sent Surendra Mukhopadhyaya, who had gone with Bholanath to escort Ma. Then only Bholanath and Yogesh Dada were left at Tarapeeth. The place was deserted and not many people were around except a few *pāndās* who lived there. No one stayed in Tara Ma's temple at night. Exactly nine days after Bholanath had left Dhaka, Ma departed from Dhaka and reached Tarapeeth on the tenth day.

Meanwhile Bholanath had attained to a very exalted state. In that cold weather (it was probably December or January) he was seated on the open veranda day and night. In the day flies were settling on his eyes and face, but he paid no attention to them at all. Bholanath had been used to smoke a lot of tobacco, but now even when he took one puff from the hookah, the hookah would fall from his hands. One day saliva started oozing out of his mouth like vomit, which smelt only of tobacco. From that day onwards, Bholanath just could not tolerate the smell of tobacco anymore.

He then told us about his visions. After Ma's arrival, he stayed at the Śiva temple day in and day out. Ma would roam about outside the whole day and lie down in the Śiva temple at night. Bholanath's diet also was considerably reduced in quantity. Once he called Surendra Mukhopadhyaya in the middle of the night and revealed to him how Tara *siddhi* and Śiva *siddhi* could be obtained. Afterwards this kind of exalted mood waned gradually.

Ma walked about alone during the day at Tarapeeth. One of the wives of the *pāndās* would feed her with puffed rice or *chapātis*. Ma was not eating much rice even then. We heard all this news from Ma and Bholanath. After talking to us they retired to bed and Yogesh Dada also went to sleep. I sat the whole night near Ma's feet and got up only at dawn. In the morning Ma took me to the *pāndās'* houses. All had come to know that Ma was leaving that day and they expressed their sorrow. In almost all the houses Ma and I were given beaten rice and puffed rice roasted in *ghī*. The ladies told Ma, "Ma, we are all poor people, we have no sweatmeats in the house. We have just offered you these ordinary things and made you eat them." The wife of a *pāndā* said, "Ma, you are leaving and a car is ready for you. While I was bathing, I heard the sound of the car and a feeling rose within my heart that Akrura has arrived to take our Krishna away from us." Saying this she burst into tears. Ma laughed and said, "Why are you behaving like this for my sake? I am just an ordinary person like you. I came for a few days and strolled about as I fancied. You all fed me with so much care. The same lady spoke up, "Ma, we are the people of Tarapeeth. This is a *siddha peetha*. We see many *sādhus* and *samnyāsīs* and are able to understand who is who. We have never known another Bhagavati Ma like you." To this Ma replied, "I am neither a *sādhu* nor a *samnyāsi*. What comparison is there between me and them?" The woman replied, "Ma, why are you fooling us? You are our Bhagavati Ma."

Ma's daily life at
Tarapeeth

Even to this day Ma is called Bhagavati Ma by some people at Tarapeeth. I cannot describe the love with which that woman fed Ma. I was struck by the way these women had become greatly attached to Ma in such a short while. Moreover Ma would wander about alone most of the time, and sometimes remain lying in *bhāva*, so that she hardly spent any time with them. They had also not heard much about Ma earlier and yet they were in this state !

After lunch we started for Rampurhat by car and then took the train to Salkiya near Calcutta. There Ma went to *Pisima's*

(Kaliprasanna Kushari's) house. I heard that Bholanath had been instructed to go to Tarapeeth for one day every year and also to stay at certain places in Calcutta for a given number of days. He departed accordingly. Yogesh Dada went with the sacrificial fire to an empty house in ruins at Calcutta. Ma had

given instructions that the sacrificial fire was not to be taken inside the habitation of any householder. On leaving Tarapeeth Bholanath brought an urn full of water from a pond called "Jivita Pushkārini" (popularly known as 'Jeol Pukur'). He had been told that this water had curative properties. While returning from Tarapeeth we went to Bakreshwar. We also had the opportunity of visiting another place of pilgrimage near the railway station. Bholanath has a great liking for places of pilgrimage and later he went to many of them. We all stayed at *Pisima's* house at Salkiya. Bholanath went to Calcutta and lived according to the instructions he had received. He visited Salkiya during the day and went away to Calcutta every evening.

Departure from Tarapeeth. Darshan of Bakreshwar. Arrival at Salkiya and the proposal of South Indian tour dropped

At Kushari *Mahaśaya's* house, while I was bathing Ma, I took off her necklace and washed it with soap and put it on her again in the form of a single chain. As I was putting it round Ma's neck, it somehow took on the position of a sacred thread. Ma immediately extended her hand and measured it and finding it to be the correct length of a sacred thread, she exclaimed, "Khukuni, see this. It has the exact measurements of a sacred thread." As soon as Ma said this, the necklace became a sacred thread in her *kheyāla* and she kept wearing it that way. But she did not say anything further to me. The same evening Ma was standing on the terrace when Kushari *Mahaśaya* went and stood near her. He was not wearing an upper garment and Ma immediately noticed that he did not have a sacred thread. She questioned him promptly, "What is this, are you not wearing a sacred thread?" He replied, "It broke a few days ago. I have been repeatedly asking for a new one to be made and given to me, but no one has done so." Ma exclaimed, "What is this? What kind of an example are you setting for your boys? Why did you spend money and have the sacred thread ceremony performed at all?"

After this incident, we were all sitting together in the evening. Ma's mood of the morning regarding the sacred thread was going strong. She requested Kushari *Mahaśaya's* wife, "Do please give me a sacred thread." And saying this Ma handed her necklace to Kushari *Mahaśaya's* wife, who did as she was told, laughing naively. Ma then said, "I am now a *brahmacāri*. Won't you give me *bhikṣā*?" The lady

tied some green grass and ten rupees in one end of Ma's sari. Ma then said, "Now five people come and repeat the *Gāyatri mantra*." But though Ma summoned the boys in the house one by one, not one of them wore a sacred thread. Now all began whispering to each other that this was the reason why Ma had purposely started playing this game. Finally, Father, Bholanath and three others repeated the *mantra* to Ma.

The same afternoon Revati Sen and some other gentlemen arrived. Ma sat covering her face with a cloth, because a brahmachari may look only at a *brahmin*. Ma declared, "I shall follow all these rules for a day, that will suffice." In the evening Bholanath arrived with Yogesh Dada. Ma wished to go with them to the banks of the Ganges and listen to the *Gāyatri mantra*. We all went along. Ma commented as we went, "I am now a brahmācārī and a beggar. It is uncertain where I may go." Bholanath, Father and others became worried on hearing Ma say this. Who could guess what she would do next? So Bholanath, in the hope of changing this mood, said to Ma a bit harshly and contemptuously, "What have you started now again? Brahmācārī indeed! Stop all this." Ma remained absolutely still and her mood changed completely. This conversation occurred on the banks of the Ganges. As soon as Bholanath returned to the house, he went away to Bhavanipur. Entering the house, Ma immediately lay down, covering her face with a cloth. Pisima called her several times and we also called out to her but we got no answer. We removed the cloth from Ma's face and saw that it was wet with her tears. Pisima pressed her unceasingly to tell us why she was weeping and finally Ma said, "I am not at

all affected by anything that may be said to me, but if truth is disregarded or treated irreverently, my body reacts and becomes thus." Ma's whole body had become lifeless. Bholanath returned the next day and found Ma lying in this condition. He asked her to forgive him for his comment. Ma got up after a long time.

Ma was to leave for Bhavanipur the same day. I recollect she was to stay at Pran Kumar Babu's house, who was sub-judge at Dhaka and it was there that he and his family had had Ma's darshan. At Salkiya, meanwhile, it was found that neither Pisima's husband nor her sons wore sacred threads. When Ma was leaving for Bhavanipur she said, "I shall return to this house next Monday. Please keep some sacred threads knotted and ready and also purchase some fruit." She gave the ten rupees which she had received as *bhikṣā* to Pisima and said, "The function for investing the sacred thread can be financed with these ten rupees."

From Pran Kumar Babu's house Ma went to the building in ruins where Yogesh Dada was staying with the sacrificial fire. Bholanath was instructed to remain there for a few days. In fact, we all remained in that house for some days. Yogendra Rai at Calcutta was very ill and was longing for Ma's darshan. His wife came to Salkiya and earnestly requested Ma to go to see him, but Ma just would not agree and sent Bholanath instead. Later, when Ma was leaving Calcutta, Yogendra Rai's wife again sent someone who pleaded with Ma and took her home for a little while.

Ma reached Salkiya on the appointed day. She had instructed Yogesh Dada to go with the sacrificial fire to the banks of the Ganges in Salkiya. Pisima had arranged for the sacred

threads and fruit. The boys being afraid of Ma had hunted out some sort of sacred threads, regardless of whether they were broken or old, and had put them round their necks.

The next morning Ma went to the bank of the Ganges with all of us. She told Pisima's husband and the four boys to have a bath. Then she kept the vessel containing the sacrificial fire near the water of the Ganges.

Return to
Salkiya

Ma now stood between the Ganges and the sacrificial fire in such a way that her ankles were touching the water and the tips of her big toes were touching the container of the sacrificial fire. In this manner Ma established contact between the holy Ganges and the sacrificial fire with her feet. Standing thus, she gave one sacred thread and one fruit to each person. She told Bholanath to put the sacred threads round each one's neck. Thus sacred threads were given to five people in this manner and Ma asked for the *Gāyatri mantra* to be read out. She gathered their old and broken sacred threads and put them on herself in the way in which sacred threads are worn. The gold necklace was already being worn by her like a scared thread. She told everybody, "From today, let nothing come in the way of your performing the *Gāyatri mantra japa* at least, even if you are unable to do the *sandhya* (worship at dawn and dusk.)" She then returned to the house with everybody. Pisima celebrated the sacred thread function beautifully. Sri Sri Ma sat with the five people newly invested with sacred threads and had her meal. In this way she completed the divine sport of the sacred thread investiture.

A few days later Ma and Bholanath took us along to Agra at the request of Virendra Dada, who had taken up work there

as a professor in 1927. After a sojourn of two or three days, Ma returned to Calcutta. Meanwhile the students and teachers of the Medical School sent a telegram to Ma, requesting her to grant permission to Father to visit

Visit to Agra
and return to
to Salkiya

Dhaka in connection with some work. They reckoned that Father might not return without

Ma's permission and hence they sent a telegram to her so that Father would be compelled to return when Ma told him to do so. And so it was : Ma told Father to go to Dhaka and we went, finished the work there within a few days and then returned to Calcutta. At Salkiya we learnt that Ma had been to Puri, had come back to Salkiya and was now at Bhavanipur and would be leaving for Vidyakut the same day.

We immediately enquired at Surendra Mohan Mukhopadhyaya's and Chandi Babu's residences and found that Ma had come, but had just left for the Rly. station.

Return to Dhaka
via Vidyakut

We went there and found that the train had started. So we returned to Dhaka the same day and went on to Vidyakut the next day. Subodh, Amulya and a few others came along with us to bring Ma back. We reached Vidyakut and found Ma and Bholanath. After staying there for a couple of days, we returned to Dhaka with them. Ma and Bholanath went to the Siddheshwari Ashram in Dhaka. Ma's birthday of the year 1929 was close at hand. For a few days Ma had been saying, "My body is burning". On being questioned repeatedly she said something to the effect that some calamity was descending on one of us. In a few days we got the news of the death of Yogendra Rai. Ma's birthday celebrations in 1929 now commenced.

CHAPTER VIII

1929

A small cottage was constructed at Ramna Ashram for Ma to stay in. There is a story behind the acquisition of land for the Ramna Ashram. Once when Ma was going out of Dhaka, Niranjana Babu (Assistant Income Tax Commissioner, Dhaka) was prostrating before her, when she placed her hand on his head and said, "You are wanting to build an ashram but first try to acquire some land on the field in Ramna." In the beginning some money had been collected for Ramna Ashram by Niranjana Babu's efforts. Work on the ashram was first started with this money. Niranjana Babu and Jyotish Dada had made several attempts to build this ashram, but in vain. So when Ma was at Salkiya they sent a message to her through Vinay Babu (who was working in the Agricultural Department and was going to Calcutta in connection with his work), that they were unable to achieve anything and that until Ma desired it nothing could succeed; their efforts were useless.

Ma replied: "Tell them to try hard this time." Vinay Babu returned to Dhaka and conveyed Ma's message to Jyotish Dada. Surprisingly enough, within the next few days the deal was fixed and the land was acquired. On the day when the deal was fixed, Jyotish Dada was the recipient of Ma's special grace — this has already been described before. A small

Introduction to the Ramna Ashram—the history of the acquisition of land for the Ashram

thatched hut was constructed for Ma in the new ashram since it was believed that Ma would not stay in a concrete house. It was decided that Ma would enter the new ashram on the last day of the birthday celebrations.

This time again the festivities were carried out with great joy at Siddheshwari. One day during this birthday celebration in the year 1929, many devotees received *prasāda* in the room in which Ma and Bhola-nath had been offered *bhoga*. Father also sat down to have *prasāda* there. All of a sudden, Ma came and sat down to eat with Father. She said, "Give me something to eat." What could Father do? He obeyed Ma's orders and fed her from the food he had half eaten.

Birthday celebra-
tions at Siddhe-
shwari (May
1929.)

On the last day of the celebrations Ma went to the newly built Ramna Ashram along with devotees, many of whom had come from various places to attend the celebrations. As Ma entered the Ashram, kirtan was sung vigorously. Kirtan had been maintained all along from the time the celebration had begun and was to continue throughout the night till the next morning. Ma lay down on the ground. After some time she got up.

Baul Babu had set up a shop during the festival. Ma had all the sweatmeats in the shop purchased and distributed them to everyone present. Nothing was left in the shop. Ma sat on the steps of the small cottage and laughed. This time also Baul Babu adorned her with a floral crown and other ornaments.

About Baul
Babu

Dressed in a sari with a broad red border, anointed with *sindūr* and decorated with these floral ornaments, Ma's divine beauty shone forth. She was immersed in *bhāva* since quite a few days. Her face had a supernatural glow, and this was further enhanced by the floral decoration. She looked like a wonderfully beautiful image of Devi. All the devotees present fell at her feet and did *praṇāma*. Ma turned towards Bholanath and asked him laughingly, "You have not done *praṇāma*?" Bholanath shook his head to say 'no'. Ma laughed and told all those present, "He often does *praṇāma* when we are alone in the house. Here it seems he feels shy to do so before all of you." We all burst into laughter when we heard Ma say this. Bholanath also laughed. Maroni was then a little child. She spoke up, "Yes, I have seen Grandpa prostrate before Grandma." This sent Ma, Bholanath and all of us into peals of laughter again. The whole night was thus spent in various kinds of divine sport.

In the morning, Ma kept lying on the ground in the courtyard where the pandal had been rigged. Many people were to receive *prasāda* that day also. Kirtan had been performed and food was being cooked. Ma lay in that condition the whole day long, only a little while before evening she sat up. Ma had spent the entire night out of doors and had remained lying outside during the day also, without entering the room. Now she rose and I washed her face and changed her clothes. The *bhoga* was ready, so Ma told Bholanath to eat but she herself did not eat as yet. Finally when *Dadamahaśaya* sat

Ma's beautiful,
divine form,
adorned with
flowers

Various kinds
of charming
divine sport

down for his meal, Ma sat with him and he fed Ma. Later in the evening *Didima* sat down for her meal and Ma sat with her as well and ate a little bit. Her mood was then very lively. In the evening Postmaster Surendra and others came to take leave of Ma. Ma was washing her mouth after having eaten with *Didima*. She said, "Why are you leaving now? Do some more kirtan; tell Father also to sing some more kirtan." Accordingly all sat down to sing kirtan along with *Dadamahāsaya*. Meanwhile Bholanath finished his dinner and went to see Niranjan Babu's son who was ill. From there he went to Jyotish Dada's place and took him to our Tikatuli house.

Here when everyone was seated for kirtan, someone fed Ma with betel leaf. As soon as the betel leaf was placed in her mouth, Ma started wandering within the

Preparations for
leaving Dhaka

Ashram, touching the walls in between.

Seeing this I was filled with apprehension. I remembered that I had seen Ma touch the walls just like this when she was leaving Shahbagh for the last time, but I did not have the courage to say anything, because a strange transformation had occurred in Ma's facial expression. Usually all people are able to sit near Ma and speak to her freely about whatever they want and feel. But once in a way, Ma manifests such *bhāvas*, that no one dares to speak to her at all. Even those of us who are constantly with Ma, have no courage to say anything to her. It is not as if there were the slightest trace of anger in Ma's mood, yet her mood is of a totally different kind. Those who have witnessed it will understand; I am unable to describe it in words.

That day also, everyone kept quiet seeing that *bhāva*. Ma went and sat for the kirtan and sang for awhile with Dada-mahaśaya. A little later, invocations started pouring forth spontaneously from Ma's divine lips. Since a long time Father had been keen to note down the invocations which were spontaneously emerging during Ma's *bhāva*, but Ma had said, "You will not be able to do it even if you try." That day, Father was sitting near Ma. A little later Ma said, "Note it down if you can." Immediately Father, Kedar Master and three or four others sat down to write. But they were able to note only partially, leaving out lines in between.*

<i>* Ehi Bhāvanāyaṁ Bhāyaṁ</i>	<i>Bhāvanibhavaṁ Bhavabhayanāśaṁ</i>
	<i>He</i>
<i>Ehi Yaṁ Saṁ Tāni Tāyaṁ</i>	<i>Hara Śaraṇāgataṁ Tāyaṁ</i>
<i>Vaṁ Kṛm̐ Ām̐ He</i>	<i>Vibhāvataha Mamāyanaṁ He</i>
<i>Bhām̐ Hām̐ Hīm̐ Hauṁ Haṁ</i>	<i>Blāvamayaṁ Bhavabhayaḥaraṇaṁ He</i>
<i>Hīm̐ Vaṁ Laiṁ Yaṁ Saṁ Tvam̐</i>	<i>Yasmin̐stavaḥam̐ Bhāga Pauṁ Haṁ</i>
<i>Tādarau Bhāga Saṁ Vaṁ Laiṁ He</i>	<i>Yastāraṇaṁ Tatra Dvayarūpaṁ</i>
<i>Deva Bhaktamsyaṁ Mama He</i>	<i>Mayā Hi Sarvāṇi Svarūpamayāni</i>
<i>Sa Tvam̐ Hi Ham̐ Yam̐ Vam̐ Vāyam̐</i>	<i>Mayā Hi Sarvaha</i>
<i>Kaṁ</i>	
<i>Blāvabhakti Bhāvamayaṁ Hé</i>	<i>Mayā Hi Sarvaśaraṇaṁ He</i>
<i>Makātmāyaṁ Bhavabhayaṁ Hara Hé</i>	<i>Dāsa Nityaṁ Praṇaśruta-</i>
	<i>kāraṇaṁ</i>
<i>Daivataṁ Mayam̐ Me Saṁ Tam̐ Hrīm̐</i>	<i>Malāṅkāyā Malābhāvamayaṁ He</i>
<i>Mattattvaṁ Bhavohayaṁ</i>	<i>Mama Bho Bhaktan Saraṇaṁ Mā</i>
<i>Yastāni Tvam̐ Tāraṇamayaṁ</i>	<i>Mama Sarvamayaṁ He</i>
<i>Bhavabhayanāśam̐ Bhāvaya He</i>	<i>Yasyā Rudrarudratraṁ</i>

* Paramahansa Sri Ram Thakur *Mahaśaya* has interpreted this. For fear of increasing the bulk of this book, it has not been given here.

Svabhāva Saraṇāgataṁ Praṇavajāsancṁ Praṇave Rām Rām Kṛtakāraṇam
Rudram Naumi
Grām Vām Hām Saṁ
Ām Him Am
Bhāvamayaṁ He
Saṁṛṣṭehe Keśavaha

During this year's birthday festival, on everybody's request I had purchased a harmonium to be used for kirtan. Ma told Yogesh Dada to catch the tune of the invocation on the harmonium. After some time the invocations ceased and Ma said, "Every day, sing this invocation which has been written down to the tune of the notes played on the harmonium and then start kirtan." Further she declared, "This harmonium shall not be used to play any trivial song. It shall be reserved for kirtan only." Saying this, she stood up and started moving to the lilt of the kirtan. Suddenly she stood still and said, "All of you must let me go. I shall leave Dhaka today." Hearing these heart-rending words everyone exclaimed sorrowfully, "Ma, Ma, how can that be?" At that, Ma began to weep like a small child and said, "You must not put obstacles in my way. If you don't let me go, I shall leave the body right here and go away, but go I must." Then no one dared utter a word and everyone's eyes filled with tears. Ma spoke again, "When Bholanath comes, explain to him that he should not try to stop me." Everyone agreed and Ma continued, "You all who had been here long ago have come again, and many others will keep on coming."

"Yesterday, at this time, I entered this ashram. For twenty-four hours I have remained, now I shall have to leave." Father

wanted to inform Bholanath, but Ma said, "It is not necessary." When she was asked who would go with her, she replied, "there is no need for anyone to accompany me, but for your sake I can take Father along." *Dadamahaşaya* was asked accordingly and he got ready to leave immediately.

Ma went and sat in the field outside with only the clothes that she was wearing. All sat around her. Ma asked, "When is a train due?" Someone replied, "It will leave at twelve." Ma said, "You people may see me off into that train; see that the train does not fail." Meanwhile Father informed Jyotish Dada and Bholanath who had arrived just then. Bholanath entered the Ashram. Ma said, "I have to leave at the correct time anyway. I shall now go inside." She went to Bholanath and asked his permission to leave. As Bholanath expressed his mild displeasure, Ma declared, "If you stop me, this body will be given up right here at your feet." Then Bholanath could raise no objection. "Go, I do not forbid it", he said listlessly. "This is an order for me!" Ma exclaimed immediately and went outside. Bholanath remarked, "If you do not stay with me, people will criticise you." Ma rejoined, "I shall never do anything which people can criticise. Father is going with me. Will anyone still criticise me?" She looked at us all questioningly. Everyone replied, "No Ma. Why should anyone find fault?" She did not say anything else.

It was time to leave. A car had arrived, but Ma did not agree to travel by it. She started walking to the station with all the people. Many of them held lamps and walked with her. Sitanath wanted to accompany Ma and she took him

along. Jyotish Dada stood on one side and did not go near Ma. We took Ma to the station and a little later Bholanath

Ma at the station
—Sitanath's
departure with
Ma

reached there along with Jyotish Dada and two or three others. Ma sat under a tree surrounded by her devotees who were sorrowful. Many people, thinking that I would

suffer greatly, told Ma, "Ma, take Didi with you", but Ma did not agree. The tickets were purchased by collecting whatever money people had in their pockets right then. Ma said, "I shall first go to Kalipada Babu's (Bholanath's nephew) house at Maimensingh." She also enquired about the whereabouts of Ashu, who was not in Dhaka at that time. While sitting in the field Ma had said, "For a long time there was this *kheyāla* to go out like this. But since Bholanath would not agree it remained unfulfilled. If an obstacle is placed in the way of any *bhāva* (I go on obeying the orders given) this body behaves strangely. Therefore, when its *bhāva* was obstructed, this body often lay motionless, and would not recover inspite of many attempts. I do whatever you all ask of me, regardless of the condition of this body."

After Ma had been sitting on the station platform for awhile, the train arrived. Bholanath and Jyotish Dada were

Jyotish Dada's
departure with
Ma

not near Ma. Ma got into the train and we then noticed that Jyotish Dada had also boarded the train and occupied a seat. When

Ma asked him the reason, he replied, "Father has asked me to go, so I shall accompany you." No one else heard this. Ma did not say anything further. Bholanath fretted with anger and sorrow after the train had left, but until

its departure he stood quietly far away. As soon as Ma's desire was accomplished he became restless. Some of us returned to the Ashram with Bholanath while the rest went to their homes.

Very early next morning, Father took a couple of blankets and some clothes for Ma and went to Maimensingh. When he reached there he found that Ma was getting ready to leave. Father handed over the blankets and returned to Dhaka the same evening, because Ma had forbidden him to accompany her. Ma was going to Adinath (Chittagong). Ashu was not to be found even at his brother's, Kalipada Babu's house at Maimensingh because he was at Narayanganj. He came to Dhaka after Ma had left. Before Father returned, Sri Kunjamohan Mukhopadhyaya set out alone in search of Ma. He had come from Kashi to Dhaka for the festival. Jyotish Dada, Sitanath and *Dadamahāsaya* went with Ma to Adinath mountain via Cox Bazar. Within five or seven days, Jyotish Dada left Ma at Adinath and returned, because he had to attend office.

As soon as Bholanath got the information from Jyotish Dada that Ma was at Adinath, he travelled there with Ashu. Meanwhile, Kunja Babu discovered Ma's whereabouts after much searching. Bholanath stayed for a few days at Adinath and then went to Chandranath via Chittagong with Ma and her companions. Shashi Babu, who was Ma's devotee since a long time, accompanied them from Chittagong and enabled them to have darshan of Chandranath. From there, Ma, Bholanath and the others proceeded to Calcutta.

From there, Ma went to *Pisima's* house at Salkiya. She then explained something to Bholanath and made him stay on there. Taking Ashu and *Dadamahaśaya* with her, she went to Hardwar, leaving Sitanath with Bholanath. She also told Kunja Babu to stay on there, but he said he was travelling to Kashi and went along with Ma ; however he did not alight at Kashi but accompanied Ma to Hardwar. Ma went from Hardwar to Dehradun, saw the Sahasra Dhara and returned to Hardwar.

Ma's trip to
Hardwar and
darshan of
Sahasra Dhara
at Dehradun

One day Ma left suddenly. Kunja Babu did not know that she had informed *Dadamahaśaya* of her departure, nor did *Dadamahaśaya* know where she had gone.

Journey to
Ayodhya and
return to
Hardwar

The reason why Kunja Babu was not informed was that he kept on saying he would return to his home, but actually did not leave. So Ma, wanting to dodge him, did not tell him she was going away. Ma took Ashu and went for a stroll on the banks of the Ganges. Suddenly she had the *kheyāla* to send Ashu to their lodgings to get a couple of blankets and went straight to the station from the river bank. *Dadamahaśaya* did not even come to know of this. Ma went to Ayodhya along with Ashu. They got acquainted with the ticket collector there, who took Ma to his house where she stayed for a day or two and then returned to Hardwar, putting up at Bholagiri Ashram. Ashu had never travelled much. Ma perhaps felt that it would be least convenient if she set out alone with him ! At that time Pandit Gopinath Kaviraj and some other people of Kashi, were staying at the Bholagiri *dharmaśālā*. They were extremely

happy to obtain Ma's company. Gopi Babu informed *Dadamahāṣaya* and he came and presented himself before Ma who started laughing. *Dadamahāṣaya* had been extremely worried for the past few days. Meanwhile Kunja Babu developed some stomach trouble.

Ma left Kunja Babu at Hardwar and proceeded with *Dadamahāṣaya* and Ashu to Kashi where she went to the houses of Bacchu (Nirmal Babu's son) and others. Kunja Babu wired to his sons at Kashi about his indisposition. Jiten Dada (Kunja Babu's eldest son) and Bacchu's mother (Kunja Babu's niece) went to Kashi to fetch Kunja Babu and left Kashi before Ma arrived there. *Dadamahāṣaya* got fever as soon as he reached Kashi and Ma left him at that house and departed with Ashu. She was also accompanied by Kunja Babu's fourth son Nani and another devotee called Manik *, who was also just a boy. Only three people went with Ma and they were all young boys. Her destination was unknown. At Mogalsarai station Nani told Ma, "Ma let us go to Vindhyaṣhal." Ma agreed. During those days we observed that whenever anybody said anything, Ma would do it straight-away. Sometimes nobody could make Ma do anything he wanted, and at other times she would comply with other's wishes with the docility of a child. All these various demean-

* His mother was also a great devotee of Ma. When Ma was surrounded by crowds, she would feel apprehensive about not being able to find a place near Ma if she got up, so she fasted for days together and sat and just gazed at Ma. In 1935, Ma suddenly reached Kashi just before she passed away. She had Ma's darshan and died the very next morning. Manik never missed any opportunity to have Ma's darshan.

nours were noticeable. That day she acquiesced to Nani's suggestion and went to Vindhyachal, where she stayed at the Vindhyachal Ashram.*

Meanwhile Jiten Dada and Bacchu's mother reached Kashi with Kunjamohan Mukhopadhyaya and discovered that Ma had been to Kashi and left. They were very sad about this. They either received information or made a guess and went to Vindhyachal the same day and had Ma's darshan. They requested Ma to go to Kashi. She returned with them and stayed at Bacchu's house.

In the meantime Bholanath went to Calcutta, Kasava and several other places of pilgrimage and finally reached his nephew's, Doctor Girija Kushari's residence at Chandpur. Tired out by so much travelling he fell ill. When Ma heard of this, she sent Ashu there from Kashi. *Dadamahaṣaya* also was down with fever. One night kirtan was held in Ma's presence at Nirmal Babu's house. After the kirtan everybody was leaving when one person said, "Ma, whenever you leave, please inform us." "I shall leave just now," Ma stated there and then. When the people of the house and *Dadamahaṣaya* objected to this, Ma began to cry and told *Dadamahaṣaya*, "Please give me permission to leave." *Dadamahaṣaya* granted permission to Ma out of fear, seeing her condition. Ma sat back composedly. The question of

* Father and Sri Kunjamohan Mukhopadhyaya had built this Ashram. They had invited Ma and Bholanath to Vindhyachal some time earlier and had inaugurated this Ashram.

who was to accompany Ma arose. It was decided that Jiten Dada would go. Ma left for Calcutta by the first available train. There she stayed at the house of Dr. Girin Mitra, who was Jiten Dada's close friend. He had had Ma's darshan long ago when he had gone with Jiten Dada for kirtan to Pyari Banu Begum's house on Theatre Road. He was also greatly devoted to Ma.

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CHAPTER IX

Ma had already been to Navadveep once, and had met a *mauni sādhu* (renunciate who observes a vow of silence). No one was allowed to enter the *sādhu's* room, and he had to be

viewed only from a distance. Bholanath, Charu Babu and several others believed that it was not a human being at all but a statue from Krishnanagar, which was being called a

man in order to make money. At Girin Mitra's house, the topic of this *sādhu* came up during conversation. Ma said she wanted to go and see the *sādhu* once again. So Girin Dada, his widowed sister-in-law and Jiten Dada took Ma to Navadveep. Ma stayed at the *mauni sādhu's* Ashram for a few days. When she expressed her desire to stay on further, Girin Dada left his sister-in-law with Ma, and returned to Calcutta with Jiten Dada. At that time, Ma's daily diet consisted of two or three *rotis* with a little boiled vegetable. Girin Dada's sister-in-law prepared this for Ma and ate some of it herself. No secret can remain unrevealed before Ma. Ma returned to Calcutta from Navadveep after revealing the *sādhu's* mystery totally.* Girin Dada went and fetched Ma.

* The *sādhu* used to sit all day long in the lotus pose, so perfectly still, that everyone felt awed and took it for granted that he was a great saint in a state of deep *samādhi*. Mataji staying next door to the *sādhu*, soon found out that he bathed, ate and slept secretly during the night. By and by he confided to Ma that he was made to assume that pose in order to get money. Through Ma's benign influence he gave up that life of deception.

In order to enable Ma to live in solitude, Girin Dada took Ma and his family to his own house in his native village, Akhna. There arrangements were made for Ma's sojourn in solitude at Dr Girin Mitra's house at Akhna. Ma to stay in exactly the way she wanted. She remained lying in solitude most of the time.

No one was allowed to go near her, nor did Girin Dada inform anybody of Ma's presence, out of fear that crowds would collect as soon as they received news of Ma's whereabouts. Ma particularly wanted to stay this way.

After a few days Girin Dada came to know that Bholanath was extremely unwell. He informed Ma of this and went to Calcutta with her. Jyotish Dada was also in Calcutta on some official work. He, Surendra-mohan Mukhopadhyaya and other devotees got news about Ma. Jyotish Dada took Ma to the house of his friend Jnān Sen. Kamalakant was called from Dhaka. Meanwhile, Surendra Mukhopadhyaya wired to Bholanath about Ma's arrival at Calcutta. Bholanath had been without news about Ma for some time. He came to Calcutta as soon as he received the telegram and met Ma at Jnān Sen's house and then went to Surendra Mohan Mukhopadhyaya's place. Bholanath was very angry. Ma stayed on at Calcutta.

In the meanwhile Pandit Gopinath Kaviraj was going to Puri with his Guru Srimad Vishuddhananda Swami. *Dadamahasaya* was also accompanying them. *Dadamahasaya's* pilgrimage to Puri Gopi Babu who met Ma at Calcutta wanted to introduce his Guru to her, but incidentally the meeting did not take place then. Much later, Gopinath

Kaviraj took Ma to meet Vishuddhananda Swamiji at Kashi. Swamiji expressed great delight on seeing Ma.

After meeting Bholanath, Ma kept *mauna* most of the time. Jyotish Dada returned to Dhaka after a few days.

Ma's partaking of *bhoga* from the hands of Surendra Mohan Mukhopadhyaya's old mother loved Ma very much. She took great pleasure in feeding Ma painstakingly. Ma has not been eating anything made of milk for the last two years. So much so, that she would not even eat anything cooked in *ghī*. Ma never ate

much rice, fish or vegetable even otherwise. Therefore the old lady felt very sad that she was unable to feed Ma with anything. This time when Ma went to their house the old lady had prepared several items with which to perform *pūjā* on the occasion of the *nistārīṇi vrata*. She was overcome by devotion to Ma and said, "When Ma herself is present here, what *pūjā* shall I perform? If Ma eats the offerings everything will be accomplished." So saying she fetched all the food and the other items meant for offering and sat down to feed Ma. Ma ate a little of everything from the hands of the old lady. Then she said, "You are sad because I do not eat milk products, aren't you? Today you can feed me anything you like." The old lady fed Ma with a little curds and other things with immense joy. Ma ate milk products after about two years. Then she got up and went into the kitchen. There, Surendra Mukhopadhyaya's wife was cooking fish and other things. Ma sat there and ate what Surendra Mukhopadhyaya's wife fed her. Everyone was delighted.

Having made everybody happy, Ma left for Chandpur with Bholanath and Kamalakant. As soon as they received this information, Father, Nishi Babu and Jyotish Dada went to Chandpur to fetch Ma and Bholanath.

Sri Sri Ma goes to Chandpur with Bholanath After staying there for a couple of days, Jyotish Dada, and then Father went back to Dhaka, leaving Nishi Babu at Chandpur.

Some days later, Nishi Babu returned to Dhaka with Ma and Bholanath. They stayed at the Siddheshwari Ashram.

Ma's return to Dhaka and stay at Siddheshwari Ma was returning to Dhaka after nearly one and a half months. I had kept *mauna* during those six weeks as per Ma's earlier orders.

Now, after having Ma's darshan I began to speak according to her injunctions. Ma was still in *mauna*. Kamalakant had gone elsewhere from Chandpur. Only Ma and Bholanath stayed at Siddheshwari as Bholanath desired. Ma was cooking with Bholanath's help. In accordance with Bholanath's wishes, Ma was also serving him. We would go and have Ma's darshan and come away. Matari Pisima, Didima and others stayed at Ashwini Babu's house in Siddheshwari. One day, Ma spoke to Bholanath with a very soft voice. It seemed as if she had lost her faculty of speech ; her facial expression was very glum. After conversing with Bholanath she called me and told me that Father and I should fast the next day. Some ritual was to be performed by us after dusk. The next day we fasted and went to Ma. After twilight the five of us, Bholanath, Father, Kulada Dada, Yogesh Dada and I, made an offering of five fruits into the sacrificial fire, by Ma's orders. We came away at night.

During this time, Didima prepared meat one day and fed Ma a little of it. The same or the next day, Ma was sitting at the doorway of the Bhairavi's room, when she suddenly began to cry terrifyingly. Feeding Ma with meat curry and her reaction Bholanath came from the Ashram and we were all present. Ma wept bitterly and said, "Yesterday I was fed meat. Meat has blood in it, there is blood in the fruit of the tree also, milk is also the blood of the cow ; everything is blood ; do not ever feed me all this." Since then Ma did not eat any of these things for a long time. Gradually Ma's *mauna* was broken.

A few days later, in July or August, 1929, Bholanath was afflicted with severe stomach ache at night. Ma kept awake the whole night and nursed him with great care. The next day we all saw his condition and treatment was begun. Within a couple of days Bholanath was shifted to a room in Ashwini Babu's house, for it was not advisable to lie on the ground at Siddheshwari in that condition. Ma also went and stayed there. Ma always sat on Bholanath's bed or on the floor near one corner of the bed. She served him as much as she could. She spoke very little and kept silent most of the time. A few days later, Bholanath recovered more or less. Ma would go and lie down in the Siddheshwari Ashram in the afternoons with Bholanath's permission and would get up and return in the evenings.

One day she was lying down in this manner in the Siddheshwari ashram after closing the door. A few ladies came to meet Ma. When going to see Bholanath, they

said, "Ma, we shall return. Please open the door for us." Ma said 'yes', closed the door and lay down. When the ladies

Ma falling down while opening the door during *bhāva* in Siddheshwari resulting in a head injury and bleeding

returned and knocked at the door Ma rose, opened the door and immediately lay down. About rising and opening the door, Ma says, "Do you know how it happened? I had given my word that I would open the door when they came. As soon as they arrived, this

body rose and unbolted the door and lay down as before.

This rising and going to the door, occurred just as a piece of paper is wafted by a breeze. As soon as the door was opened

and thus the word had been kept, the body fell from its standing position." The *bhavā* in which Ma had been lying down

was continuing. Therefore she did not notice the injury on her head. Meanwhile, the ladies who had knocked at the

door, heard the door being unbolted and then the sound of Ma's falling down. But since the door was closed for awhile,

they did not have the courage to push it open. When they finally did so, they saw that the floor near the headrest of Ma's

bedding was covered with blood and all her hair had turned dark with drops of blood. They were frightened and called

out to Ma. She arose just as one does after a nap, most casually, and started chatting. Many other people turned up

and everyone listened enthralled to Ma's talk. No one noticed the injury on her head. After a long time everyone got up

to go to Bholanath at Ashwini Babu's house. A little later I went and placed my hand on Ma's head and found that her

hair was all damp with blood. When I became anxious everyone's attention was drawn to the hurt. Ma's hair was cut

and we found a big wound. Ma remarked, still laughing, "I did not notice anything." The bleeding stopped after we washed the wound for a long time. Some hair had also to be cut. Ma sat quietly. The wound healed after many days.

Gradually Bholanath resumed his normal diet. He was staying at the same house. At that time we received news from

Calcutta about the sudden demise of both Bholanath's recovery and about Surendra Mukhopadhyaya's mother and wife. It struck me then, that that was the reason why Ma ate milk products and other things from their hands and made them happy, while

she was at Calcutta lately. Ma had taken the old lady to Hardwar during the Kumbha mela and enabled her to travel to several places of pilgrimage. The old lady had not gone to many holy places before this and by Ma's grace she was able to have the darshan of several sacred spots.

Within a few days, Ma developed slight fever (it probably started during August, 1929). Ma did not even notice it. She

Ma's indisposition and her visits to Siddheshwari during the illness in August 1929 was being fed rice during her illness and she was eating just that. For some reason we were not staying there much during that time but going only once a day and returning after a while. During Bholanath's illness, a homœo-

pathic doctor had given him two bottles of medicines. Ma's attention was drawn to this and she remarked to the doctor, "Baba, I think that one of these bottles contains water." The doctor replied, "Yes Ma, we are often made to do this for the sake of pacifying our patients." The same day, Ma started saying, "I shall have medicine, I am having fever. I have

fever, give me medicine." She repeated this over and over again. Didima gave her some water and Ma said, "I have drunk medicine. I have fever." As she said this she really began having fever. And Ma's state of helplessness was also a yogic activity. The fever seemed to be a means of keeping that state going. Ma always likes to keep her real condition hidden. One day when the fever seemed to be higher, Ashwini Babu's little daughter (named Chhana) forcefully applied a thermometer and found that the temperature had risen very high. Ma had eaten rice that day also. In this condition also Ma would go and lie down in the Siddheshwari Ashram during the afternoons. That day too Ma went there and returned in the evening.

The next day she finished her meal quickly and went to the Siddheshwari Ashram. Before leaving she told Bholanath, "I shall eat now. I may not be able to eat after that." No one understood the significance of this statement. She went and lay down in the Ashram. At that time Father and I also went there and saw that Ma had spread an ordinary mat on the ground and was lying on it. I placed my hand on her body and found that because of raging fever her body felt like fire to the touch. Ma spoke a little to us most normally. A couple of other people turned up, had Ma's darshan and left. Didima, Pisima and others all came on hearing about Ma's fever. A little later Ma vomitted. I was alone with Ma in the room, because she asked everyone to go out and then threw up. An enormous worm fell out. Ma told me, "Go and throw it out. Don't say anything to anyone." Then everyone entered the

Ma's stay at
Siddheshwari
during her illness

room. A little later, before evening, Ma wanted to pass urine. I held her and went outside. But while returning Ma could not move any further. She suddenly let go of her entire body which had become altogether helpless. Just then a few other people arrived and with their help I supported Ma and made her lie down. The fever was very high and her body was totally disabled. Father and others felt extremely worried. Bholanath came as soon as he heard of all this and declared that he would also stay on in the Ashram. Ma did not wish to leave the Ashram and go elsewhere, and it was indeed practically impossible to shift her. Yet it seemed as if Ma's innate joy was increasing. With Bholanath's permission I began to stay with Ma from that day onwards. Father and Yogesh Dada also remained at Siddheshwari Ashram day in and day out. For some reason Jyotish Dada was then forbidden to go to the Ashram, so he was unable to be there. His residence was very close to ours at Thikatuli, so that whenever Father went to our house in the morning, Jyotish Dada got all the news from him. In addition he also received information from others.

Meanwhile everyone left that day. Ma's condition became terrible. From head to toe, Ma's body was totally limp. And after all these activities Ma's head had become soft and there was a depression at one spot in the middle of her head.

In all, it seemed to be a manifestation of all the *kriyas* that can occur within the body. This matter has been discussed with Gopinath Kaviraj.

It was raining in the evening and at about ten o'clock Ma said, "Take me outside." Father, Yogesh Dada, Bhupati Dada and I held Ma and took her to the veranda. Observing the rain Father wished to take Ma back to the room.

Descriptions of
the above men-
tioned condition
and its wonder-
ful characteristics

Ma laughed and said, "You are a doctor after all; the *samskāras* do not want to leave you." Ma did not go inside. Once she said, "Lift me and make me sit up." Then she said "Gather my limbs and body together and make a creeper-like formation." Again she said, "Spread my arms and legs and make me lie down." In this manner we did whatever Ma asked us to do at any time. Who knows whether or not she was performing *āsanas* of some kind? Much time was spent thus. Then Ma said, "Take me into the room." We did so.

At that time Ma's bodily condition was such, that if two people did not support her head and neck properly her head would lurch forward and the neck would turn helplessly just like that of an infant. It was as if her entire body had come apart and was totally limp. And in this condition she was telling us to lift her, seat her and lay her down, day in and day out, ceaselessly. She was telling us to make some change or the other in her body's position continuously and she would take no medicine. If anybody asked her to take medicine she replied, "I have no objection, but if anything is started once it cannot be stopped within limited amounts. Consider this and then do whatever you like." But we also never felt the need to administer any medicines to Ma. During the day Father and Yogeshda had to go away in connection with their duties.

Bholanath and I stayed near Ma. Didima and Pisima also, after finishing the cooking, came to Ma. Ma's condition was continuing in the same manner without any improvement. It was extremely difficult to take her to the toilet. Ma laughed and said, "The body's state is like that of a sack of flour." Really, even when three or four people were supporting Ma's body, whichever part was not held securely, that limb would begin to fall. She seemed to have totally left the body and in those circumstances it was not possible to protect her body fully. We felt very bad about this. Whenever one part was being supported, some other part would fall. It went on this way. But she was chatting a great deal and a blissful *bhāva* was predominant. Doctors declared that this lifelessness in Ma's body was paralysis, but this letting go of the body and the *āsanas* which occurred, though the body survived alright, who knows whether or not it was a consequence of the *āsanas*? Ma had once declared in Bajitpur that at a certain age, that is at a certain time, something would occur within her body. I do not now recollect what it was that she had said would happen. She had also declared that there would be a special manifestation of *yoga kriya*. Gopi Babu had asked Ma, "When was your *sādhana* completed? Even now *yoga kriya* is being manifested." Ma replied, "That does not mean anything. It could have happened in the past and may also happen later." Though the body had become so helpless, the sense of touch was still very keen. So much so, that even if an ant crawled across the soles of her feet or on any part of her body, she could feel it. This condition persisted for four or five days.

Since the time when Ma stayed at Shahbagh, kirtan was performed throughout the night on every Saturday. At first *nāma-kirtan* was kept up from sunset to sunrise. Later for the sake of convenience, it was performed from sunrise to sunset. One day I told Ma, "Ma, please get well now. We are not able to protect your body properly." The same night Ma was lying down with her eyes closed. Suddenly she lifted her left arm ever so slowly and lowered it again. For the last four or five days, this was the first time Ma had moved any limb by herself. We felt very happy to see this. The next day kirtan was performed from sunrise to sunset in the same Ashram. Only a couple of people were singing *nāma-kirtan*. Suddenly Ma rose in *bhāva* and went and sat on the veranda by herself. Then she could not get up again. We raised her somehow and brought her back to the room. After this her body was no longer helpless, but her fever was still very high. For a few days Bhupati Dada and I recorded the temperature with a thermometer, very often. The fever was remaining as high as 106° F. When we found the temperature constantly so high, after a few days, because of Ma's telling us to do so, or because we ourselves became indifferent we stopped recording the temperature with a thermometer. We also found a startling difference in the temperature within a short interval of time. For instance, we had just removed the thermometer and read the temperature to be 101°F. On replacing the thermometer again soon after, we found the temperature to be 106° F or 107° F. Then we did not use the thermometer anymore.

Ma on the way
to recovery by
her own will as a
result of our piti-
able entreaties

After this Rajmohan Babu's wife ground some medicine in water and applied the paste to Ma's forehead. Ma asked and found out what had been ground in water and applied and said immediately, "If you have Ma's recourse to a wonderful remedy applied water then put water properly on my head." So now head washing began in right earnest. We had already cut some hair from Ma's head. On the first day we poured four or five urns of water. On the second day ten urns of water were poured over Ma's head and forty to fifty buckets on the next day. Yet she told us to go on pouring. Then a hundred to a hundred and fifty urns of water were poured. The pouring was started in the morning and continued through the afternoon. It seemed as if Ma's difficult *kheyāla* had been suppressed because of the water poured on her head. We felt that we had committed a blunder by bathing her head one day. Now she just did not want to stop. Water was being poured till evening. Whatever Ma said was carried out. Three or four boys (Kalidasa, Amulya, and others) became perplexed after continuously fetching water. One day we stopped pouring water and mixed old ghee and milk and applied it to Ma's head. This put a stop to the water pouring. Sick body! And she was chatting away with great joy. Bholanath reflected that Ma was afflicted with this illness and was yet in such bliss, so that she may never have the *kheyāla* to drive away the illness. He knew very well that Ma could cure herself if she only desired to do so. Therefore he scolded her one day and said, "Why are you in such joy in this state of illness?" After this Ma assumed silence. She remained very quiet just as sick people usually do.

A few days later Bholanath told Ma, "Look, you must get well now. Drive away the illness." He repeated this twice or thrice. Ma kept quiet for awhile. Then she replied, "See, you have brought about this condition by putting obstacles in my *bhāva* and making me return. Now don't say anything. Whatever has to happen will happen." We

Difficulties confront Bholanath for having put obstacles in the way of Ma's *bhāva*

realised then that we had been confronted by this situation only because of compelling Ma to return and stay on in this way. It has already been mentioned that whenever Ma's *bhāva* is opposed, Ma obeys orders alright, but her body undergoes some terrible change. There is nothing we can do or say about it but we can only keep on doing whatever service she accepts from us. (After this illness, for the next three or four years, Ma had fever every year during this season.) A few days later Bholanath fell ill — he had fever, stomach-ache and other troubles. Kulada Dada, Matari Pisima and several others attended on him.

Kulada Dada had to go to office. Almost everybody went away during the day. Father, Yogesh Dada and Kulada Dada

The advent of diseases near Ma is just like the advent of visitors

stayed in the nights. A few days later, Nagen Dutta and Doctor Nripendra also came to stay at the ashram. Ma started passing blood in her urine and stools. This illness went on for several days. If we mentioned recovery to Ma she would reply, "When you all come to me, I don't drive you away. Diseases also come and play within this body. Why should I drive them away? They will play as long as they have to and then leave of their own accord." Saying this she would

laugh. The diseases began sporting with great aplomb within Ma's body. A few days later, the symptoms of diseases receded and the fever also came down but did not stop altogether.

During this time, Ma told us to write to my brother Nandu to come once. A telegram was dispatched. Nandu arrived from Calcutta. Ma declared that she would eat rice. Nandu reached Dhaka on the very day that she was to eat rice. I did not know why Ma had asked Nandu to come. Ma had immense love for him. We have received a great deal of motherly affection from Ma. Nandu and I had been extremely attached to our mother who brought us into the world. We could not stay without her for even a moment. The aim of our life from our childhood onwards was to serve our parents, particularly our mother. How much capacity has an offspring to serve his parents? Yet we lived with the attitude that we would do as much as we possibly could. Our time was spent with our mother, day in and day out. We did not engage much in worship or other ritualistic activity. People who saw this state of affairs thought that I would also not live much longer when my mother passed away. But the good fortune of having the darshan of Sri Sri Ma's feet was lying in store for us and therefore nothing happened.

I became blessed and contented when I had the darshan of Sri Sri Ma's feet, about a year after the death of my mother. Ma once saw a photograph of my mother and pointing towards Nandu and me, she commented, "Seeing this picture of your mother it seems to me that she has taken

The story of my
and my brother's
childhood

so much trouble to make you two into humans, only for my sake." We were overwhelmed by these affectionate words

uttered by Ma. What bliss welled forth

Ma's special loving compassion towards us

in our hearts ! The purpose of recording all these incidents is to keep alive the memory of

Ma's love. I believe that this memory can

wipe out the impurities of the mind to an extent which *pūjā* and *japa* cannot achieve. Naturally, the sacred memory of this love is extremely precious to us. Therefore I have written down a couple of instances about Ma's love in a few places while recording Ma's life. How much grace Ma had bestowed even on children like us ! As I think of this my eyes fill with tears. Undoubtedly, the good fortune of having darshan of Ma's feet is the result of a great deal of penance in previous births. Today again Ma has given her children an opportunity to serve her by creating illness within herself. Ma's activity always promotes welfare. As soon as Ma's fever decreased slightly, she ate rice. Then for awhile there was no fever, nor was there any swelling of the feet or any other symptoms. Jyotish Dada brought the list of medicines prescribed by Kaviraj. The next morning Ma said, "I shall eat rice." For two or three days Ma ate rice and remained quite well.

In the morning around five or six, I saw Ma extending her palm and raising her arm. So I asked her, "What is in your hand ?" Ma replied with closed eyes, "Malaria fever has been offered." Meaning that a personification of the disease had touched her hand and that she had accepted it. Astonished, I queried, "What, do you have fever then ?" I saw that Ma had fever, and the fever continued. Ma some-

times ate rice in between, when she did not have fever. For a few days after the fever had subsided, Ma ate rice, *roti* and other things as well. Ma never ate rice regularly anyway.

Another room had been built at the Ramna Ashram. The image of Kali was at Siddheshwari. In Yogesh Dada's village, there lived a boy named Atul, who had passed his matriculation and was unmarried. Since he had no interest in worldly life he came to Siddheshwari in search of Yogesh Dada. He began preparing *bhoga* for Kali and offering it to the Goddess. Yogesh Dada, Atul and I received that *bhoga* as *prasāda* while the other people all ate at Ashwini Babu's house where *Pisima* and *Didima* were cooking. This was the way things were going on.

The Kali image was to be brought to Ramna Ashram before Durga Puja as per the plans afoot. Nagen Babu and Bhupati Babu were working hard for the Ashram. The entire burden of arrangements for the Ashram lay on Jyotish Dada. With reference to installing the Kali image, Ma said, "A small Kali temple shall be constructed here in exactly the same spot where a broken Siva temple with a broken Siva image is situated and the image of Kali shall be put in the place as the Siva image." Sri Nagen Rai had the temple built. Bhupati Babu, Nagen Babu and others got together and arranged for Ma's meals at Ramna Ashram.

Hearing about Ma's illness, Nirmal Babu came from Varanasi and stayed with Ma at Siddheshwari. A model of the almirah at the Kali temple in the Ashram was prepared. It has already been mentioned that the Kali image at Siddheshwari

was kept in a big wooden cupboard. A pit was also dug in the ashram to house the sacrificial fire. Ma gave instructions that the Kali image and the sacrificial fire should accompany her. Jyotish Dada had also started coming to the Ashram by then. Not many people at Siddheshwari visited Ma regularly, but during Ma's indisposition many of the local residents came. Sri Rajmohan Babu's wife would visit Ma every afternoon and stay on for a long time, serving Ma in whatever way she could. She would leave her children at home, even when they were sick, and spend a lot of time with Ma. Many other people brought offerings like pickles, mango preserves and seasoned tamarind. They felt extremely happy when Ma accepted all those things.

One day during her illness Ma spoke to Sri Rajmohan Ganguli about her condition, "See, Baba this time I had a stomach upset at Chandpur one day ; such was the illness that I was unable to return to my room from the lavatory. I visited the lavatory fifty to sixty times. In that too, there was great bliss, as if that were a grand kirtan. This kind of immense bliss continued all day long. I ate everything as usual at night, and nothing happened." Rajmohan Ganguli is a very learned man. He understood this to be a characteristic of a *sthitaprajña* (one who is established in supreme Knowledge). He gazed at Ma with great happiness and asked persuasively, "Ma, does this condition of yours persist always ?" Ma laughed lightly and did not reply.

Congregation of many devotees around Ma during her sickness

Sri Sri Ma is beyond health and illness

CHAPTER X

In the evening of the *Mahālaya* day of the month of Ashwin (September or October) 1929, Ma and Bholanath went to the

Ma's stay at
Ramna Ashram
—1929, (Ashwin,
Mahālaya day)

Ramna Ashram. The Kali image and the sacrificial fire were also taken with them from Siddheshwari. This was the fifth and last time the Kali image was being shifted. Ma said,

“Now whatever has to happen will happen.” On two sides of a room which had been built on the northern side of the Ashram, two bedsteads were placed for Ma and Bholanath to sleep on. The broken Siva image had already been put inside the small hut which had been built for Ma. The Kali image was installed in the new temple which had been constructed according to Ma's instructions. Ma was then still unable to stand without support. She was very weak though not actually ill and was recovering gradually. Bholanath was extremely unwell. For a few days he did not take any medication but later treatment had been begun methodically. After a few days, Ma asked for her bedding to be taken to the small hut and began living there.

That year, devotees had not arranged for any special *pūjās* to be performed during the Durga *pūjā* festival. Ma got up

The story of the
arrangements for
special puja of
the Kali image at
Ramna Ashram
during Durga Puja

early on the *Mahā Saptami* day and declared, “It is necessary to prepare *bhoga* without delay and offer it today.” She told Kulada Dada to perform special *pūjās* to the Kali image on these three days. Thus all arranged for the worship with whatever was available in their homes. When

Bholanath asked Ma about animal sacrifice, Ma declared, "There must never be any animal sacrifice in this place." On all three days, the Kali image was worshipped with the sixteen kinds of offerings (*ṣoḍaśopacāra*). Ever since, *pūjā* is being performed in this way at the time of Durgā Pūjā.

When this *pūjā* was in progress, Munsif Vinay and his family arrived at Dhaka. His daughter Uma was ill. Vinay

Uma Vinay Babu's daughter's death and the construction of a kirtan room in her memory in the Ashram

Babu came every day to the Ashram with her.

One day Ma said, "For a few days do not come to the Ashram with this girl." He thought that Ma had said this because it was inconvenient for him to bring the sick girl.

In his eagerness to be near Ma, he did not heed Ma's instructions. The girl died after a few days. Ma said then, "I had forbidden him to bring her." Later Vinay Babu had a kirtan room built at Ramna Ashram in the memory of his daughter. The room was named "*Nāma Ghar*" (House of the Name). He also arranged for an offering of milk and bananas to Manasa Devi during the daily worship, just as Ma had been offering milk and bananas at the broken down temple. There were big snakes at the Ramna Ashram. Bholanath began to recover gradually and Ma also regained her health.

During this time Bholanath went to his village to attend the marriage of Amulya's niece. Since he believed that Ma

Bhual *saṁnyāsi* visits Ma

would not leave Dhaka for a year, he did not press her to go with him. Almost every day, newcomers were arriving for Ma's darshan.

One day *Samnyāsī* Madhyam Kumar of Bhual came to visit Ma. He prayed, "Let me attain to the Kingdom."

Once, for about fifteen days, Ma had the *kheyāla* to keep sitting or lying down on her small bedding. She hardly got

Ma's sleeping, sitting or walking according to her *kheyāla* up to eat ; she rose only to go to the toilet, after which she again sat on her bedding. Then Jyotish Dada started coming to the

Ashram early every morning and took Ma for a walk around the field. As soon as this walking was started Ma wandered all around the field every day. Sometimes she went even further. She kept wandering about thus for three or four hours and at times she rested at some spot for awhile.

One night Ma lay down to sleep and just did not get up the next morning. She kept on lying this way for about two or three days. Then Bholanath started singing

Ma's continuous sleep for two or three days, its break with *nāma-kirtan* and a change in *bhāva* kirtan and we all joined in. After kirtan was sung for a long time, we observed a slight change in Ma's condition. Kirtan was kept up the whole night through. The next afternoon

Ma sat up. Ma always told us, "If I keep on lying down, nobody should touch me. Keep the doors closed and repeat the names of your chosen deities." This was done most of the time, but sometimes attempts were made to rouse her.

Once at Shahbagh Ma was in *bhāva* during kirtan and kept lying down. The night was far gone and all went to their homes. Father and I would not leave Ma in

Ma's instructions to devotees on their duties during her *bhāva* this condition. After awhile Ma's breathing became alarmingly fast. The body took up various positions and Ma's condition became frightening. It seemed as if she would leave her body any

moment. No one was able to think of what was to be done. Much later Ma said very indistinctly, "Name — five people." We felt she wanted five people to perform *nāma-kīrtan*. So Bholanath, Father, Amulya, Matari Pisima and I began to sing kīrtan. After a long time Ma became a little steady. It is impossible to write about all these numerous kinds of *bhāvas* which occurred.

Then again one night while at Ramna Ashram, Ma went to sleep and kept on lying down throughout the next day. In the

Instructions to
devotees at
Ramna Ashram
to observe special
vows on
Saturdays

evening she sat up and exclaimed laughingly,

"My day has dawned so late," and went to wash her face. It was Saturday and *nāma-kīrtan* had been sung from dawn to dusk without interruption. Seeing Ma's condition, we

had all omitted our meals that day. In the evening Ma said, "Because of the circumstances, no one in the ashram has eaten anything today. Therefore from today *nāma-kīrtan* will be performed all day on every Saturday. Everyone shall eat only fruit and roots. After dusk, when the kīrtan is completed, rice will be cooked with potatoes or with any other item and everyone shall receive that as *prasāda*. On Saturdays Ma did not eat anything during the day. After dusk she would partake of fruit or drink milk. This routine went on for a long time. Ma ordered me also to have fruit and milk only in the evenings on Saturdays. Later, many other people too began having rice cooked with potatoes in the evening only according to this rule. Ma would say, "It is necessary to resolve to live and eat in purity at least once a week. Then the practice will increase gradually."

Nowadays, Ma did not keep lying down the whole day as she used to in Shahbagh. When this observation was communicated to Ma, she said, "Look, now lying down or moving about, walking or talking, all appear to be the same state. There is no difference whatsoever. I feel I am in the same condition all the time." One day she had the *kheyāla* to cook. About that she commented, "This cooking that I have just done, and that lying down, this and that are one and the same, without any change in attitude. I feel I am always in the same state. You all surely observe various activities being performed by this body, but I have absolutely no feeling of difference."

About Ma's
condition in
bhāva

Sometimes a *bhāva* of great affection towards everyone prevailed, while at other times it appeared as if she did not recognise anybody. We all stayed near her day in and day out, but she would not even cast a glance in our direction. Not the slightest trace of affection was noticeable. We cried bitterly but we may as well have been weeping in a forest. While Ma was in this mood, Jyotish Dada would also come from office sometimes in the afternoons and express sorrow when he saw this *bhāva*, but Ma's condition would not change one bit. It was not as if she were absolutely quiet. She did speak to everyone and spread bliss, but on careful observation the change in her *bhāva* was perceptible. We were almost unable to bear this *bhāva*, but we had no alternative. We just could not understand what *bhāva* Ma was in. We understand only love and affection and were therefore distressed. Ma is actually not attached to anything, whatever may be the acti-

vities prevailing in her body. No object in the world can bind her and this is so clearly apparent in Ma's external behaviour sometimes, that ordinary beings like us are unable to endure it and suffer consequently.

Many a time Ma has enlightened us on this matter in course of conversation, "Whatever you see is but the play of the body.

Equanimous Ma In reality, I have not the slightest tie or relationship with anyone." She once told *Didima* laughingly, "Look, if there were even the tiniest difference in my attitude towards you as compared to all others because of being related, I would have left you all and gone away long ago. I have the same attitude towards all people regardless of whether they are related to this body or not. Since I have no feeling of difference, I remain with everybody. Whom shall I abandon and whom shall I retain? Everyone is alike to me."

At Puri a lady once asked Ma, "Ma you have a feeling of your duty towards your husband? You regard him as your

Ma's apt reply at Puri Guru. Are your husband and all others alike to you?" Bholanath was seated nearby.

Ma smiled and replied, "If I give a truthful answer to this question, Bholanath will be angry with me." Saying this she began to laugh loudly. Then she said, "Everyone is alike, yet, wherever it is necessary for a particular mode of behaviour to be enacted, it happens. In childhood my parents were my Gurus. Then they introduced my husband as the Guru. At that time there was a strong feeling of *Guru-bhāva* towards my husband. Today I see that the entire universe is my Guru. You are also my Guru. Everything is but His form. There is nothing other than the ONE." Hearing

this reply from Ma, the lady was enthralled and totally silenced. In truth, it is impossible for us to understand Ma's *bhāva*.

Ma was still at Ramna Ashram. She would walk around the field every morning, then eat some fruit, or keep lying down.

A brief report of
Ma's daily
routine in
Ramna Ashram

Realising that no one would eat anything unless they received *prasāda*, Ma would tell us, "Bring a little food, put it in my mouth and then take the food away." We would do so. Ma would lie down most of the time, sometimes getting up in the afternoon and sometimes before evening. On some days she would keep sitting, but would have no desire to eat, saying, "I shall eat when feel like eating." I have already mentioned that Ma was unable to bind herself by rules of eating or sleeping at particular hours. No change was visible in Ma's behaviour according to the change in time. Therefore as soon as she awoke in the evening, she would say, "My morning has just dawned," and she would go to wash her face and perhaps eat something.

The cooking was done with great emphasis on cleanliness and purity. Matari Pisima prepared all the vegetarian dishes.

Ma's views on
caste distinctions

Didima or I normally cooked the fish. At first, while at Shahbagh, brahmins pulled the water necessary for cooking. Now, all others also fetch water. In connection with the caste system Ma says, "It is best for all to eat with purity. It is not right to eat food cooked by people of all castes. So long as one distinguishes between different castes, it is better to observe caste distinctions. Later on, with the advancement of spiritual growth, if all this disappears, then whatever has to happen will

happen." In the Ashram food was almost always cooked by the brahmin lady devotees. Later, when large numbers of people were fed during festivals, Brahmin cooks were called to prepare the food. The meals were served by brahmins.

All this was according to Ma's wishes and Bholanath also paid a great deal of attention towards this. Indeed, Ma had never had any objection to being fed by anyone, but she was observing all these rules for the good of all. Bholanath, too, did not approve of discarding caste distinctions.

Several months elapsed after Ma's illness. Probably in the month of March, Ma asked Bholanath to settle down in the room at Siddheshwari. Bholanath sat in that room and performed his spiritual practices and worship. One brahmacāri took the *prasāda* of food offered at Ramna Ashram and brought it to Bholanath and also did whatever else was needed. Bholanath stayed at Siddheshwari and at night, one brahmacāri stayed with him, mostly Atul. Ma visited him sometimes. He lived in this way for about two months. In between he experienced special *bhāvas* while he was there and while in *bhāva* he rolled on the ground in ecstasy. In the afternoons, he sometimes came to Ramna Ashram, where his body underwent various *kriyās*. He initiated brahmacāris and also gave initiation to a few other people, while he was in that state.

Bholanath's
sādhana at the
Siddheshwari
Ashram and his
giving initiation
to devotees
(March, 1929)

CHAPTER XI

On April 15, 1930, Bholanath came to the Ramna Ashram and performed the Kali *pūjā* himself. From that day onwards

Kali *pūjā* at
Ramna Ashram
by Bholanath
and the installa-
tion of the
Panchavaṭī
(April 1930)

he stayed at the Ashram. A temporary roof had been erected around the small Kali temple where *pūjā* and other activities were being carried on. A few days before this, Bholanath had planted five trees (peepul, ashoka, bel and gooseberry) to form a *Panchavaṭī*. While planting these trees, Bholanath experienced many kinds of *kriyās* in his body. He obtained the *bīja-mantra* for planting every tree. While planting the *Panchavaṭī*, he was rolling on the ground in *bhāva* in such a manner, that his entire body was caked with dust. Ma was standing close by. He gazed at Ma, took her permission and planted each tree. The *Panchavaṭī* was installed in this manner. Later a platform was constructed in the centre for Ma to sit on. I shall now mention a special incident in connection with this *Panchavaṭī*.

When the ashoka tree was being planted, it was found that its roots did not have any soil around them. Noticing this, someone remarked, "This will not survive." Bholanath retorted forcefully, "What, will it not survive? It can never dry up!" So saying, he planted it, uttering the *bīja-mantra* that he had received and arranged to have it watered every day. A few days later, the ashoka tree began to look quite lifeless.

A special inci-
dent in connec-
tion with the
Panchavaṭī

Kamalakant thought it was useless to retain a withered tree, so he pulled it out and threw it close by. At that time, Bholanath was staying at the Siddheshwari Ashram. When he came from there one day and found the tree uprooted, he was very upset. He gathered the dried branch and planted it again and made arrangements to have it watered. He declared, "This tree just cannot die." One day Ma suggested, "You can do one thing. Get another branch of ashoka and plant it in union with this dried one". Bholanath did so. Within a few days, leaves sprouted on the dried branch. Everyone was astonished and Bholanath was greatly delighted. Gradually the tree took root firmly.

Soon the time for Ma's birthday festival of the year 1930 arrived. Several days before the birthday, Ma stopped speaking. For five to seven days she did not say a single word and for a long time after that her voice was very soft and indistinct. Hardly anyone could understand what Ma said.

Sri Sri Ma's
birthday celebra-
tions in 1930

During the festival also this *bhāva* persisted. This time the devotees arranged for specially grand celebrations. They collected dāl, rice and other provisions and stored them for the festival. Arrangements were made for uninterrupted kirtan from 2nd May till the fourth day of the Krishnapaksha (Ma's birthday *Tithi*). A large number of people gathered. Since there was not enough space in the Ashram Ma would go and sit in the field off & on. Wherever Ma went, a crowd assembled around her. Ma was unable to speak properly.

During these celebrations, I went to the field one evening when the crowd was not large. Ma was seated inside the Ashram on the veranda of her hut. It was a dimly moonlit night. On entering I at first did not notice, but later I saw a huge big snake near the Ashram door, right next to my feet. I was in such a position that I could neither move this way nor that. I did not know what to do. Suddenly I moved aside and the snake coiled itself up and settled near the doorstep of the Ashram. Jatu and some other boys were standing and talking at some distance. As soon as I called out, they came running and saw the snake settled at the same spot. I went and told Ma, who laughed and stood up, clapping her hands. She said, "I'd already seen it yesterday," and went to look at the snake. Bholanath and all the others also followed suit. Ma gazed at the snake fixedly for awhile. It had uncoiled its head and was looking around. Ma came away suddenly. Later, Ma explained : "I felt like going and holding the snake. But realising that you would all stop me from even going near it, I came away." Jatu asked Ma, "Ma, shall I kill the snake?" Ma put her hand on her neck and made such a sign that we interpreted it as her forbidding us to harm the snake. Such a big snake was present near the door, and so many people were going to and fro, but nothing was done to the snake. Then it entered the Ashram and went towards the wall but no one touched it. Ma alone knows what connection she had with that snake !

On yet another day, Ma was seated in the small room of the Kali temple at Siddheshwari. She had been lying down

Ma's remark
when seeing a
snake at the
Ramna Ashram
during the birth-
day celebrations
of 1930

for almost the whole day. Just before dusk she got up and came outside. As soon as her clothes were shaken out, a snake slithered out from within her inner clothing. And Ma had been lying on the floor in that state in the dark room for such a long time !

The 1930 festival was in progress. On the day of the feast everyone sat down to eat. Ma stood and watched. Then she lay down flat on the ground and prostrated before everybody, saying, "I have done *pranāma* to Narayana." The festivities were completed in great joy by all who had gathered. On the night of Ma's birth anniversary, Ma was taken to the altar at the *Panchavaṭī* and made to sit on it. She lay down and Bholanath sat there and worshipped Ma. As the *pūjā* progressed morning dawned. Ma rose only after the day was far gone. Devotees bathed Ma ceremonially on the altar that day. This marked the completion of the festival.

Some days after the birthday celebrations, Ma was lying down, when she suddenly said, "I can see panic and weeping in every house." A few days after this, terrible Hindu-Muslim clashes broke out in Dhaka. Weeping started in every house. Let alone women, even men could not dare to go out of their houses. For many days no one was able to come to the Ashram. Ma said, "How difficult it would have been if this condition had prevailed before your festival. Ladies were coming and going day in and day out. All that would

The story of the snake at Siddheshwari

Bholanath's worship of Ma on the altar of the Panchavati, on her birthday, in 1930

Premonition of Hindu-Muslim riots in Dacca

not have been possible.” Gradually the fighting calmed down slightly.

During this time, Prafulla Babu took Ma to Jaidevpur. He was then posted there as the government manager of Bhual state. He arrived at the station to receive Ma with great honour. As Ma alighted from the train, a group of ladies garlanded her. A party of kirtan singers were also present. Ma was in *bhāva* leaning on me and walking slowly. She was taken in a carriage to the temple of the royal palace and many people walked alongside. She was being photographed while still in *samādhi* and arrived at Prafulla Babu's house in that condition. Prafulla Babu's wife had come with us. Much kirtan was performed in that house. Ma was in great *bhāva*. At night, while Ma was lying down, there was an earthquake and Ma was carried outside. The next day Ma went with the ladies to a Śiva temple. Many people of Jaidevpur delighted in Ma's company. Ma returned to Dhaka after a stay of two days.

A couple of days later, Ma set out for her trip to the south. Bholanath, Father, Yogesh Dada, Ashu, Ma's aunt and I went along. This aunt had travelled with Ma earlier. First Ma went to Calcutta and stayed with Pisima at Salkiya. From there she went round Rajsahi for a day. During this time Ma and Bholanath took Vrajendra Ganguli, Charu Babu, Pisima, Baby Didi, myself and several others to Tarapeeth. Bholanath had received instructions from Tara Ma to visit Tarapeeth for one day every year. And so we all

Ma's visit to
Jaidevpur, stay at
Prafulla Babu's
house and return
to Dhaka

Ma's visit to
Rajsahi and
Tarapeeth via
Calcutta and
return to Calcutta

stayed there for only a day and then returned to Calcutta. At Calcutta all the devotees took Ma to their homes and offered *bhoga*. Because of this *bhoga*, everyone gathered and enjoyed the bliss of Ma's darshan.

From Calcutta Ma set off towards South India. She first went to Waltair, where she stayed for three or four days and roamed on the mountain there. Then she went to Madras for about seven days. After that she did not stay long at any place. She travelled through Kaveri, Godavari, Pakshi Teertha, Chidambaram, Srirangam, Kanjeevaram and Madurai. In each of these places, Ma stayed for a day or two, and at times she halted only for awhile and then proceeded elsewhere. At Rameshwar she remained for five to seven days.

Ma's South
Indian trip

There are plenty of spots worth seeing in this area. We saw as much as possible as we proceeded. Then we went to Kanya Kumari,* which was sparsely populated. The *dharmaśālā* was right on the sea-shore. When we saw the enchanting spot, we all decided to remain there for a few days and actually stayed for a fortnight. We could not understand even a word of Tamil or Telugu which are the languages spoken

Visit to several
places in this
area and halt at
Kanya Kumari

* At Kanya Kumari, Father sat in one corner of the Sri Kumari Devi temple to do *japa*. He narrated, "Suddenly, I do not know how, my eyes opened and I saw a fair young girl standing in front of the door. I wondered what this was, for no woman came here. Where had this girl come from? As soon as my gaze fell on her, the girl began to move backwards. I leaned forward and watched her. She kept receding. I watched from various positions to keep sight of her. The girl's form receded in this manner till it merged with the stone image of Kanya Kumari." Father never reveals his experiences of this kind. Today, after several years he narrated this incident all of a sudden.

there. But Ma managed to speak a few words even in the midst of the people there. Later, she made me jot down many words.

The temple of Kumari Devi is situated on the seashore. The statue of the Goddess in the form of a little girl is anointed beautifully with sandal paste. In the evening the little daughters of the pāṇḍās walk about and sing in the temple. Ma went for strolls on the sea-shore every morning and evening.

Departure from
Kanya Kumari
1930

Though Ma could not communicate in their language, she was soon well acquainted with the little girls. They started coming to the *dharmaśālā* and would move round Ma in a circle as they sang. We gave them coconuts and bananas which were available in plenty. By Ma's desire, the little girls were entertained to a feast one day and the *pāṇḍās* another day. The girls wore long skirts and were dancing and singing in them in the temple. They were taken to the temple and given garlands and sandal paste and long skirts and blouses. Everybody was blissfully happy. Having indulged in such delightful sports in this way Ma left the place. The little girls saw Ma off at the station and with a variety of gestures requested Ma to come again. Ma laughingly gestured back to them.

From Kanya Kumari we travelled to Trivandrum. As soon as we reached there in the evening Ma went out to see the temples. At the Padmanabha temple, a guard was posted at the entrance. We were asked whether we were brahmins. As soon as he heard we were brahmins, he let us enter. In these parts of the country, we were questioned as to whether we were brahmins even for entrance into

Visit to
Trivandrum and
darshan of
Padmanabha
temple

dharmasālās. If the people who wish to stay there are brahmins, then no further objection is raised. We entered a temple and saw a considerable number of people seated for meals. A large space had been allowed all around the temple for people to sit together and eat. We learnt that about three thousand brahmins with their families receive *prasāda* here every day. So many people were being served and yet there was no noise or chaos of any kind. This was a daily routine and arrangements were excellent.

Noticing that we were outsiders they requested us pressingly to receive *prasāda*. We agreed by Ma's orders, and they served us with great purity, after making us sit on one side. Ma also took a little *prasāda*. Then we returned to our *dharmasālā*. We stayed there for three or four days. We happened to converse with a colleague of the manager of the temple who had had Ma's darshan and conceived great regard for her. He took us all around and showed us everything. Most Bengalis are not even allowed to enter the temples of this region. The image of Sri Padmanabha enshrined in the temple reclines on Śeṣa serpent. We were told that this image which is huge was made of lakhs of *śāligṛāma* stones. There are three doors. Through the first, one can have darshan of the head, through the second the middle portion of the body is visible and the third door opens on to the feet of the image. A *Dandi saṁnyāsi* is the priest of the temple. No one is allowed to enter the temple until the priest enters it, even the king is made to wait. The King of Trivandrum is a devotee of Sri Padmanabha. All the wealth belongs to Padmanabha. The above mentioned manager took us to see the store-

house of Sri Padmanabha which is an immense affair. The store house of a place where three thousand people are fed every day can only be imagined when actually seen. But Ma had reached the store house as she strolled about on her own. Our guide, seeing Ma there, took her inside and said, "This is Sri Padmanabha's store room." In one corner of the temple we saw Nārāyaṇa reclining on a peepul leaf in a cradle. At the beginning of creation only this form existed. The mattress in the cradle was very dirty. On Ma's instructions a new mattress was made and placed there. Ma took with her a number of ivory images of Nārāyaṇa reclining on the peepul leaf and distributed these images to many people for worship when she returned. Almost the entire town space is occupied by the temples which have been constructed. Sri Rangam was also similar. We saw all these places, travelling along the seashore for three to four months.

We went to Bombay via Mangalore. From there we proceeded by sea to Dwaraka and had darshan at the Dwaraka temple. *Pāṇḍās* stopped us to pay for having the image of Sri Kṛṣṇa bathed and asked us to purchase a new towel. Meanwhile Ma suddenly entered the temple, bathed Sri Kṛṣṇa with water from an urn, wiped the image with one end of her *sārī* and came out. The *pāṇḍās* did not even get a chance to stop her.

From Dwaraka we journeyed to the Vindhyachal Ashram. Arrangements had already been made there for Durga Puja. Sri Kunja Mohan Mukhopadhyaya had joined us at Calcutta and was touring with us all along. The *pūjā* had been

Visit to Dwaraka
and Ma's bathing
of Sri Kṛṣṇa's
image unnoticed
by anyone

arranged at Vindhyachal by his special request. Devotees had also arrived from Kashi. Bhupati Babu had come to Vindhyachal from Dhaka. Durga *pūjā* was performed most joyfully in Ma's presence. Then everybody took Ma to Nirmal Babu's residence at Kashi. They had all come from Kashi for the *pūjā*. Nepal Dada and Shankaranda Swami too had attended the *pūjā*. We went with Ma to Kashi, and after a few days visited Gaya. Taru and Nirmal Babu went to Gaya for their own work, along with Ma. Everyone offered *pinda* (food offering to ancestors). Ma took us all to the Phalgu river for a dip. The same afternoon she went to Buddha Gaya and at the Buddha temple Ma decided to spend the night there. The place was beautiful and the gardens were deserted. We spread some odd things on the ground under the tree and spent the night with Ma. People are not normally allowed to stay in the gardens. When the manager was told about Ma, he granted permission and also offered to make other arrangements. But we assured him that we did not require anything else. Ma spent most of the night walking about in the garden. In the morning she again set out on foot. We got a carriage after walking for three or four miles, went to Gaya and started for Jamshedpur.

Yogesh Dada's younger brother Krishna is employed there. Yogesh Dada's mother and other members of his family were all living there. We went straight to Krishna Babu's residence. He is an excellent person. He had never seen Ma before this. Yogesh Dada's family members were all very happy to have Ma's

Arrival at
Vindhyachal
from Dwaraka
and visit to
Jamshedpur via
Kashi and Gaya

The story of
Ma's stay at
Jamshedpur

darshan. Krishna Babu became a staunch devotee of Ma from then onwards. He took leave to come to Dhaka for Ma's darshan several times. Tata's steel factory in Jamshedpur is world famous and we all went with Ma to see it. There, many young people belonging to high castes work all the day long. They do not have much interest in religion. Kirtan was arranged. During the kirtan Ma had *bhāva*. Seeing her condition was an eye opener for them all. That night everyone sat around Ma for a very long time. Not many people had come during the first two or three days, but from the day after the kirtan, quite a number started gathering already in the morning and gradually people began arriving from far off places every day. Crowds collected at Krishna Dada's house that could hardly be accommodated. People were seated around Ma till three and four in the morning. No one felt like getting up and leaving. In this way, Ma aroused in them some interest in religion before departing for Calcutta. Yogesh Dada's old mother expressed her desire to have darshan of Sri Rameshwar, so Ma left Yogesh Dada at Jamshedpur with instructions to take his mother to Rameshwar. Regular kirtan was started at Jamshedpur after Ma's visit. In every house a photograph of Ma was placed and worship was begun. *Bhoga* was offered on every *Amāvasyā* and *Pūrṇimā* day. Everyone gathers at Krishna Dada's house. Sri Kunjamohan Mukhopadhyaya's younger son-in-law Shyamkant*, was one of the chief organisers of this. Aswini Babu, Lakshmi Babu, Amulya Babu, Abani Babu, Atul Babu and many other people joined in.

* Ma was present at his wedding. He was employed in Jamshedpur at that time.

Ma came to Calcutta. There she was always surrounded by crowds. She sat composedly day and night, while people flocked to her group after group. Sri Yatish Guha* had had Ma's darshan earlier in Chandi Babu's house. Then he had gone to his father-in-law's, Pran Kumar Babu's house in Dhaka and to Ma's Ashram and had darshan. By then Pran Kumar Babu had got transferred to Patna. Before this, Jyotish Dada had taken Ma and Bholanath for a day to Patna to see Anukul Thakur's Ashram but Pran Kumar Babu was not at Patna then. This time Pran Kumar Babu had written to his son-in-law Yatish Guha to bring Ma to Patna. In Calcutta Ma was taken to Yatish Dada's house and much kritan was performed and *bhoga* offered. Yatish Dada's younger brothers Kshitish and Nitish also became great devotees of Ma. The entire family is crazy about Ma and many of their relatives also keep coming to Ma.

Kshitish Dada's father-in-law, Sri Pasupati Basu was a disciple of Yogiraj Gambhirnath Babaji. At first he did not approve of the craze which his sons-in-law had developed for Ma. He met Ma in Calcutta and questioned her, "Why are you making all these children dance to your tune in this way? Can you explain?" Ma laughed and replied, "Baba, please beat me with a stick." Many such conversations took place. Later

Sri Sri Ma and
Pasupati Babu

* He is Pran Kumar Babu's son-in-law and an advocate at Calcutta High Court. He is a special recipient of Ma's grace. His present house is at Ballygunj (Calcutta). Every evening, *ārati*, singing of devotional music and *bhoga* are performed there. Ma's birthday is celebrated every year in his house at Calcutta by his efforts. Ma's devotees in Calcutta and in neighbouring places gather there to get information about Ma and to speak and converse about her.

he became such a staunch devotee of Ma that he declared, "Ma, everyone calls you Ma, but you are 'Baba' to me, for I find no difference between my Baba (Guru) and you." He had performed lots of spiritual practices. He also delighted everybody with his oratory and spent much time with Ma in great happiness. There are very few people like Pran Kumar Babu and his wife in this world. But because of a severe backache, Pran Kumar Babu's wife was unable to even stand up without support for the last six or seven years. Her younger sister's husband, Sri Upendranath Choudhury and his wife, came often to Ma. Ma was taken to all these houses in Calcutta and kirtan was performed.

A *sādhū* had been visiting Ma recently. During this time, in Calcutta, Ma went to the lawyer Upendra Babu's house in Grey Street for accepting *bhoga*. There the Sri Sri Ma and a *sādhū* *sādhū's* wife presented herself before Ma, with two small children. She began to weep for the return of her husband to his home. Ma told the *sādhū*, "Go with her and console her and try to make her understand." He did what Ma had ordered him to do. The next day he came to Ma again. When Ma questioned him about his wife, he said, "I have tried my utmost to explain to her. I have been explaining to her for so many years, why won't she understand? I am leaving home for their welfare." Ma did not say anything more.

CHAPTER XII

The members of the family of Sri Yatish Guha took Ma to Pabna. About thirty or forty people got ready to accompany her. When we reached the station to go to Pabna, we found that the *sādhu* was also present with his urn and blanket ; we learnt that he was accompanying Ma to Pabna.

Sri Sri Ma's visit to Pabna and stay at Pran Kumar Babu's house.

Everybody went to Pran Kumar Babu's house, who had already made arrangements on getting information. He felt delighted to receive Ma and took her home with all the people who had come with her. He treated everybody with great respect and hospitality. So many people turned up for Ma's darshan that once again there was not enough room in the house. Day in and day out people were arriving from anywhere at all. Ma was resting only for awhile at night, with all the people around her in the room.

One day all gathered and went with Ma to Anukul Thakur's ashram where Ma and Thakur met. All of us walked around and saw the Ashram. Ma was presented with many books published by them. We returned to Pran Kumar Babu's house before evening. The judge and magistrate (Bengali) came for Ma's darshan and talked to her for a long time. They were extremely delighted to listen to incidents of Ma's earlier life related by Ma herself.

Another day Ma hunted out jars of pickles and mango preserves belonging to Pran Kumar Babu's wife and distributed the contents to all people present. I fed a little bit to Ma.

When the jar was empty Ma took it to Pran Kumar Babu's wife and said, "See this, I have eaten all that was inside your jar." She replied, "Ma, you only ate a tiny little bit." To which Ma rejoined, "I have eaten all this myself through everybody's mouth." Pran Kumar Babu's wife had had many fruits brought from Calcutta for they were not available in plenty in Pabna. She was giving the fruits to Ma little by little. But one day Ma asked me to get the whole basket with all the fruits and to distribute them to everybody. She said, "So many fruits should not be stored and eaten little by little. Whatever is available where one happens to be, should be eaten." In this way, Ma sported delightfully and then left Pabna, making everyone weep when she departed.

That *sādhu* had caught a fever on the day after we reached Pabna. He ate ordinary food while running fever on one day. After that he did not come near Ma because of the crowds. He was told to stay in the drawing room and Ma somehow did not go there. When Ma was leaving he did not go to meet her either, for he felt that Ma had not given him darshan and therefore he also would not go to her. In the general confusion and crowd, none of us thought of taking Ma in his direction. Ma set out from Pabna and on the way she asked about the *sādhu*. Ashu replied that the *sādhu* had been unable to go near Ma because of fever and that had made him angry so that he also did not go to meet Ma. Ma said, "I had no *kheyāla*." Then she told us all, "Why didn't any of you remind me?"

We reached Calcutta and left for Cox Bazar within a few days. On the way we halted at Chittagong. Ma's Pisima

had stayed back at Jamshedpur at her daughter's place and Ashu remained in Calcutta. At Calcutta we were joined by the wife of the late Atul Datta (Tunu's mother). In 1929 Ma had been to Cox Bazar for a day with Jyotish Dada, when she had gone to Adinath. The lawyer, Sri Deenabandhu Chakravarty received Ma at the station and took her to his house. He arranged for Ma's stay in a building that he owned which was situated near the sea. We all were accommodated with Ma in that small bungalow and ate at Deenabandhu's residence.

One day, as Ma was strolling on the beach, she began digging a pit in the sand. When I questioned her she replied, 'I am making my *samādhi*.' I stopped Ma and made her come away. Within three or four days we received a letter by post. As soon as Ma saw it, she quickly walked away to another room and I followed her. Ma said to me, "Go and see whose letter it is. Is it not news of death from Pabna?" Just then Bholanath came with the letter and said to Ma, "See, a letter from Pran Kumar has arrived ; that *sādhu* passed away in Pabna in Pran Kumar's house." Ma turned to me and remarked, 'A *sādhu* is given *samādhi* after death. That day I was digging a *samādhi*, wasn't I ?'

We stayed at Cox Bazar for twenty or twenty-two days. A few days after the above mentioned incident Ma went to Munsif Jnana Babu's house to accept *bhoga* on *Amāvasya* day. I also accompanied her. As soon as Ma returned to her bungalow from there, she began twisting one arm with the

Return to Calcutta and visit to Cox Bazar

Ma's foresight about the death of the *sādhu* of Pabna

other and said, "I shall break it." Though a smile flitted on her face, her eyes were full of tears. I reasoned that one

Ma's foresight
about the robbery
of the jewels
adorning the
Kali image at
Ramna

never could make out what Ma would do and I was afraid she might break her arm, so I stopped her and caught hold of both her hands and began stroking them. The entire night Ma was in a strange condition. The next day again Ma's eyes were full of tears and

she kept twisting her arm every now and then. We could not understand the reason behind this. A few days later we came to know from Dhaka that on that very *Amāvasya* night thieves had broken one arm of the Kali image at Ramna Ashram, and had robbed the jewellery adorning the image. The part of the arm which Ma had been twisting was the same as that of the image which had been broken during the robbery. In this way Ma often reveals through her own body information about incidents taking place at a distance.

Let me describe another incident which occurred at Cox Bazar. This time we had been accompanied by Nani (Kunja

Description of
Nani's condition
in Cox Bazar

Mohan Mukhopadhyaya's fourth son) from Varanasi. At Cox Bazar, he was performing *Gāyatri japa* one day, as per Ma's instructions, when suddenly he had a wonderful experience

and was filled with thrilling ecstasy. His eyes were closed; he was seated in *padmāsana*. The repetition of God's name was going on incessantly without a break. Deenabandhu and others were stunned to see that condition. Ma was brought and as soon as she arrived, Nani ran to her and prostrated, placing his head on her feet. Tears were flowing down his cheeks.

His entire body was numb, he was as if intoxicated. Ma was watching. For two or three days he was unable to eat anything at all. Sometimes his body became limp and lifeless, at other times he seemed totally absent minded. One night Ma took him aside and spoke to him alone. After that his ecstatic mood wore off gradually.

A few days later Ma took us all to Adinath, where we halted for some days. There Bholanath had some tiff with Ma.

Since a few days Bholanath had been sullen and Ma kept quiet. At Adinath he spoke angrily to Ma. Ma suddenly roared in such manner that everyone was taken aback. Bholanath fell silent.

Ma's mood changed and she went into *samādhi*. She remained lying in that state for a very long time and then was roused with great difficulty. I have already written that whenever Bholanath gets angry or expresses a derogatory attitude towards truth, a terrible change takes place in Ma's condition.

At Shahbagh, Ma was having her food and I was feeding her. Bholanath finished his meal and got up. He got angry

with Ashu and Amulya for some reason and beat them. As soon as he entered the room

Differences in Ma's external condition due to Bholanath's anger

Ma said, "How many times have I told you not to get angry in this way when I sit down to eat? The food is not being retained at all." Saying this Ma sat quietly and was unable to eat. Seeing this, Bholanath who was already furious spoke contemptuously about Ma's behaviour. Immediately Ma stood up. She raised her right arm, roared and went and stood near Bholanath in a terrifying mood. Bholanath was speechless and I was trembling with

fear. Baul Babu was also present. He and Father prayed to Ma with folded hands, to calm down, calling out, "Ma, Ma!" But Ma roared and shut her eyes and then fell flat to the ground from the standing position and went into *samādhi*. She could not be roused that day. The next day she rose after much effort. That day also she was in about the same condition. In contrast to this I have observed many times that when Bholanath lost his temper and said all sorts of things harshly, Ma's bliss personified demeanour did not vary one bit. On several occasions I have witnessed Bholanath berating Ma angrily. On coming near her he would become even more furious, so Ma would move away and laugh, saying, "Nothing I say has any effect. As long as my blissful mood prevails, he cannot be calmed and he only upsets his mind and body with anger. Nothing affects me in any way. He calms down only when any change is evident in my external behaviour and condition. So it seems as if this change is essential and therefore it occurs. I do not do anything by my desire. Whatever is necessary happens within this body." So that sometimes, in order to pacify Bholanath, Ma would hide her cheerfulness and become serious; or at times she would become sad. In truth, Bholanath would then become mollified. In this way Ma played innumerable games. In Adinath Bholanath calmed down greatly when Ma assumed the attitude described above.

From Adinath we went to Shashi Babu's house at Chittagong. He took one photograph of Ma with Bholanath and several of Ma alone. We went to Chandranath with Shashi Babu where he has a *dharmasālā* in which he arranged for

our stay. We saw Chandranath, Badavanal, Sahasradhara and other places. Then we went to the Kali temple at Kasava.

Ma's tour to Chandranath and other places via Chittagong and return to Dhaka

It was here that Ma's paternal grandmother had prayed for a grand-daughter whereas she had actually desired a grandson. Ma had been born after this prayer. We stayed at Kasava for a day. Then we went to Girija Dada's house in Chandpur for a few days, after which we returned to Dhaka. Ma had been away from Dhaka for five or six months. Many people came to have Ma's darshan. A few days later Yogesh Dada also returned to Dhaka after taking his mother to Rameshwar.

Within a few days we received a letter from Charu Babu of Calcutta that Bholanath's brother, who had been missing

Ma's visit to Calcutta and meeting with Bholanath's brother, Reverend Chakravarty after many years.

for about twenty-two years, was in Calcutta. He had met Charu Babu and introduced himself and said that he had heard about Ma and Bholanath. As soon as Bholanath received this information he took Ma and Ashu to Calcutta, where they stayed for about a week and met Bholanath's brother. He had become a Christian and was a priest known by the name of Reverend K. K. Chakravarty. Everyone was overjoyed for they were meeting after many years. Bholanath's brother said that he had been in Calcutta for several years and had been seeing Kushari Mahasaya and others but had not revealed his identity. But now, hearing about Ma, he had felt the urge to disclose his identity and had done so to Charu Babu for he had heard that Charu Babu was a devotee of Ma whose house Ma had visited.

CHAPTER XIII

After about a week, Bholanath returned with Ma to Dhaka. A big temple was to be constructed in the Ashram for which the work had already begun under the supervision of Nagendra Babu. When the labourers were digging, they found several tombs and even human bones. In some places ash and earthen lamps were discovered in a pot. Ma herself showed these. Three tombs were below the site for the big temple. A *Śivalinga* was installed above another tomb nearby and a *Śiva* temple was built. Above another tomb, an image of Ma's lotus feet was installed. Ma declared, "Tombs are covering almost the entire ground below the Ashram." There is a tomb beneath the hut built for Ma. When Ma started sleeping in that hut after her illness she lay down with only a blanket beneath her. When Bholanath got well, he also came to sleep there. Ma was lying towards the south and Bholanath towards the north. Bholanath's bedding had a mattress, a bedsheet, a quilt, a mosquito net and a pillow. One night Ma suddenly got up and told Bholanath, "Get up and lie down on my bedding. I shall sleep on yours." Bholanath went and lay down on Ma's blanket without even a pillow. He folded some clothes and put them under his head to serve as a pillow while Ma slept on Bholanath's bedding. After sleeping on it for three or four nights she said, "Remove this bedding." She then spread her blanket and slept there, but remained lying towards the north. She would not let

Ma's return to Dhaka from Calcutta and about the tombs of ancient spiritual aspirants in the ashram grounds.

Bholanath lie down in that direction but would do so herself. From that day Bholanath also had a bedding of only one blanket. Ma informed us that this change in places which she had affected was due to some tomb below. She had seen the form of a skeleton. Later she confirmed that it was the spot where the tomb of Jyotish Dada's previous birth lay.

Ma was still in the Ashram. In between devotees took her to their homes. She wandered about in the fields during the mornings. In the evenings, she again walked round the fields with the ladies. Many gentlemen who were also present, sat in the field and watched Ma as she moved around. Rai Bahadur was an elderly person. He would declare, "I just cannot understand anything about, yet this much I know, she is extraordinary. Look at the way she walks amongst the ladies with her head raised above the others, as if she were the queen amongst the swans."* And in fact Ma's manner of walking and her physical stature are very special indeed. Ma would walk about and then sit in the field or on the veranda of her

* Ma once said about Rai Bahadur Yogesh Chandra Ghosh, "His inner nature is good, though externally he has troddena long many paths of contrary behaviour. When I first came to Shahbagh, he got acquainted with us. I would go inside my room as soon as I heard the horn of his motor car. I rarely went in front of anyone at that time." Saying this, Ma laughed and continued, "He would arrive and beckon me outside and tell me all about his life. One day he said, 'A childhood friend of mine has become a *scmnyāsi* and, just see what has become of me!' As he said this his eyes overflowed with tears. Another day he said, 'Some of us went for a walk in a forest and lost our way. Caught in that misfortune we remembered God. Suddenly what did we see? A boy standing near us. As soon as we enquired of him, he showed us the way out of the forest. When we took out money to reward him, we found no one around. Then we realised that this must have been God's play-acting.' So saying he wept for a long time. "Ma bequeathes her grace on per-

cottage where all the people gathered around her, either standing or sitting. The evening was spent thus, until nine or ten o'clock in the night, after which people gradually took leave. Some stayed on till much later in the night.

Once when Ma was in Calcutta, an incident occurred, concerning the Rai Bahadur and his son, which I shall describe here.

In April 1927, Ma went to Calcutta for a few days. At that time, Rai Bahadur (Yogesh Chandra Ghosh) and his wife lived in a part of a building at No. 36, Theatre Road. This building belongs to the daughter of the Nawab of Dhaka, Nawabzadi Pyaribanu Khanam Sahiba. The Rai Bahadur stayed there in connection with his official work in the Nawab's estate. His son Sri Atul Chandra Ghosh, then lived at Barrackpore being employed in a Government job. Nawabzadi Sahiba is a staunch devotee of Ma and Ma sometimes stayed in that building on being specially requested by her. Ma had then not yet given up staying in householders' homes.

When Atul Babu heard that Ma had been staying in this building along with Rai Bahadur and his wife, he also had the

Ma's understanding of a devotee's plea even from afar

desire to take Ma to his house at Barrackpore for a day. Accordingly he went to the Theatre Road building to fix a time and date for this.

But when he arrived there he found that Ma had just left with Bholanath, Rai Bahadur and his wife for a devotee's house seven or eight miles away. He was told that

ceiving the inner nature of each individual. We do not comprehend this and often express wrong views about Ma. For example, many times some people say, "Ma is gracious only to highly placed people." This is a completely wrong idea.

Ma would return only late at night. Atul Babu discussed with Nawabzadi about fixing a date for Ma's visit and requested her to inform his father (Rai Bahadur) that he had come to make arrangements to take Ma to Barrackpore.

Meanwhile, at the devotee's place where kirtan was going on before Ma, Ma repeated with resignation, "I shall have to go. I shall have to go" many times and quite irrelevantly. Neither the Rai Bahadur nor any of those present could make any meaning out of this. It was only when they returned and the Rai Bahadur heard from Nawabzadi about his son Atul's visit, that he realised that Ma had with her subtle vision, perceived Atul's conversation from a distance of seven or eight miles and had then exclaimed, "I shall have to go." What was most wonderful was the fact that at exactly the time when Atul was speaking to Nawabzadi in Calcutta about arrangements to take Ma, Ma spoke up in the devotee's house in the aforesaid manner.

On the appointed day (probably 4th April 1927) Ma and Bholanath were taken to Barrackpore. A large number of people had gathered there on receiving information about Ma's visit and they all joined in singing kirtan with great joy.

During kirtan Ma began rolling on the ground in the courtyard immersed in *bhāva* and also performed very intricate

āsanas spontaneously. The people who watched were mystified and enthralled. At that time Ma's face bore such a divine lustre and such a wonderful expression ! It cannot be described in words. Finally, while in *samādhi*, Sanskrit *ślokas* and *mantras* poured forth from Ma's lips of their own accord.

Ma's wonderful
external condi-
tions during
kirtan

Everyone was stunned and amazed. Sri Sri Ma has no worldly knowledge of the Sanskrit language. Yet, Sanskrit *śloka*s poured forth incessantly with such purity and fluency that it was unimaginable. Everything Ma does is wonderful.

Kirtan went on till about eleven in the night. Ma's *samādhi bhāva* persisted in full measure till then. But we had to return the same night, and so Ma was with great difficulty put into the train in a half conscious state and brought to Calcutta along with Bholanath, the Rai Bahadur and his wife.

One day Prankumar Babu and many others came to Ma's Ashram with Sri Ram Thakur Mahasaya. Ram Thakur Mahasaya prostrated full length before Ma and she stood with folded hands. He stayed and she stood with folded hands. He stayed Sri Ram Thakur Mahasaya's darshan of Ma for some time and left. Ram Thakur Mahasaya is about the same age as Ma's father. Some of his devotees questioned him about the fact that he did *praṇāma* to Ma whereas she did not do *praṇāma* to him. Prankumar Babu heard of this and informed Ma about it. Ma laughed and said, "Go and tell them that Thakur Mahasaya's feet are always on my head, but I am unable to do *praṇāma* in the ordinary way. What shall I do? This body behaves in such a fashion." On hearing this no one had a chance to comment further. Meanwhile, Ram Thakur Mahasaya (who is a great spiritual aspirant) was asked by his devotee, "Anandamayi Ma is young enough to be your daughter. Why did you take the dust of her feet? You don't do this to everyone." His reply was, "I have done *praṇāma* to one who is worthy of receiving my *praṇāma*." Ram Thakur

Mahasaya told many people, "Go to Ramna and have Ma's darshan. Ma is verily Bhagavati Herself." Ram Thakur Mahasaya's life history is very amazing. I am unable to write about it here, since it would be out of context.

About this time, one morning, Jyotish Dada took Ma, Bholanath and myself to Madhavi Ma's ashram. Madhavi Ma welcomed Ma with great reverence. Later she also came to the Ramna Ashram.

Sri Sri Ma's
meeting with
Madhavi Ma

Once Ma was lying immersed in *bhāva* the whole day long. In the evening she went out and sat in the field where a large crowd of people gathered around her. Sheetal Babu of the Saraswat Sabha remarked to Ma, "Perhaps you were with God when you were lying thus till now. Now you have descended from that state and are able to speak to us."

Ma laughed and replied, "Are you apart from God? Baba, I know nothing of ascent and descent. It is always the same condition. Only various kinds of *kriyās* of the body are visible outside." Even during her illness at Siddheshwari when Ma's entire body was totally helpless, Ma would laugh and talk though her body was as immobile as a stone. Ma spoke about that condition laughingly, "Now I am speaking, laughing and my eyes are open, isn't that so? Therefore you say when this body is lying like a stone it has become powerless. Then if I were to close my eyes and stop speaking as has happened so many times before, you people would call it *samādhi*. Can there be no *samādhi* with the

Ma's condition
is always the
same regardless
of differences in
her external
physical condi-
tion.

eyes open and while speaking ?” Saying this Ma laughed. Then we realised that this was true indeed. Ma’s body has been in this kind of state so many times before, while walking, speaking and during kirtan. Two or three days have been passed thus immersed in *bhāva*. But then Ma would lie with her eyes shut. Therefore we called it the state of *samādhi*. In truth, it is foolish of us to even attempt to delineate these states by means of language.

All the people around Ma were spending their days in bliss. Atul Thakur Mahasaya of Sadhan-Samar Ashram, presented himself at Ma’s feet. He offered flowers to Ma every morning. He filled Ma’s lap with basketsful of flowers.

Atul Thakur
Mahasaya of
Sadhan-Samar
Ashram offers
flowers to Ma

Usha Didi, the wife of Janaki Babu of Bajitpur came to Dhaka, and visited the Ashram now and then. Ma also went two or three times to the place where Usha was staying and I accompanied Ma. I heard from Usha Didi about Ma’s earlier life. She had expressed a desire to eat some dish made by Ma, so Ma cooked what she wanted at the Ashram and asked her to eat it. Ma was hardly able to cook for it seemed as if her hands were out of control, yet she cooked as much as she could. In this manner Ma sported. Sometimes Ma remarked, “The day that has passed never returns.”

About Usha
Didi

Once there was a gathering in Dhaka of many great philosophers from various places in connection with some organisation. Shri Mahendra Sarkar from Calcutta was one of them.

They all heard of Ma and came to the Ashram along with some professors of Dhaka. They sat around Ma and conversed on various topics. On being asked about her earlier life, Ma told them whatever she could. Some people even jotted down all the incidents. As the conversation progressed, Ma spoke about the time when her cousin Nishi Babu and Janaki Babu questioned her in Bajitpur while she was in *bhāva*, "Who are you?" Ma was saying, "What was uttered after this!" and immediately changed the topic. But Mahendra Babu and others caught on at this point and asked persistently, "What emerged from your lips at that time?" Ever since this incident occurred Ma had forbidden anyone who had heard what was uttered to reveal it to others. Today this issue had been raised after several years. Ma remained quite for awhile and then said, "What will happen if I tell? I do nothing by my own will. Whatever is revealed!" As she said this, Ma's face got flushed and her eyes filled with tears. She said, "The words uttered by me then were *Pūrṇa Brahma Nārāyana*." As she said this she was strangely affected. But the conversation went on. Then Ma described her *dikṣā*. The visitors wanted to hear from Ma in detail about the entire history of Bholanath's *dikṣā* and Guru. Ma looked towards Bholanath and smiled slightly, awaiting his permission. Bholanath signalled his refusal to grant it and Ma said, "He forbids me." She did not speak about it after that. The scholars left after conversing with Ma for a long time. Ma went to her room, her condition was unusual. Her body had become strangely affected by her

Ma's revelation
of her identity
on being ques-
tioned by scho-
lars in Dhaka

own revelation of her identity and she lay down. Bholanath told Ma, "Why did you say that? You yourself had forbidden its revelation." Ma replied, "I do nothing by my own will. It seems the time had arrived, and therefore it was revealed." Ma lay down in *bhāva* for a very long time and tears streamed forth continuously.

Again when Usha Didi came, this topic was raised in her presence. She also said, "What is the harm in telling it after

Similar revelations of identity to Usha Didi

so many years? Now it is revealed anyway and Ma is renowned all over as the Universal Mother." She told Ma this and said, "That

day you had declared *Pūrṇa Brahma Nārāyaṇa!*" Ma was seated nearby and her eyes and face turned red and tears began streaming down her cheeks. As soon as Usha Didi saw the effect of her words on Ma, she was very remorseful. She fell at Ma's feet and begged forgiveness saying, "What mistake have I committed by speaking thus?" Ma consoled her and said, "You have committed no mistake. Whatever has to happen at any time just happens. Otherwise why did we meet in this manner after so many years and why was this topic raised at all?"

A brief description of what I heard about this matter from Sri Ma herself is as follows :—Ma was performing *japa* and

Description of Ma's revelation of her identity in her own words

other rituals in Bajitpur, after having initiated herself. Various *kriyās* were occurring in her body and *japa* was also going on continuously.

After her *dikṣā* Ma would not even sip water before finishing some spiritual practices regularly. Observing all this, Ma's maternal uncle's son, Nishikant Bhattacharya

said to Bholanath, "What is all this going on? She has had no initiation or anything, what is all this she is doing? Why can't you say something to her?" Immediately Ma's *bhāva* underwent a remarkable transformation and her expression changed. She spoke to her elder cousin sharply, "What will you say, oh what will you say?" He looked at Ma and retreated a few steps in fear. Terrified, he blurted out, "Who are you?" The reply that emerged from Ma's lips was, "*Pūrṇa Brahma Nārāyaṇī*."

Bholanath also inquired, "Who are you?"

Ma uttered, "*Mahādevī*."

Nishi Babu now queried, "Have you been initiated?"

Ma said, "Yes."

"Has Ramani Babu received *dikṣā*?" asked Nishi Babu.

"No" replied Ma.

"When will it occur?"

Ma's reply came pat, "Five months hence, 15 Saur Agrahayan, in such and such a week and on such and such a date."

Nishi Babu could not understand the date. Realising this, Ma clarified the matter saying, "Janaki Babu is fishing at the pond. Go and call him. He will understand." Janaki Babu was not visible from where Ma was seated. He was called and brought immediately. He explained the date. He also questioned Ma, "Who are you?" To him Ma's reply was, "*Pūrṇa Brahma Nārāyaṇa*." He remarked banteringly, "You are naughty!" Ma says, "The condition of my body at that time was deplorable. My clothes were in disarray. I always veiled myself in front of Janaki Babu. In the presence of

Bholanath and of his elder brother also I behaved most respectfully. But at that time such feelings did not exist.* I knew that the clothes on my body were in disarray, but the modesty required to set them right was missing. I was speaking openly about everything. Because of all this, none of them attended office that day for it went on till evening.”

The point now raised was why Ma declared herself to be “*Nārāyaṇī*” once, “*Nārāyaṇa*” a second time and “*Mahādevī*” another time. Ma explained: “Relatives regard me as a woman or a sister and therefore a feminine word was uttered to them according to their attitude. But essentially the word ‘Narayan’ was the correct one. Then again *pūjā* was being performed and therefore *Mahādeva* and *Mahādevī* were uttered. This was one angle. Essentially there is nothing manifest or unmanifest, only I was trying to explain The Perfect. All this happened on the Monday following *Jhūlan Pūrṇimā*, or may be it was three or four days after *Pūrṇimā*, I do not remember. I followed each questioner’s attitude. But in truth, “*Nārāyaṇa*” was the word that emanated properly. And one reason that the word *Mahādevī* was uttered was that whenever

* In April 1922, Ma’s *bhāva* began to change. In August 1922, Ma’s *dikṣā* occurred spontaneously. After this *dikṣā*, Sanskrit *ślokas* and *tāja mantras* began emanating from Ma’s lips. Ma said that before all these were uttered the “OM” sound emerged first. When Ma was a child she had been forbidden to utter the syllable “OM” by preceptors and so Ma never uttered “OM”. But during these spontaneous utterances, the prohibition was forgotten. It was as if all this were being pushed out from within. *Āsanās* and *mudrās* had begun before *dikṣā*. They appeared even more forceful after *dikṣā*. In 1924, when Ma came to Shahbagh, yogic *kriyās* were still occurring in Ma’s body. Because of this Ma had no menstruation for a month. Later the menstrual cycle became normal for some time and then stopped altogether when Ma was twenty-seven or twenty-eight years old.

any God or Goddess is being worshipped, the worshipper has to assume a corresponding *bhāvā*. I was performing *pūjā* at that time and therefore such a word was uttered. But *pūjā* does not imply external worship with flowers and *bela* leaves. After *dikṣā* many such *kriyās* occurred."

While walking in a forest in Shahbagh, I had repeatedly requested Ma to reveal her true identity. Ma said, "Get me the thorn of a lime tree." A tiny berry which Ma's revelation of her identity in a similar manner, to me had purplish juice was peeled partially and served as an ink bottle. The lime tree thorn was the nib. There was no one else near us.

With the improvised ink and nib, Ma wrote the word "*Nārāyaṇa*" on my hand or my dress. But she forbade me to reveal this to anyone and therefore I did not speak about it then. Now it has been expressed openly and therefore I have also recorded it. I have preserved that thorn and fruit. They are now dried up and shrivelled.

Meanwhile the temple was ready and it was decided that the images would be installed during Ma's birthday celebrations. Ma had explained how the temple was to be designed. The Kali temple was the nucleus around which the temple rose on all sides. The lower half of the Kali temple was surrounded by the large temple. The upper half had a door on one side with enough space to allow it to open. On the terrace above the Kali temple the seats (*simhāsanas*) of the Deities to be installed were constructed. A cave was excavated within the temple and the steps leading to it were situated behind the *simhāsana*. Three little rooms were built on the outside of the temple and

The history of the temple in the Dhaka Ashram

two rooms were constructed below the veranda. These were meant only for spiritual practices and kirtan.

The birthday celebrations of 1931 were started on 2nd May. Kaliprasanna Kushari (Piśā Mahasaya), Piśima and

Sri Sri Ma's birthday celebration in 1931 and installation of images of various gods Bholanath's brother who had been missing (Kamini Kumar or Reverend K. K. Chakravarty) also came with family as well as many other devotees from Calcutta. Goddess Annapurna was installed in the temple. On one

side of Annapurna Devi is a statue of Śiva holding a cloth for alms. On the other side is a lifelike Kali in space just as Ma had seen a living Kali in space. (Ma had not seen Śiva under Kali's feet and therefore no image of Śiva was placed there). An image of Vishnu is placed above Annapurna. Ma's personal jewelry was used to make ornaments for all these Deities. Bholanath himself installed all of them. Ma stayed in the temple for awhile and then went and lay immersed in *bhāva* in the cave within. The image of Annapurna was installed on Ma's birthday and the special *pūjā* for Ma's birthday was performed to this image. Ever since, Ma's birthday *pūjā* in Dhaka is always performed to this image and not to Ma's.

Till then *bhoga* for the Kali image kept in the cave had been prepared by Matari Pisima and others. From that day onwards, Ma instructed Yogesh Dada to perform *pūjā* in the temple and stated that only Yogesh Dada, Atul, Kamalakant or Kulada Dada were to prepare the *bhoga*. Water needed for the preparation of *bhoga* was to be drawn only by them. They were not to eat anything cooked by others and were

to live in purity. Yogesh Dada was then living elsewhere. From that day he was instructed to reside in the Ashram.

Arrangements
for service and
bhoga to the idols
and introduction
to Yogesh
Brahmachari's
entrance into
ashram life

On one day before the installation of the temple, Ma made us cook an elaborate meal with a variety of items at Siddheswari and arranged to have it served to the brahmachāris. Ma was also offered *bhoga* there on that day. Ma herself made Kulada Dada, Yogesh Dada, Atul, Kamalakant and Kanu sit down to

a very satisfying meal, because that after they were to take on the task of worship at the temple and would not be able to eat food cooked by others. Bholanath himself performed the rites pertaining to the sacrificial fire.

After this installation, the sacrificial fire that had been kept burning continuously was ceased and a sacrificial fire was lit in

An independent
arrangement to
guard the sacri-
ficial fire and the
installation of
Kali's image in
the underground
temple with entry
allowed once a
year to all re-
gardless of caste
and creed

another manner. It was arranged that every day this fire would be put into the *kunda* and fire sacrifice would be performed. The image of Kali had been worshipped all these days. On Ma's birthday, Kali was worshipped in the underground chamber of the temple and the door to the chamber was closed. A photograph of this Kali was placed before this door. That photograph is worshipped and a garland

of hibiscus flowers is offered to it every day. The task of opening and closing this door was entrusted to Yogesh Dada. It was decided that every year, on Ma's birthday the door of Kali's temple would be opened. On that one day, after the *pūjā* in the afternoon, everyone would be allowed inside the

temple, regardless of caste and creed. Before sunset, the temple would be cleaned and Kali *pūjā* would be performed. Then the door would be closed for a year. Yogesh Dada alone could enter the temple, opening and closing the door, as per Ma's orders.

This birthday celebration was also attended by the three brothers of Yatish Dada, Navataru Dada* and Jñāna Dada.

Ladies' kirtan throughout the night under Ma's leadership, Ma's water sport and acceptance of *Bala Bhoga*, Blissful festivities.

from Calcutta. One day Ma declared, "The men folk have been keeping awake many nights, performing kirtan. Tonight we shall spend the night singing kirtan with all the ladies." We informed all the ladies about this and those who were present agreed joyously.

That night about thirty ladies gathered and kept awake doing kirtan. Ma also sang *nāma* kirtan with them. Hearing of this the next day, many ladies requested Ma to have another night's kirtan. Ma agreed and a hundred to a hundred and fifty ladies sang *nāma* kirtan throughout the night. Ma kept awake the whole night in great bliss. How enjoyable it was !

The next morning, Ma instructed the men to take over the kirtan, while Ma went with the ladies for a bath in the pond of the Kali temple in Siddheswari. It was a beautiful scene, as Ma sported in the water for a long time. After the bath, Ma emerged from the water and said, "Now give us *bāla bhoga*."

* Navataru Dada is a special devotee of Ma and has been a particularly fortunate recipient of Ma's grace. He is unmarried and is crazy about Ma. Jñāna Dada is also unmarried and is a close friend of Navataru Dada. He is an initiated disciple of Sri Ma Sarada Devi, the wife of Paramhansa Dev. He also has great devotion and love for Ma.

Father and many others who were present went to arrange for *bāla bhoga*. Ma went to Siddheshwari Ashram and started kirtan with everybody. Then *bāla bhoga* of curds, beaten rice and puffed rice and whatever else could be obtained, was offered. The people who sat down to receive *prasāda*, occupied the field fully and Ma also sat with them. After this blissful festivity, Ma came to Ramna Ashram. Almost all the ladies took leave and returned to their homes.

On another day also, Ma spent a night singing kirtan with the ladies. That too was followed by a bath in the Siddheshwari pond and *bāla bhoga* with *pūrīs* and sweets. This was how kirtan by ladies was first started. Later, ladies sometimes sat with Ma during daytime and sang kirtan. Whenever Ma performed kirtan in the night along with the ladies, all the gentlemen were made to leave and the ashram gate was shut. Only a couple of men were appointed by Ma to sit in the field outside the gate. Ma does all her work perfectly to the minutest detail. Since so many ladies (many of them being young girls) were to remain in the field, a few men had been stationed as guards outside. In this way the festivities were completed.

Father and I leave home
 A few days before the festival, Father and I left our home and took residence in Siddheshwari according to Ma's command. From that day, neither Father nor I entered our home again. The festival ended. In the evenings Ma often stood on the veranda of the temple with the ladies to watch the *ārati* in the temple. Brahmachāris cooked the *bhoga* and sometimes, Ma went to prepare the *bhoga*. It was decided that

khicdi would be prepared twice a week, rice and vegetables cooked in one dish on three days and five vegetable dishes would be offered to Annapurna on the other two days of the week. All work went on as per these regulations. Atul Dada and his wife had also attended this festival.

CHAPTER XIV

In June 1931, after the festivities of Ma's birthday, talk about Ma's departure was afloat. Some days later Ma and

Departure for
Bajitpur from
Dhaka (June,
1931)

Bholanath decided to go to Darjeeling via Bajitpur. Father, Jyotish Dada, Atal Dada, his wife, two or three others and I were to accompany Ma. When we sat in a car to go

to the station from the ashram, the wives of Rajendra Kushari and Yatindra Mazumdar arrived with some other ladies to meet Ma. As they talked to Ma, they went and sat down with her in the car. With only the clothes they were wearing, they decided that they would accompany Ma to Bajitpur. Ma laughed at the thought of what people would say at this kind of madness. The group following Ma became large. We went straight to Bajitpur passing through Sripur where Ma had lived with her elder brother-in-law's family. Ma's father-in-law had passed away a year after Ma's wedding and she therefore had lived with her brother-in-law's family for three or four years, as has already been written. Ma's brother-in-law had been the station master at Sripur. Ma indicated the house near the station, saying, "We stayed in this house." Pointing to a pond she reminisced, "I have bathed in this pond."

We visited Kalipada Babu's house in Maimensingh. In Bajitpur a big crowd of people had gathered for darshan. Ma halted at Nayeab (administrator who collected rent) Surendra Babu's house. We heard stories of Ma's life at Bajitpur, from him and from many others there, which we had first heard from

Ma herself. The house where Ma had lived, in the neighbourhood of Surendra Babu's house, was now lying empty. It was in ruins, only the foundation was still there. From the spot where Ma had sat for five months performing *āsanas* and spiritual practices spontaneously we picked up earth and preserved it on the altar at the Panchavati in Ramna Ashram. The jackfruit tree which Ma had sown, was now fruiting. Devotees brought a couple of jackfruits from the tree. How precious even the fruits of that tree are to them. We also saw the spot where Ma had cooked. Ma showed us the girl who had helped her with household work. When Ma had observed *mauna* that girl had done all the work beautifully. Ma indicated a few other signs of the past. Everyone who heard of Ma's arrival came to have her darshan. We stayed there for two or three days in great bliss.

Then we returned to Kalipada Babu's house at Maimensingh from where many of the group returned to Dhaka, while we went with Ma to Darjeeling and sat in the station, without any fixed idea of where to go. Just then Biren Maharaj suddenly appeared and was immensely happy to see Ma. He took Ma and all of us to his house with great zeal. One day kirtan was performed for a long time. After halting at Darjeeling for four or five days Ma departed with all of us for Calcutta. Jyotish Dada and Atal Dada returned to Dhaka on the way. At Calcutta we stayed at Yatish Guha's house in Ballygunj. From there we went to Chunchuda on Pran Kumar Babu's invitation accompanied by Yatish Dada and several others. There also, everyone sang kirtan with Ma and enjoyed

Visit to
Darjeeling via
Maimensingh
(June, 1931)

a lot of bliss. I have already mentioned that Pran Kumar Babu's wife suffered from backache. One day Ma went for a bath in the Ganges with everyone. Ma swam in the water and bathed along with the others. Some ladies took Ma in their laps and some embraced her and sat in her lap. She sported thus in many ways. Pran Kumar Babu's wife also managed to take Ma on her lap and then sat down on Ma's lap. Girindra Dada's place is very close to Chunchuda. He arrived and took Ma and all her companions to his house at Akhna. After staying there for two days everyone returned with Ma to Chunchuda, where we halted for another two or three days. The next journey was to Navadveep. Pran Kumar Babu's wife and the group from Calcutta also accompanied us.

At Navadveep again, Ma bathed in the Ganges with everybody. She caught hold of the hand of Pran Kumar Babu's wife and walked her around in the water, saying, "Hold the railings of the veranda and try to walk a little bit. Try every morning and evening." Pran Kumar Babu's wife started doing accordingly. From that day surprising results became evident. She was able to walk a little more each day. Bholanath had also read out a mantra and blessed her twice (once at Pabna and once at some other place which I do not recollect). She now got relief from an ailment which had troubled her for seven or eight years. When we went to Calcutta about ten months later, we found her walking about quite normally.

Trip to
Navadveep via
Calcutta and
Chunchuda

Astonishing disappearance of
Pran Kumar
Babu's wife's
ailment

Ma had been to Navadveep on three occasions before this. On her last visit she had taken us along, but we had stayed only for a day and had not seen much of the place. This time Yatish Dada was present and he knew every nook and corner of Navadveep and was also acquainted with great Vaishnavites there. We visited many places. Jñāna Dada who is a disciple of Sri Ma Sharada Devi (wife of Sri Ramakrishna Deva) was with us. At that time Chirakumari Sri Gauri Ma, a disciple of Sri Ramakrishna Deva, was residing in her ashram in Navadveep, together with a few ladies. She was very fond of Jñāna Dada. The latter took Ma and all of us to Gauri Ma who was then very old. Ma spent a few blissful moments with her.

We then went to the Radhe Shyam temple where many ladies gather and sing kirtan. Ma stayed there for some time and then went elsewhere. In this fashion we saw temples and ancient places of interest. In the evening we went to Lalita Sakhi's abode. Yatish Dada was known to her. She decided to sing kirtan for Ma at midnight. Arrangements were made for meals at a temple. After eating, we went to the dance hall in Lalita Sakhi's residence. At midnight, she sang kirtan beautifully and Yatish Dada also joined in the singing. The kirtan went on till the small hours of the morning and so, by Ma's orders we all slept in the dance hall near Ma. The next morning, we all bathed in the Ganges with Ma. It was on that day that Ma made Pran Kumar Babu's wife walk around in the water. In the afternoon Ma went for a walk on the banks of the Ganges. There, Yatish Dada's eldest daughter,

Latika, sang for Ma : “*Suradhunir Tire O Ke Hari Bole Neche Jaya*” and other songs.

Probably the next day, Ma set out for Calcutta. There we all stayed in a hall on the second floor in Yatish Dada's

house. At night kirtan went on there. One day, Vrajrendra Ganguli and many others were invited, kirtan was performed and all were to be served *prasāda*. During kirtan that day, Ma went into *bhāva* after a very long time.

Arrival at Calcutta from Navadweep and stay at Yatish Dada's house (June, 1931)

Since Ma was immersed in samadhi, no one ate anything throughout the whole day. Late at night, Ma recovered a little and *bhoga* was offered and *prasāda* distributed to all. Yatish Dada and his family decorated the hall where Ma had *bhāva*, with picture of Ma, of gods and goddesses, saints and great souls, to commemorate the occasion. Ever since, *ārati* and kirtan are performed in that hall every evening. Many devotees of Calcutta gather there. Nirmal Babu and family and the wife of Doctor Harendra arrived at Calcutta from Varanasi for Ma's darshan.

A few days later, Ma left with us for Puri. Nirmal Babu and family and the wife of Doctor Harendra accompanied us.

Visit to Puri and stay at Harlal Babu's house. Foreboding the death of Nirmal Babu's son, Santosh

At Puri Ma and all of us stayed at the residence of Harlal Babu, who is related to Yatish Dada. One day Ma was seated amidst us all on the terrace when she suddenly said, “Misfortune is approaching. Let me see how you all face it.” Everyone was alarmed,

but what was the solution? No one had any idea of the misfortune that was looming ahead. Ma did not say any-

thing else but we knew for sure that some calamity would occur.

The car festival at Puri was to be held soon and therefore the temple was closed so that we could not see the Deities. In the mornings and evenings Ma often went for Darshan of temple at Puri walks by the sea shore with us all. She spent a lot of time there. On some days she visited the *samādhi* temple of Haridas Thakur and other temples. She also visited the Jagannath temple, walking around it on the outside.

A few days later, Nirmal Babu and others were to leave and it was decided that we would also go with them as per Bholanath's desire. Many people were arriving at Puri for Ma's darshan, on hearing that she was there. Everyone pressed Ma to stay on till the car festival (Ratha Yātrā) was completed. Ma had no objection, but Bholanath wanted to leave and our departure was finalised. Before dawn on the day that we were to leave, Bholanath spoke to Ma, even before getting up from his bed, "Look, everyone is telling us to remain here for the chariot procession, so let us leave only after that." Our departure was thus postponed. But Nirmal Babu and his group were to leave for Varanasi as scheduled. However, Nirmal Babu's eldest son, Santosh refused to go to Varanasi. He wanted to go with Ma to her ashram at Dhaka. Bholanath agreed, but Ma neither said yes, nor no. Santosh's parents decided to leave him with Sri Ma. Their only daughter, Taru, was a widow. She also decided to stay on to see the chariot-procession ; later she was to be escorted to Kashi from Calcutta.

When I heard of this decision about their staying on, I felt unaccountably disturbed. I went to Ma, who was lying down in her room in the morning, and said, "Is it proper for us to stay on? From your attitude it seems as if some calamity is imminent and it is best for us to leave this place." Ma replied, "Everyone is leaving, only a few of us are staying on." It had been decided earlier that Ma, Bholanath, Father, Marani and I were to stay on, and when Taru and Santosh also decided to remain, Ma told me, "Are they also staying? Alright, do look after them!" I was taken aback by this sentence from Ma and exclaimed, "They are leaving them in your trust and you are asking us to look after them — how can that be?" Ma did not answer. I told Santosh's mother about Ma's remark. She came and spoke to Ma at length. Finally she placed her son's and daughter's hands in Ma's and said, "I am leaving them in your hands." Ma smiled faintly but said nothing. The party left.

Santosh stayed with Ma all the time. Eight days after Nirmal Babu left, Ma went in the morning for a walk on the seashore with all of us. Jyotish Dada had arrived the previous day from Calcutta, where he had gone on some work, and was to stay in Puri for a couple of days. We all returned to our lodgings from the seashore at about eight o'clock, but Bholanath went to the temple of Vimala Ma. Ma drank some water and lay down, conversing with Jyotish Dada and others. Santosh also returned from the walk, but after that he was not to be seen and many people asked, "Where is Santosh?" Taru replied, "I think he has gone to

Santosh's sudden death, some days before the chariot procession of 1931

the temple with Bholanath.” Believing this to be true, we all kept quiet. Meanwhile Ma closed her eyes and lay back very quietly. Around one o’clock Bholanath returned from the temple, but Santosh was not with him and everyone got worried. Santosh suffered from partial paralysis on his left side and he also had epilepsy. Ma sat up on her bed. After searching for some time, Santosh’s corpse was found in the well behind the house. Santosh was then twenty seven or twenty eight years old. Everybody was grievously shocked by this awful tragedy. Father and some others lifted the corpse out of the well and brought it. Bholanath and all who were staying in the lodgings were extremely upset, but Ma remained steady and calm, without the slightest trace of disturbance. She did not even go to see Santosh once. She remained talking as she had been till then. The parents had left Santosh with Ma barely eight days ago, and this had happened and yet Ma’s expression had not changed the slightest bit. Many people who had come for Ma’s darshan turned to leave when they learnt of the tragedy, but when they heard that Ma was speaking to everyone just as usual, they went up to Ma. Ma was conversing normally, as if nothing had happened, though such a terrible disaster had just occurred in the house. A grandson of Sri Vijay Goswami Mahasaya and a disciple, Makhan Babu, and some other people came to take away the corpse. Bholanath also went with them. It is written in the Utkal Mahatmya, ‘However death may occur in Puri, it is not an unnatural death, and *śrāddha* and other ceremonies may be performed. Even if an unnatural death occurs, Vaikuntha is attainable’. Scholars there also gave the same assurance. The corpse was cremated.

Late at night we all ate something very light and lay down to rest. Ma did not eat anything. Observing Ma's steady calm in the face of such a tragedy, she may be called stone-hearted. But at night Ma's *bhāva* was quite different. When everybody was asleep and all was quiet, Taru and I were sitting near Ma. Ma then started talking about Santosh in great detail. During the previous night, Ma had been very restless and unable to sleep. So she had come out on the veranda from her room, murmuring, "Monday", but we could not make any sense out of this though we immediately apprehended some kind of calamity from the manner in which Ma spoke and behaved. On the very next day which was a Monday, Santosh died. Only then did we realise the significance of Ma's having said, "Monday". On the night after Santosh's death Ma spoke to us only of Santosh. We felt Ma's heart was overflowing with tenderness. Had it not been for this beautiful combination of adamant firmness and overflowing compassion, why would so many people say, "Ma" and fall at her feet ! We spent the whole night this way. When day dawned, Ma went to the well to see how Santosh had fallen in. He never used to go near the well for he was aware of his physical deficiencies. What made him go there alone in the rain ? Ma told us that after she returned from the seashore, drank water and lay down conversing, she suddenly felt as if she was being strangled and her breathing stopped. Ma immediately understood from this that Santosh must have got drowned and asphyxiated. She lay back with her eyes closed. She told us later, "I was unable to say anything then, and even if

I had spoken, it would have not been possible to rescue him alive. He died as soon as he fell into the well. Whatever has to happen will indeed happen. I could not say anything earlier, for words would not emerge from my mouth. What can be done? What is predestined has to be fulfilled. I saw from the very beginning that Santosh was to die here."

After this incident, Ma said, "Do not tarry any longer here. We must leave on the night after the chariot procession."

Since Ma was in Puri and also because of Preparations to leave Puri *dhāma* the chariot festival, Yatish Dada came from

Calcutta with his mother and wife and a few other relatives including children. On the day of the chariot procession, Ma took everyone and went and sat in one place for darshan of the chariot. The Deity was placed on the chariot alright, but for some strange reason the chariot could not be pulled. It was decided that the chariot would be drawn again the next day. Yatish Dada's mother and many others were very keen to stay on for a couple of days more and watch the chariot being taken out in procession. But Ma had already declared that she wanted to leave on the day of the chariot procession and we were all anxious to go. We returned to our lodgings at night. None of us had eaten the whole day long. Father went to the station to make arrangements for meals and returned with information that no train was leaving Puri that night, but early next morning there was one going towards Mogalsarai. We explained to Yatish Dada and made him agree and left for the station immediately. After what Ma had said even he did not have

the courage to stay longer. But Ma did not say anything more then.

We spent the night at the station and took the morning train to Mogalsarai. Taru was to be sent to Kashi from there and Ma would take us all to Vindhyachal. At To Vindhyachal via Mogalsarai first we were to go to Jamshedpur from Puri, but later that was dropped. A telegram was sent to Varanasi. Jitendra Dada's wife and Doctor Harendra came to the Mogalsarai station and Taru was taken by them to Varanasi. Ma proceeded to Vindhyachal with us all, including Yatish Dada and his people. Ma's attention is all-pervading. The pandits of Kashi withheld permission for the performance of Santosh's *śrāddha* because of the unnatural way in which he died. Ma realised how grieved the bereaved parents would be if the *śrāddha* were not performed. But the consideration that she gave even more priority to, was the fact that *śrāddha* should not be withheld when it was ordained by the *śāstras*. Therefore she dispatched letters to Puri to get information about whether *śrāddha* could be performed, for according to the *Utkal Mahātmya*, such a death could be followed by *śrāddha* ceremonies. Ma wired to the pandits at Puri and sent people from Vindhyachal to Kashi again and again. Finally it was decided that the ceremonies could be performed and the *pandits* at Kashi did everything nicely. At that time Kalachand Babu and his aged mother were staying at the Vindhyachal Ashram as per Ma's orders, and they were delighted to obtain Ma's company. Kalachand Babu's maternal uncle was the late, respected Ashwini Kumar Datta of Barishal. Yatish Dada's family was also with Ma and so was Maroni.

After spending some days at Vindhyachal, Yatish Dada and his people returned to Calcutta via Varanasi, where they had darshan of Kashi Vishwanath. Ma also left with all of us for Varanasi. Ma now went to Santosh's parents, twelve days after his death. As soon as she saw Ma, Santosh's mother clung to Ma and wept. Nirmal Babu spoke to Ma bravely with a forced smile on his face, "Ma, we had offered two to your care. You accepted one, why then have you returned the other?" Ma understood what it cost him to suppress his intense grief and to speak lightly thus. Ma gazed at him and started weeping so pathetically that Santosh's mother stopped crying herself and started consoling Ma. Ma calmed down after a long time. Later, one day Nirmal Babu asked her, "Ma, why did you cry that day?" Ma replied, "You did not cry, so I cried to lighten the burden of your grief." Ma spoke consolingly to Santosh's mother at great length. Ma stayed at their house for fifteen days and surprisingly, Santosh's parents remained very calm for those fifteen days. Everyone was astonished to see such equanimity in those who had lost a young son just a few days ago. People visited Ma day and night. Kirtan went on and there seemed to be a great festival in the house.

After Yatish Dada and others went to Calcutta, Ma took us back to Vindhyachal. This time Shankarananda Swamiji, Manik and others also went with us. One day while Ma was seated on the veranda of the Vindhyachal Ashram, some gentlemen who had come for a stroll on the hills, left a packet of sweatmeats and a container with water near the

Ashram, and went some distance away. Ma beckoned to me and said, "Go and bring all those things." I did so. Ma told me to open the packet and put one sweet into her mouth. Meanwhile, as this sport was in progress, the gentlemen arrived and found their packet missing. As they were searching for it, someone from the Ashram went and called them. They heard what had happened and were immensely delighted. They did *praṇāma* to Ma and left.

Return to
Vindhyachal and
the first meeting
with Ma of
Upendra Babu
and Kulada Babu
of Mirzapur

The very next day they were back for Ma's darshan. One of them, who was a doctor (Sri Upendranath Bandopadhyaya) brought his wife. They had all come from Mirzapur. Another one of the company was a bachelor named Kulada Prasad Chattopadhyaya. He began visiting Ma almost every day, and even followed her to Dhaka and other places. Dr. Upendra took Ma to his house in Mirzapur from Vindhyachal. Upendra Babu owns a house on the banks of the Ganges, with a garden and he arranged for Ma's stay at that house. Ma remained there for two days with all of us and then returned to Vindhyachal. Nirmal Babu came there with his family and spent a few days with Ma. Ma knew that though Nirmal Babu did not express his feelings outwardly, he had been greatly affected within, and therefore she had called him to Vindhyachal. He returned to Varanasi and only Shankarananda Swami of Kashi stayed on.

One night, Ma was sleeping on the veranda. It was very late and everybody was asleep. Only I was sitting near Ma. Suddenly Ma's body began to undergo a change, so I

immediately called everybody and we carried Ma indoors. Many wonderful *kriyās* started manifesting in Ma's body, but

Wonderful *kriyās*
in Ma's body in
Vindhyachal—
Aṣṭāṅga Yoga
of Devi

Ma remained seated steadily in one place.

One state after the other was being manifested.

Ma was made to lie down on a blanket.

The states occurred steadily in regular succession and then ceased. Everyone was watching

all this quietly. There was no need to even hold on to Ma's body any further. A little later, Ma still in that state, spoke in a sweet voice, with her eyes shut : "The *Aṣṭāṅga Yoga* of Devi." I had never seen this kind of *āsana* before nor had I heard Ma speak of it before. We understood this to mean that this was the *Aṣṭāṅga Yoga* which had just been performed by the body. Ma then lay down and kept silent.

CHAPTER XV

Ma next went to Kashi with all of us, after visiting Ayodhya. We had not been to Ayodhya before this. Ma Journey to Dhaka now showed us where she had stayed when via Ayodhya, she had gone there from Hardwar with Kashi & Calcutta Ashu and where Ashu had cooked rice and from Vindhyachal so on. From Kashi we went to Calcutta and then to Dhaka.

Pisima and Pisa mahāśaya (Kali Prasanna Babu) came to meet Ma at the Dhaka ashram from Chandpur where they had been staying with their son. Ever since Pisima arrived, Ma ate with her almost every day and created an atmosphere of bliss with joyous activity. Pisima is strongly religiously inclined. She attains elevated states during *nāma-kīrtan*. She also obeys Ma's instructions to the best of her abilities. It has already been recorded that Ma took the sacred thread from Pisima's hands. This time again, while Ma was conversing with her, Pisima was holding a small bamboo stick in her hand. She had found it somewhere and it chanced to be in her hands. I do not know why she suddenly placed the bamboo in my hand and in course of conversation she said, "Is this not your stick?" Ma told her, "Take the stick quickly and go where Kulada is performing *havana*. Have him touch this stick with the sacrificial fire." Pisima did so and gave the bamboo to Ma. Meanwhile, Ma drew out a few threads from the silk *sari* that

I obtain the
saffron cloth and
stick from Ma's
hands and am
instructed to
keep it a secret

she was wearing and tied them to the middle of the stick. Then she gave me the stick and said, "Today do not speak without this stick." Everything happened playfully. But we do not consider Ma's actions or words as sport and take them lightly, for I know how Ma accomplishes great things in this manner. I did as I was told. At night, Ma said, "Wrap this stick in a cloth and hang it up in Siddheshwari." I did so.

As soon as Pisima gave the stick, she enquired, "Is there any saffron cloth for a brahmachāri here?" Baby Didi was present. She had then begun visiting the Ashram every day. Ma looked at her and said, "Baby will bring a brahmachāri's saffron cloth." A few days later, Baby Didi dyed a cloth saffron and brought it. Ma went to her room, shut the door and wore the cloth and remained seated with it for some time. Then she gave it to me and said, "Wear this cloth, sit in this room and perform *japa* for some time, then change and come out." I did just that. No one else knew. Ma told me to put away that cloth and also instructed me to wear it occasionally and perform *japa* at night, without letting anyone see. Ma played a game in this fashion.

Ma still wore the golden necklace as a sacred thread, and the old sacred thread which had been put round her neck was also there. Probably some people noticed these in Pabna. After Ma returned to Dhaka from Pabna, some lady from Pabna sent a sacred thread made by her, to Ma. Ma remarked, "Do you see how everything happens of its own accord!" She knotted the sacred thread and wore it and removed the old one but kept it.

Ma's acceptance of Jyotish Dada as a brahmin and later, presentation of a sacred thread with Ma's own hands to Jyotish Dada.

Some days later, she made the golden necklace into a sacred thread for Jyotish Dada. Most of the people around knew nothing about this.

Earlier one day at Shahbagh, Ma, Jyotish Dada and Nandu were sitting in a room. All at once Ma spoke up, "We are three brahmanas here in this room." The feeling that Jyotish Dada, who was born in a *vaidya family* was also a brahmana was being expressed by Ma, but nothing further happened then. Now, Ma put the golden sacred thread around Jyotish Dada's neck and probably instructed him to henceforth eat only food cooked with his own hands. For a long time Jyotish Dada ate only what he had cooked himself. One day Ma said to me, "Jyotish Dada has a very excellent disposition ; he lives in a family and so all do not understand this." In this way Ma played the *līlā* of the sacred thread. She accomplishes many jobs playfully.

Now I shall relate another incident. A lawyer popularly known as "Pandit Sahib" lived in Dhaka. His wife, Shyamala Devi, visited Ma often. She remained in *mauna* for many years and practised *sādhana* intensely. She attained to exalted states and told Ma about her experiences. Ma also indulged in joyful sport with her. One day Bholanath and I took Ma to her house and she showed her shrine room to Ma. Ma sat there for a very long time. A *kamandalu* was kept in the shrine. Ma saw it and picked it up saying, "Khukuni, take this *kamandalu* along with us. I shall drink water from it." Shyamala Devi laughed and consented. But when we came away from their house, we forgot to bring the

Ma takes a
kamandalu from
lawyer Pandit
Sahib's wife.

kamandalu. Ma was then living at Uttama Kutir. As soon as Father arrived near Ma, she sent him to Shyamala Devi to get the *kamandalu*. Father had never before been to that house nor was he acquainted with Pandit Sahib, for the latter never came to Ma. On Ma's orders, Father went there and asked for the *kamandalu* and brought it to Ma. For a few days Ma drank water from that *kamandalu*. Then it remained lying somewhere after which it was taken to Siddheshwari Ashram during some festival. Then no one looked for it again.

Some time later I was performing *pūjā* in Siddheshwari, when suddenly I remembered the *kamandalu*. For a long time

Sri Sri Ma gives
the *kamandalu*
to my Father

no one had remembered the *kamandalu*. After performing my *pūjā* I went to enquire about it from the Bhairavi of the Kali temple, because she is the one who lights the lamps and incense at our Ashram. I had just reached the door, when surprisingly, at that very moment, a man who was swimming in the pond felt something touch his feet. He lifted up the object and found it was a *kamandalu*. It had become blackened. The man enquired to whom it belonged and I recognized it as none other than Ma's. I did not go to the Bhairavi. I just took the *kamandalu* to the Ashram and told Ma the whole story. Ma said, "Scrub it clean and fill it with water, and keep it near my bedding. I had brought it for the purpose of drinking water." I did what Ma told me. The *kamandalu* was then fitted with a lid. Ma drank water from it for a couple of days. One day Father and some others were sitting in a room in the Ashram and Ma was lying on her bed and talking to them. In course of conversation Father said, "I cannot drink

water without touching the container to my lips." Ma said, "Take this *kamandalu* and practise drinking water without touching the container with your mouth." And she handed the *kamandalu* to Father. Father accepted it with great reverence for it was given by Ma. Ever since, Father drank water from the *kamandalu*, even though he found it inconvenient, because it was Ma's order. At that time he did it out of eagerness to learn to drink without touching the container with his lips, but the results were extraordinary. Because Ma finally made Father a *sannyāsi* with a *kamandalu*. This is yet another instance of how Ma executes important deeds most playfully.

It was the time for Durga *Pūjā* and Ma was still in Dhaka. Nishi babu took Ma to his house in Samsiddhi. A Matajī named 'Siddhi Ma' lives there, whom Ma had met a couple of times in Dhaka. Siddhi Ma's husband's house is also in Atpara, near Bholanath's home. Ma stayed in Samsiddhi for a day and then returned to Dhaka.

Then a devotee of Dhaka, the lawyer Pramath Babu, took Ma to his village. Many devotees accompanied her and the atmosphere was charged with bliss. Rai Bahadur Yogesh Chandra took Ma for the second time to his house at Paruldiya. A few days before the Kali *Pūjā* in November Ma again left for Cox Bazar.* This time, Matari Pisima, Didima and others.

* In 1931 when Ma went to Cox Bazar, there was talk of Kulada Dada's going to stay in the Ramna Ashram. After Ma went to Cox Bazar he abandoned his home and went to live in the Ashram. He retained his job for he had small children to support. He went to office from the Ashram and returned there after the day's work. He never went home again. He kept *mauna* for a long period.

went with Ma in order to have darshan of Adinath and Chandranath. The two sisters of Dhaka, Sadhana and Vasana performed kirtan in front of Ma almost every day. The elder sister Sadhana, went with Ma, and so did Yatish Guha and his younger brother Nitish. Nepal Dada had also taken leave and was with Ma in Dhaka. He was to accompany Ma to Cox Bazar but could not do so because he fell ill. After Ma left for Cox bazar, Kulada Dada abandoned his home and began living in Ramna Ashram. Ma took everyone to Anath's elder brother Upendra Babu's house at Brahmanberia. Then it was decided to go to Sultanpur (Ma's maternal grandfather's place) in Kumilla district, but due to some reason the programme was dropped. Ma's maternal uncle was a very great scholar and was also well off. As a child, Ma had gone every year to her maternal grandfather's home during Durga *Pūjā*. Ma told us all about this. Ma liked the *Pūjā*-room at her grandfather's house very much. She was attracted by the scent of flowers and sandal wood in that room and would leave her childish play to go and sit in that room for long hours. Ma gets the same fragrance that she got from this room in her childhood, from the *Pūjā*-room at the house of the priest at Siddheshwari. Ma had declared this on the day of the *pūjā* performed by Father after which his external worship ceased. On that day, again, Ma had said that during that *pūjā* also she experienced the same fragrance as that which pervaded her maternal uncle's shrine-room. From Brahmanberia, Ma went with all of us to Chittagong and then to Cox Bazar.

This time again, we stayed in Dinabandhu's small bungalow by the seaside in Cox Bazar. Meals were at Dinabandhu's house. A few days after we reached Cox Bazar, Ma had fever. It would come on soon after sunrise and was very high for a few hours and would decrease in the evening. Ma went for walks on the seashore and ate anything that had been cooked. After this went on for a few days, Bholanath and Dinabandhu requested Ma to take some medicine. Ma replied, "This (fever) has come and will play for a few days in the body and then leave. Alright, wait till such and such a date (I do not remember the exact date or week). If the fever comes on that day again, then I shall take medicine as you want." But from the day that Ma had mentioned, the fever did not appear again.

This time we stayed for a long time in Cox Bazar. Dinabandhu's family became closely attached. Dinabandhu regarded Ma as his daughter. He never performed *sandhyā* or *pūjā*. Ma told him to repeat the *Gāyatri-mantra* and declared, "If you do *Gāyatri-japa*, the health of this daughter of yours will be good, understand this for sure." He performed *Gāyatri-japa* thenceforth.

One day the following incident occurred : Yatish Dada had had his meal at Dinabandhu's house and had returned to the bungalow on the sea-shore. Ma and all of us were still at Dinabandhu's house. Suddenly a thought entered Yatish Dada's mind, "Alright, if Ma appears here all alone, then I shall know !" This idea passed through his mind as he sat in the bungalow. Ma never went to that building alone, the two

Ma's stay at
Cox Bazar

A marvellous
incident

houses were quite a distance apart. Every day I fed Ma and then sat down for my meal. Ma would wait for us to finish eating and then would go with all of us to the sea-shore bungalow. Father would also finish eating and wait for us in the drawing-room through which we had to pass. We would call him on our way out and Bholanath also joined all of us. That day, Ma sent me to another room on some errand and when I returned she was not there. I searched the whole house but could not find her. I went to the drawing-room and found that Father was also looking for Ma. I did not believe that she could have gone to the bungalow for she never went alone in that way. But a man who saw us searching told us that he had seen Ma walking all alone towards the bungalow. We hastened to the bungalow and found Ma and Yatish Dada there. Ma was laughing. Yatish Dada then described what had happened. He had been sitting there and thought thus, when suddenly Ma had come and stood near him laughing. He got up amazed and took the dust of Ma's feet on his head. Ma removed his doubt in this way; but our doubting minds do not want to believe. It is not easy to have unshakable faith—it requires very much *sādhana*.

Another time, when Ma was staying in Salkiya at Pisima's place and conversing, suddenly a few exclamations of pain like "Ah!" and "Oh!" escaped from Ma's lips a couple of times. Two or three days later we learnt that Kulada Dada's son-in-law was suffering from cholera. At the time when such exclamations had been uttered by Ma, Kulada's son-in-law had also sighed thus because of his acute suffering.

Similar incidents
that occurred
elsewhere

Many such incidents have occurred. While travelling in a car, Ma suddenly exclaimed, "Ah!", then biting her tongue and smiling she turned towards us and said sweetly, "Such sounds have started again. What can I do? I do nothing of my own will." Within a few days we would receive news of someone's illness or misfortune. In this way though Ma never spoke about far off occurrences, her knowledge of them was revealed by her body. Sometimes she would also mention something.

On certain occasions it has happened that we were to go somewhere and someone was to come to take us, but the time of his arrival was not fixed. People were discussing this and guessing what time we were to go, but Ma listened quietly and sometimes joined in their talk. Later, while walking about alone, or lying down on her bed, she would suddenly say, "Monday" or "five days". She uttered so many things to which no one paid special attention. Later we came to know that on the day that had been mentioned by Ma, the man had arrived or left from where he had to take us.

Sometimes we did not remember to tally such utterances with actual occurrences and we often forgot such utterances altogether if many days elapsed between them and the incidents. The kind of sounds which emanate from Ma's lips are innumerable. Some nights Ma uttered a few words so loudly and suddenly that people were shaken out of deep slumber. Around midnight, I often sat near Ma and heard such words very clearly, but was not able to understand their meaning. On some occasions, Ma would open her eyes and look for a few moments and at other times, her eyes remained shut. During

such *bhāva*, *stotras* also emanated from Ma's lips. Ma would be lying, when *stotras* were pronounced softly ; later Ma would get up in the same *bhāva* and sit in some yogic posture. The utterance of *stotras* grew louder gradually and then slowly ceased.

Late one night at Ramna Ashram, as Ma was walking about as she pleased, she went and sat at the doorway of the temple. *Stotras* began pouring forth and tears flowed from her eyes. The utterances gathered volume gradually and then softened down gently. Ma went into *samādhi* and lay down where she was for the whole night. She rose only the next day. How much time was spent in such *bhāvas* is not known. It is just not possible to complete the narration of Ma's *bhāvas*.

Didima, Yatish Dada and some others left and only a few of us stayed on with Ma. After about one and a half months, we departed from Cox Bazar.

CHAPTER XVI

From Cox Bazar we accompanied Ma to Chandranath via Adinath and Chittagong. Dinabandhu's wife had hardly ever set her foot outside her home. Though
Trip to Adinath and Chandranath she was growing old, she had not even bathed in the Ganges and she confided to Ma about all these frustrations. Ma got Dinabandhu to agree and took him along with his family.

We had darshan of Chandranath and then proceeded to Chandpur and Calcutta. This time Ma was followed by a large crowd and so she stayed in a two storeyed vacant house at Ballyganj belonging to Suresh Babu. Later she also went to other houses. It was time for Bholanath to go to Tarapeeth and therefore Ma took us all with her. As per Ma's earlier instructions, Bholanath was to stay in Tarapeeth only for a day, so we returned to Calcutta the very next day. There was great rejoicing in Calcutta for a few days in Ma's presence. Ma visited many houses including Kaka Babu's (Rev. K. K. Chakravarty's). Wherever she went, all the devotees gathered and often heard her nectar-like words of advice. Every evening kirtan was performed in Ma's presence, but there was now no change in Ma's external condition as used to happen before. Ma listened to the kirtan quietly and even when there was a trace of *bhāva* not all could perceive it; Ma would control herself. From Calcutta, Ma went to Kashi with all her companions, to enable Dinabandhu's
Visit to Kashi via Calcutta and Tarapeeth

wife to have Kashi darshan. Pisima joined us from Calcutta. We stayed for some days at Kashi and visited the temples.

Then we left for Vindhyachal. Yogendra Rai had accompanied Ma from Kashi. In the wide open spaces of the hills at Vindhyachal, in the moonlight till about twelve o'clock, Yogendra Babu sang kirtan for Ma. We were only five or six of us listening, with Ma seated quietly in our midst. We also kept perfectly still while Yogendra Babu sang melodiously. We were all immersed in bliss because of the ideal setting of time, place and characters.

We spent only two days at Vindhyachal and then went on to Jamshedpur where devotees were eagerly awaiting Ma's darshan. They began festivities in great rejoicing because of obtaining Ma's company. This time also Ma stayed at Krishna Dada's place. Everyone gathered there. On one day, they took Ma to each one's house. In every home Ma's photograph had been installed and was being worshipped. We found the lady of each house awaiting Ma's arrival with an *āsana*, and fruits and sweets for *bhoga* all laid out and ready. They had arranged Ma's visits to so many houses in such a short time, so that the dust of Ma's feet could bless all the homes and they took Ma around accordingly. Ma stayed in Jamshedpur for only two or three days and a lot of kirtan was performed in her presence.

Bengali ladies believed that their good fortune (the lives of their husbands) would be sustained if they offered fish to Ma. At first Ma ate a little fish in a couple of houses. Later

she did not like to take fish in each house that she visited, so I fed her with very small amounts so as to keep up the propriety. But I knew that fish curry had been prepared in large quantities in every house and that the hosts would not be satisfied with Ma's just touching it. Yet I fed Ma very meagerly knowing that that was her will.

Once, while in Jamshedpur, I fed Ma with a little extra rice and fish curry because of Bholanath's and other people's telling me to do so. Usually Ma ate very little rice and I fed her only that much, but on that day I fed her a little more. As Ma returned after washing her mouth she asked me, "You have fed me a little more of everything today, haven't you?" I replied, "Everyone feels distressed because I feed you so scantily. They make so many elaborate preparations and you eat almost nothing. Most people do not know how little you eat and they think that I do not feed you and therefore you do not eat. They believe that if I were to feed you a little more perhaps you would accept it, so thinking over all this, I have fed you a little extra today. Ma became serious and said, "You feed me every day and you know exactly how much I eat. It is right for you to do your work abiding by rules without heeding praise or criticism. Looking outward always distracts one's attention from one's work. Today my body feels peculiar for having eaten excessively." I understood the correctness of Ma's words and I was very remorseful. I realised that I had paid attention to external factors and incurred shortcomings in my service of Ma.

Ma spent two or three days at Jamshedpur and then left for Calcutta. The train was to start at night. Five or six

cars had been arranged to transport Ma and her party to the station, yet they did not suffice for the large crowd gathered to accompany Ma to the station. Due To Calcutta to lack of space in the cars, many people were made to get off and it was too late to get more cars. When Ma's car started those who were left behind got so upset, that that scene is still in my memory, and I recall it with a mixture of sorrow and bliss. In such a short time, those people had begun pining so intensely for Ma. Ma reached Calcutta with all of us.

In a couple of days she arrived at Dhaka with Dinabandhu and others, after making the devotees in Calcutta weep.

Ma in Dhaka All at Dhaka were overjoyed. It was probably the month of February. Ma stayed at the Ramna Ashram.

During that time, that is a few days before the festival, I got a new mosquito net ready for Ma. When I brought it in the morning, Jyotish Dada was there and Ma suddenly went to her cottage and asked me to fix the net. She sat inside the net and asked Jyotish Dada and me to enter. Jyotish Dada and I declared to be brother and sister. Then she made us both lie down on her lap and said, "You are brother and sister." The door had been closed. A little later she got up. The varieties and numbers of *līlās* performed by Ma are limitless.

Father and I were staying at Siddheshwari according to Ma's instructions. Every morning I got up early and went to Ma. Jyotish Dada took Ma for a walk and returned to his home a little after I reached. Father sat near the

āsana in Siddheshwari for a long time every day, as per Ma's orders. As soon as he woke up, he bathed in the pond and sat down to do *japa*. In the afternoon, after Father's wonderful darshan partaking of a little food, he resumed his *japa*. Around five in the evening he went to the Ramna Ashram and ate the *prasāda* blessed by Ma. He remained till nine or ten in the night near Ma and then returned to Siddheshwari with me. He again sat for *japa* till twelve or one in the night. One night, around midnight while Father was doing *japa*, he saw very vividly that Ma (who was in Ramna Ashram) had risen and come out of her cottage and then lay down. That evening Ma was lying in *bhāva*. The next day when father asked Bholanath he found that Ma had actually got up and gone out around midnight and had returned and lay down. Father had once mentioned, "From the day that I had darshan of Ma, whenever I did *prāṇāma* anywhere, I felt my head was touching Ma's feet."

Father sometimes sat up the whole night doing *japa* and only rested for awhile on his bed in the early morning hours.

Father's gradual progress in *sādhana* He did *prāṇāyāma* according to Ma's advice. Ma does not instruct everyone alike, but advises each one according to his individual competence.

Jyotish Dada is a very thoughtful person. Since the Shabbagh days I have noticed that whenever no one else is present near Ma he would turn up at her feet. Jyotish Dada's Mātri Satsanga Ma speaks to him on various subjects in the same *bhāva*. On many days he would come to Ma around eleven or twelve p.m. after everybody had

left, and would spend the night near Ma. On some days if Ma had the *kheyāla* to go to Siddheshwari (at that time we were not staying at Siddheshwari and the room was locked) she would immediately hire a vehicle and go with Bholanath to Siddheshwari. On her way she sometimes picked up Jyotish Dada from his residence. Sometimes he conversed with Ma and at other times she would just lie down immersed in *bhāva*. He then sat at her feet the whole night through. In this way Ma sees the capacity of each individual and imparts instruction. One person's experiences are not generally revealed to anyone else. Ma says, "Each one must keep his own matters to himself."

In connection with the sites of the Siddheshwari and Ramna Ashram, Ma had said, "These places are extremely helpful for *sādhana*." But she had not mentioned

The story of the sites of Siddheshwari and Ramna Ashrams

any further details regarding these spots. When Ma gave instructions to acquire these lands, no one knew anything about them.

Later it became known that many *sādhus* and *saṁnyāsīs* had performed rigorous penances in these very places ; that the Kali temple at Ramna Ashram was a much more recent construction and that earlier there had been a Durga temple there. In addition to these historic facts Ma herself revealed during conversation, "Many sages have performed *tapasyā* here and I have seen several of them (in their subtle bodies)."

Around that time, the wife of Abani Dutta Mahāśaya of Gendariya, Dhaka, was coming to Ma. She spent a lot of time in *sādhana* and *bhajana* though she was a householder. She also had intense devotion for her Guru. She came to

meet Ma after having heard about her, and was greatly attracted to Ma after the very first darshan. She was afraid that she would succumb to the power of Ma's attraction and become more attached to Ma than to her own Guru and therefore she did not visit Ma often, but neither was she able to stay away from Ma. While at home she pined for Ma's darshan and was finally compelled to come to the ashram. We enjoyed all this greatly with Ma. Once when her Guru visited Dhaka she told him all about Ma including her strong attraction for Ma. "Should I go to Ma or not?" she asked of her Guru. He replied, "All are *one* after all; if you want to go, you may." After securing his permission, she began visiting Ma everyday. She would describe her beautiful experiences to Ma. She has one son and one daughter. The son was then in prison in connection with the freedom struggle and the daughter was married. She spent most of her time in spiritual practices. Ma made Jyotish Dada her spiritual son, and Atal Dada the spiritual son of Baby Didi, saying that they should be of mutual help to each other in their religious pursuits.

Many new people were arriving at Ma's holy feet. Amongst them the names of Sachindra Babu and Prabhat Babu must be mentioned particularly. These gentlemen of the upper classes came for Ma's darshan almost everyday. Many lawyers also came. Pramatha Babu, Abani Babu, Radhika Babu and others were constant visitors. The number of people increased day by day. Ma did not stay for long in Dhaka at that time and so crowds

About Abani
Dutta's wife

Arrival of new
devotees

of devotees collected as soon as she arrived at the Ashram. Some people stayed on till late in the night and when the others had left, spent some time with Ma in solitude. Ganesh Babu and his wife came for Ma's darshan every afternoon and then arrived again late in the night and sat near Ma. At that time they got a chance of speaking to Ma in private. Dinabandhu and family came to Dhaka for three or four days. In the month of February, Atul Thakur Mahaśaya performed Saraswati Pūjā in the Ashram in the kirtan room constructed by Vinay Babu in memory of his late daughter. Then in the month of March, Atul Thakur Mahaśaya performed Śiva Pūjā on *Śivarātri* in Siddheshwari. He sat up the whole night and did *pūjā* in each *prahāra*. Baby Didi, Satya Babu's wife and others also performed *pūjā* throughout the night. There was great bliss.

On the Dolpurnima day (Holi) of 1932, at the request of the wife of Rajendra Kushari, Ma played Holi with all the ladies. How happy we all were! Everyone threw colours on Ma and Ma reciprocated by spraying coloured water from a water-syringe on all. The entire crowd of ladies was painted red with coloured powder. In the afternoon, Ma went and sat in the kirtan room with everybody. Kirtan was performed for three or four hours and then Ma took everybody to the pond to bathe with her. She sported in the water for a long time and meanwhile *prasāda* was being prepared. At Ma's suggestion, Belu's mother (Rajendra Kushari's wife) was declared "The King of Holi", since the day's sport was at her request. Ma and the others returned to the kirtan room

Ma's *dol-līlā* in
1932

after the bath. Ma asked for sandal-wood paste and applied it to everyone's forehead. Then she sat to eat along with them. This Holi festival celebration continued from morning to night. The ladies then did *pranāma* to Ma and left.

In April, Ma set out for Rajsahi. Munsif Dinesh was then at Maimensingh. He suddenly fell ill and at the request of

his wife and children, Ma halted at Maimensingh on the way for two or three days. This time Makhan (Ma's younger brother), Belu's mother and Maroni accompanied Ma. On the way to Rajsahi, Maroni, Father and I went to Calcutta on Ma's behest. Ma, Bholanath and the others went to Rajsahi for a couple of days and then proceeded to Calcutta to the residence of Kaka Babu (Bholanath's brother, Rev. K. K. Chakravarty).

From Dhaka to Calcutta with halts at Maimensingh and Rajsahi (April 1932)

On April 15, 1932, Ma went for bhoga to the house of Pisima at Calcutta, where everyone was delighted. A Muslim gentleman fed Ma with an orange. The same day, Ma gave Father the one stringed necklace from her neck. Father has preserved it carefully to this day.

Stay at Calcutta

From Rampur, Govardhan's mother turned up at Calcutta when she heard Ma was there. But she did not know where

Ma was staying. As she searched for Ma in the sun, going from one devotee's house to another, she fainted on the road. Then she somehow reached Suresh Babu's house with great difficulty and waited for Ma there. Ma had then not yet returned from Pisima's house.

Story of Govardhan of Rampur and his mother. April 1932

Both Suresh Babu and his wife are deeply devoted to Ma. They just sit quietly near Ma and gaze at her face. They neither have any questions nor any requests — they are satisfied with Ma's darshan. In between they take her home and offer *bhoga*.

Ma—the Inner
Knower

Once, Ma was to go to Suresh Babu's house and his wife had cleaned everything since the morning and got *bhoga* ready for Ma. But it so happened that Ma did not go. Ma was seated in Kaka Babu's house surrounded by a surging crowd. A little before twilight, Ma called me and said, "Ask Father to get a vehicle and take me to Suresh Babu's house. Perhaps they are waiting for me." Father immediately took Ma in a car to Suresh Babu's house. When we reached there, we found that they had not eaten anything and were waiting for Ma. Suresh Babu's wife believed firmly that Ma would certainly come and that they would offer a little food to her and obtain *prasāda*. She was waiting with this faith and Ma, who knows all that goes on within each one, reached there. How happy they were to obtain Ma! They offered her food and then all got *prasāda*.

Meanwhile Govardhan's mother got darshan of Ma after intensive endeavour. Ma's first meeting with Govardhan's mother is a beautiful episode. Once Ma entered the waiting room in some railway station and found that there was no place to sit. Govardhan's mother was seated in that room. Observing that Ma was standing, she said, "Do sit down!" Ma advanced towards her and remarked, "Where shall I sit? There is no place." Govardhan's mother glanced at Ma's face and

Ma's first meet-
ing with Govar-
dhan's mother

replied, "Is there no place? Then come and sit on my lap." Without a word Ma went and sat on her lap. She embraced Ma tightly. All who witnessed this scene thought that Ma was crazy, for without some kind of insanity does a lady go and sit on the lap of a totally unknown person? A little later the train arrived. Ma and Govardhan's mother got into the train and travelled together for some distance. Govardhan's mother alighted first and Ma proceeded to Howrah. Now it so happened that Govardhan's mother forgot a big bunch of keys in the train. Virendra Dada and others who were accompanying Ma, took the keys, but Ma had not ascertained the address of Govardhan's mother's residence and only knew that she lived in Sri Rampur. A month later Govardhan's mother met Ma again, when she arrived in search of her keys. At that time she took Ma to her house at Rampur. Her son, Govardhan, who was then a little boy, became an ardent devotee of Ma. Ever since Ma often goes to his house at Rampur on the way to Calcutta. We have also been there with Ma, but when Ma first met Govardhan's mother, we were not present.

Second darshan of Ma during the search for her keys and beginning of regular visits

Once Govardhan looked around for lotus flowers to offer to Ma during *pūjā*, but he could not find any. When Ma was leaving Rampur, he also went to the station. He had locked his house. On returning from the station, he found that someone had thrown a bunch of lotuses into the house from the veranda. He was stunned. He performed *pūjā* to Ma with the lotuses.

Performance of *pūjā* with lotuses from an unknown source

In Calcutta, this time again, Ma stayed at Kaka Babu's house. Whenever Ma visits Calcutta, she does not get any

time to rest either in the day or in the night.
 Ma — beyond the barriers of regulations

Considering all this Kaka Babu, Pisima and others decided that no one would be allowed to stay near Ma after midday for a few hours and between nine p.m. and early morning, and that Ma was to be allowed to rest, for otherwise her body would not be able to bear the strain. In Dhaka also, Jyotish Dada had tried once or twice to enforce such regulations, but had not been successful. It was not possible to restrain the persistence of the people. Ma also is not one who can be bound by rules and therefore no rule works. This time the rule was decided upon. Kaka Babu had a clock installed since at twelve noon everyone could not be told personally. No one objected because this was being done for Ma's health.

By twelve that day almost everybody departed. We made Ma lie down in a room and a few of us sat nearby fanning her. Outside, the sun rays were scorching

Daytime regulations broken

relentlessly ; being the month of May the heat was intense. Kaka Babu, Bholanath and others had gone to another room and were also resting. But Ma sat up and within a few minutes she was in Kaka Babu's room. She roused him and took him for a walk in the street. Kaka Babu exclaimed "What is the matter ? We took such pains to make everyone leave so that you could rest, and now you are setting out in the hot sun ! What will all the people say to me ?" But who would listen to all this ? Ma laughed and replied, "Don't you know that I am crazy ? I am not

even letting any of you rest.” And so saying, she began walking from street to street. She went to a shop and begged for alms. The shop keeper gave her something, which she gave away at some other place. She sported in this manner. We were only a few of us with her. Yatish Guha, who had been unable to stay without Ma turned up at Kaka Babu’s house. The rule was that the devotees could meet Ma after four in the afternoon, but Yatish Dada arrived in the early afternoon and found that she was not in. As soon as he heard that Ma had gone walking about the streets, he tracked her down and joined her.

Strolling gaily in this way, Ma reached the house of Kshitish Dada’s father-in-law, Pashupati Babu. Pashupati Babu’s wife was then very ill and thus unable to come for Ma’s darshan. While lying down, she was praying, “Oh Ma ! If you are the knower of everyone’s heart, then come and give me darshan !” Ma now presented herself near this lady. She was amazed and delighted to see Ma, and fell at her feet and did *praṇāma*. Pashupati Babu reflected over this event for a long time. Everyone was stunned. Ma never goes out in the afternoons walking in the streets in this manner. It was only this afternoon that she landed at this particular house and spent some time there. Then a car arrived from some place (I do not remember exactly from where) to take Ma and she went to another house.

When Ma returned to Kaka Babu’s place it was late in the evening. She broke the daytime regulations in this fashion. At night, again, everybody was made to leave by nine p.m..

Ma’s grace
showered in
answer to a
devotee’s
earnest prayer

But Ma did not let a single person of the household sleep throughout the night. She chatted merrily, laughed and joked with Pisima, Kaka Babu and Kakima, and whiled away the night. The next day the devotees arrived and came to know how Ma had rested ! Ma breaks all rules like this. She can

Night regulation
broken

never be confined within the enclosure of any bondage. When the ashram at Dhaka had been constructed Ma remarked, "You all think that you can contain this (myself) within this small space surrounded by four walls. The ashram has been built and you all will meet here for good purposes. Nothing is sure about where I stay or go." And truly enough, we now observe that so many ashrams are coming up, but Ma moves about outside the Ashrams a great deal.

After spending a few days in Calcutta, there was talk of going to Rajsahi again. Ma said, "This time at Rajsahi, Girija

From Calcutta
to Rajsahi and
then to Dhaka

Babu made an earnest request that we should go to his house for a day, but we did not stay. Therefore we shall go to Rajsahi again and remain for a day, at his house and then go to

Dhaka. Ma went to Rajsahi without us and then took us to Dhaka via Podaha. But we did not go with her to Rajsahi.

Earlier Ma had taken us once to Rajsahi where we all stayed at Atal Dada's house. Kirtan was to be performed one night at some place and we all went there with

An incident that
had occurred ear-
lier at Atal Dada's
house in Rajsahi

Ma, except for Atal Dada. When we returned, Ma found that Atal Dada had already dined and was asleep. He woke up when Ma arrived.

Ma told him, "You are a nice host ! You did not come

with us to the kirtan and now you have dined before us and are sleeping !” He replied, “My eating implies that you have eaten too ; the mother’s stomach is full if only the son’s hunger is satisfied.” Ma rejoined, “Is that so ? Good, then keep this in mind !”

Soon after, when Ma was offered food she asked that the food from her plate should be given to Atal. “Since by Atal’s eating my repast is complete, give all this food to Atal,” she said. Atal Dada laughed and ate up the food. Ma did not go to sleep, saying, “Atal’s sleeping is as good as my sleeping.” Atal Dada jokingly said, “Alright. You keep sitting. I’ll go to sleep.” And he did.

The next morning Ma said, “Atal’s residing in the house is the same as my staying here. So come, let us go elsewhere.” She set out on foot with us all. Atal Dada’s wife also came along. Ma went to a small temple by the river and said, “Cook food right here.” We obeyed. Bholanath and Father got provisions from the market. Atal Dada’s wife and I cooked on the stones by the river side. *Khīr* was prepared. I poured some of it into a small bowl and kept it in the river water to cool and began to feed Ma with *khicdi*. After Ma had eaten *khicdi* I presumed the *khīr* was cool and put some of it into a glass and poured it into Ma’s mouth without touching the glass to her lips. She was then not even sipping water directly from a glass, it had to be poured without touching the glass to her lips. As soon as I poured it Ma swallowed it hastily and said to me agitatedly, “Now just pour a little of this *khīr* into your own mouth from the glass.” Ma spoke with so much haste that I had no time to think. I immediately

poured some *khīr* into my mouth and found that it was so hot that I was unable to swallow it and had to spit it out. Ma began to laugh. I then realised what a terrible mistake I had made in pouring it into Ma's mouth before ascertaining whether it was cool enough. Ma had made me eat some to teach me and indeed it was a great lesson for me. Atal Dada's wife spoke up, "I too have learnt a lesson. I offer hot *khīr* to Ma as *bhoga*. From today I shall never offer *bhoga* to Ma before ascertaining whether it is cool enough." Ma said, "Never offer such hot *bhoga* to deities." Ma has taught us any number of such lessons. Yet do we really learn ?





CHAPTER XVII

Ma came to Dhaka in May 1932, a few days before Ma's birthday celebrations started. Some months earlier the images of Annapurna, Vishveshvara and Kali had been replaced by new images and the entire responsibility for this fell on Jyotish Dada who got all the work done. During the birthday festival the installation of the new images took place. They were made of eight metals (*aṣṭa dhātu*) and were very beautiful. The image of Vishveshvara was made of silver. The gold from the ornaments worn by Ma earlier was melted and used to make jewelry for the Deities. Bholanath performed the installation ceremonies and *havana* and other special rituals were also done. Father had an image of Śiva made of white stone brought from Kashi and this was installed in the other temple.

By Ma's instructions Kulada Dada one day performed Kumari *Pūjā* of his own daughter, as Kumari Devi. On another day, during the festival, six of us, namely, Father, Yogesh Dada, Atul, Kamalakant, Kanu and I, performed Kumārī *Pūjā* each of a different Kumārī, all according to Ma's bidding. Ma said, "This is essential for coming into this line." Then one day, Ma made us feed the Kumārīs. The *havana* was done by Bholanath but five or seven of us were asked to make offerings of fruits and flowers every day.

This time Ma's birthday by solar date and by the *tithi* differed by twenty-one days. *Nāma-kīrtan* was sung continuously during those three weeks. As per Ma's orders about five or six of us lived only on *choru* cooked on the sacrificial fire during these twenty-one days. Ma and Bholanath also ate only that. Bholanath exerted himself a great deal, performing rituals of worship, but remained very fit on just a little *choru* and fruit. Baby Didi did Kumāri *Pūjā* one day and decorated the Kumāri with a variety of golden ornaments.

On one day, according to Ma's desire, Sri Annapurna was offered *bhoga* of 108 varieties of dishes prepared of dal, greens, vegetables and other items. The spices were ground by brahmins only and the required water was also drawn by them. This *bhoga* was prepared with great purity and cooked on the sacrificial fire. About seven to ten ladies did the cooking. Brahmachārīs also ate the *prasāda* of that day's *bhoga*. Ma sat down to eat with all the ladies in the inner compound of the Ashram. The meal was partaken of with great happiness. Ma again spent two nights in *nāma-kīrtan* with the ladies. She thus celebrated one kind of festival each day, blissfully.

On the night after the 108 items of *bhoga* had been offered, there were heavy showers. Ma started singing *kīrtan* in the rain. She sprinkled rain water on those who were standing on the veranda and soaked them so that they were compelled to come out into the downpour. Then all at once Ma began rolling in the slush on the ground. This *līlā* continued till late into the night.

Akhanda-Nāma-kīrtan for 21 days

Bhoga for Anna-
purna Ma with
108 kinds of
dishes

Wonderful bliss
of *kīrtan* in the
rain

Then I changed Ma's clothes and mine. Jatu, who performs *ārati* beautifully, now did *ārati* of Ma exquisitely. The Beautiful *ārati* of ladies had decorated Ma with flower garlands. Ma by Jatu Bhai All were drunk with the bliss of the festival.

Ma spoke to the brahmacāris about the work to be done in the temple and told Bholanath details about the performance of *pūjā* and offering — everything received Ma's attention. She spoke whatever was necessary to each individual and only the person concerned heard it. Others did not even come to know of it. After having given essential instructions Ma went and sat casually amongst the ladies, watching the *havana* naively, as if she knew nothing and was an onlooker just like the rest of the audience. The fact however is that Ma's attention is focussed so marvellously on each detail. Every part of the proceedings was going on beautifully by her instructions alone. But no one could have made this out by observing her external behaviour. She enjoyed everything and moved about everywhere just like a child.

On the last day there was a great festival. The *pūjā* for Ma's birthday (*tithi*) was performed to the image of Annapurna, as it had been done previously. Small tins of *sindūr* given by devotees had filled a box. Ma got them put into baskets and distributed to all the ladies. Silk *saris* were distributed to all who had offered them. There was a huge crowd of people. Ma walked in their midst in the field and spent almost the entire day and night in this way.

Ma's watchful eye on every detail and demonstration of her methods of instructing each person without the knowledge of anyone else

The last day of the festival—distribution of *sindūr* tins and silk *saris*

Bhupati Dada's daughter's wedding day occurred some time during this festival. He took Ma to his house on the eve of the wedding and we also went along. As Ma returned to the Ashram, some ladies suddenly began making the auspicious *ulu* sound. Ma immediately looked towards me and asked, "What is this? This *ulu* sound signifies that some auspicious occurrence is imminent in the Ashram. What do you say?" I could make nothing of this.

On the evening of Bhupati Dada's daughter's wedding, *pālā-kīrtan* was going on in the Ashram. The auspicious hour of the wedding was later in the night. The whole day long Ma had been lying on the floor behind the *simhāsana* in the temple. In the evening she rose and went to her cottage and sent for Bholanath. Then they both conversed for a long time. A little later Kulada Dada went to the veranda of the cottage followed by his wife who had arrived from home. Ma told the couple to go and sit at the Panchavati. A little later Ma and Bholanath followed. We were unable to make out what was the matter.

The kīrtan ended and many people took leave of Ma and departed. Ma told the people who stayed back to go to the Panchavati. Now Maroni* was brought, decked with fine apparel and jewelry. At an auspicious moment, in front of the people who had gathered, Maroni was engaged to be married.

* Maroni had been given only vegetarian food from childhood and was never allowed to eat off anyone else's plate. She had been taught to do Śiva *Pūjā* at an early age and performed it every day. She could sing kīrtan beautifully even as a little child. She had been given a very pure upbringing.

to Kulada Dada's son, Chinu, who was also present. Ma said, "Maroni is now only eight years old. At the proper age, provided all goes well, Maroni's hand will be given to Chinu." Kulada Dada and his wife formally accepted Maroni as their daughter-in-law. The engagement was thus formalised by Ma under the Ashoka tree of the Panchavati. Bholanath was very fond of Maroni and he began to weep when all this occurred so suddenly. Ma laughed lightly and said, "What is there to cry about? Whatever has to happen to each one, will happen; what is there to get upset about?" Maroni was sent to Kulada Dada's house with Chinu and his mother for three days, after which she returned to the Ashram and stayed with Matari Pisima. The birthday celebrations came to an end.

One morning Ma went by car to Vinay Bandopadhyaya's house with Bholanath, Manorama Didi, Jyotish Dada and myself. Ma had never before been to Vinay Dada's house and she halted there for awhile. When we were leaving Vinay Dada's mother gave some green gram dal and vegetables to us to be used for preparing *bhoga* for Ma. I tied it in one end of my *sari*. A few days ago Ma had told Kamalakant and Atul to go and beg for *bhikṣā* once a week and they had brought back rice, dal and whatever they had got. I remembered this and laughingly told Ma, "Let us see what we get for *bhikṣā* today."

From Vinay Dada's we went to Kulada Dada's house. As soon as we reached, I laughed and declared, "To day we have set out begging. Give us some alms." I spread out the end of my *sari* and they gave rice, vegetables and some money.

We partake of
bhikṣa at the
houses of devo-
tees along with
Ma

We then went to Pratap Babu's house at Philkhana. There again we asked for *bhikṣā*. They gave lots of vegetables and I could not hold it all in the end of my *sarī*, so Ma told Bhola-nath and Jyotish Dada, "You also spread your cloth and take *bhikṣā*. How much can she take alone?" They also took *bhikṣā* and tied up the things in their cloth. That day Ma visited Rai Bahadur Bhudev, Surendra Babu and many others in this manner. Soon it became necessary to get another carriage to transport all the things received as *bhikṣā*. Ma told all the devotees to come to the Ashram in the afternoon and receive *prasāda*.

Jyotish Dada went to his house on the way back on some work. Ma gave him some dal and rice as his *bhikṣā* and told him, "Cook it today and eat it." By Ma's orders he had been eating only food cooked with his own hands since a long time. Evidently Jyotish Dada's wife did not like all this and getting annoyed with Ma for all these reasons she had even stopped coming to the Ashram. Compassionate Ma, for the welfare of her children, had gone and stayed two nights at Jyotish Dada's house and explained to his wife. But it was of no avail. Jyotish Dada became a traveller on the path which seemed true to him and his wife's unhappiness increased day by day. Later she began criticising Ma severely. But our Ma, like Ganges water, regards praise and criticism with equanimity and accepts everything without distinction. She took it all happily and never was even a trace of anger visible. In fact she sent Father to fetch Jyotish Dada's wife for the festival, but the latter could not even comprehend this graci-

About Jyotish
Dada's wife

ousness on Ma's part. Ma knows exactly why each thing happens the way it does and therefore there was no reason for her to become displeased with Jyotish Dada's wife.

As soon as we reached the Ashram, Ma sent me to Siddheshwari to do *pūjā*. All the devotees had gathered at the

Ma's *bhoga* and
prasāda for devo-
tees with the
items obtained
as *bhikṣā*

Ashram and were immersed in bliss. The things obtained in *bhikṣā* were used for preparing a meal. That very day, Manorama Didi had a desire to cook something and offer it to

Ma as *bhoga*. With Ma's permission she prepared some vegetable without salt (curry prepared with salt by people of castes other than brahmins is not used for Ma's *bhoga*) and *pūrīs* and offered it to Ma. As soon as her *bhoga* was ready, Ma arrived at Siddheshwari Ashram with Virendra Dada to take me. There, she went to the Kali temple on her way and touched the image and also the peepul tree outside. Then she beckoned to me and proceeded to Ramna Ashram. Manorama Didi had the *bhoga* ready and kept it near Ma. Ma was seated in her cottage and I fed her the *bhoga*. Ma then asked me, "Shall I give you some?" I replied, "Who else is here to give?" Ma handed me one *pūrī* with some vegetable. Immediately many others extended their hands and Ma gave them all *pūrī* and curry. Manorama Didi just licked Ma's hand! Ma rose and told me, "Go and sit down with all the others for *prasāda*." Daylight was fading when we got up to receive *prasāda*. Ma took us to the field.

A few days after the festival was over, people were still arriving in crowds. During that time, Baby Didi offered

bhoga of 108 items to Ma. That evening Ma distributed *prasāda* of all the preparations from a large vessel to all the devotees. No distinction between different castes and creeds was observed that day. Ma declared, "Today this *bhoga* has been cooked on the sacrificial fire ; today is Śrikṣetra."

I have forgotten to mention one incident. During the birthday festival, a Śiva *linga* made of black stone was installed on the altar in the Siddheshwari Ashram. This Śiva *linga* had been brought by Krishna Dada and installation rites had been performed by Bholanath. I noticed that Ma told him how to perform all the rituals during the installation. She kept standing there throughout until all the work was done and the Śiva *linga* was about to be installed, and just then she walked out of the room. After the installation when Bholanath along with other *brāhmaṇas* began bathing the Śiva *linga* Ma entered the room. When Ma was asked the reason for this, she replied, "Why was I not able to stay ? All things cannot be explained. I am unable to reveal the reason for this either."

In accordance with Ma's wishes, a big snake has been sculptured above the Śiva temple in Ramna Ashram. Ma also explained in what manner the snake was to be studded with jewels. A few days before the festival, Ma was lying down in the Siddheshwari Ashram when Amulya Babu and Ganesh Babu arrived for darshan. I was seated near Ma and Father

Installation of a Śiva *linga* on the altar at Siddheshwari

About the snake constructed above the Śiva temple in Ramna Ashram

was engaged in *sādhanā* near the altar. Ma was speaking to Amulya Babu and Ganesh Babu about earlier happenings and the topic of the snake came up. Suddenly Amulya Babu blurted out, "Ma, it seems as if the snake had been a highly evolved person at this very spot and therefore the image of a snake has been made above the Śiva temple. Is that so?" Ma laughed and said, "What is all this that you are saying again?" And she smiled as if in acquiescence with Amulya Babu's conjecture, and then kept quiet.

A little later, a group of ladies came for Ma's darshan. Ma murmured, lying down as she was, "Who comes for whose darshan? You have come for your own darshan." Ma spent the afternoon at Siddheshwari and then went to Ramna Ashram. Ma often would go and lie down this way in Siddheshwari.

After the birthday festival of 1932, *bhikṣā* was gathered as described and *bhoga* was prepared. *Prasāda* was distributed till the evening. (During the festival, Kanu had been sent to Sadhan Samar Ashram with Ma's arrangements to leave Dhaka at mid-night and instructions to devotees present Atul Thakur Mahāśaya) Ma went and sat on the veranda of her cottage that evening. Then she sat on the veranda of the temple. Gradually almost all the people left except some of us who were residents of the Ashram and a couple of others. Till about eleven thirty in the night, Dinesh Babu's wife Virendra Dada and Nandu were sitting near Ma on the veranda of the temple. After some time Ma got up suddenly and the others followed. Ma stood outside and murmured almost inaudibly "Now I shall go." Virendra Dada was strangely

affected by this utterance and he said, "Yes, Ma go and lie down on your bed now." Ma did not say anything. Then Virendra Dada did *praṇāma* and departed.

Surendra Babu and Girija Babu stayed on in the Ashram and Manorama Didi had also come with the intention of staying on in the Ashram that day. Girin Dada had come with his brother's wife from Calcutta for the festival and he was also present. This time Ma had called a large number of people to Dhaka for the celebrations and so there was a big gathering. Yatish Dada had come with family from Calcutta and Pisima, Navataru Dada, Jnana Dada and many others had arrived. Ma had also been to Siddheshwari one day where everyone enjoyed her company. The group from Calcutta had returned except for Girin Dada. Ma had instructed him in course of conversation to eat only food cooked with his own hands.

When everyone left, Ma stood on the veranda of the temple and said to me, "Just call Bholanath." Bholanath was fast asleep for everyone was tired out after the strain of the last few days of the festival. I called him and took him to Ma and Ma entered the temple with him. A little later he came out of the temple, put on his shoes and got ready. Meanwhile Yogesh Dada had been sent to Jyotish Dada's house to call him. Ma sat on the altar at the Panchavati. She summoned Kulada Dada, Atul, Kamalakant and other brahmacārīs and spoke to them privately.

Father had had a room built near the Panchavati for performing his spiritual practices. He had been staying there during the festival. Father, I and a few others were sitting

there. Suddenly I heard a voice saying, "Khukuni". Ma was calling me from the Panchavati, and I jumped up and ran as fast as I could. I found Ma seated alone, quiet. I went near her and Ma said : "Look, fortitude is an important part of spiritual practice. You must be calm and steady."

Ma offers me
consolation

Right from the beginning we were suspecting from Ma's behaviour that she was about to leave us. Now with this sentence my suspicions increased. Ma continued, "Do not get upset, have I not gone out several times before? I have returned knowing you all get so disconcerted. Let me go my own way. If you obstruct me I am not able to go. See, when I first saw you I asked you where you had been till then. Ever since, almost everyone remarks that you and I resemble each other and many think you are my younger sister. Don't you understand there is some meaning in all this? There is indeed!" After saying this much Ma kept quiet. But at that moment I did not relish such talk and became very agitated. I understood fully well that Ma was going away though she was not saying so clearly and I burst into tears.

Ma called Manorama Didi and said, "What was it you wanted to tell me? Say it." Manorama Didi asked Ma to leave, but Ma knew that I was weeping and no conversation would be intelligible to me in that condition, so she said, "Let her be, you speak." When Manorama Didi finished talking to Ma, Girin Dada came and sat near Ma. Still no one knew anything. Father was in his room. A little later Surendra Bandopadhyaya came to take leave of Ma and do *praṇāma*. Ma said, "Are you leaving? I am leaving today." This was

the first time I heard Ma distinctly declare that she was leaving that very day. Surendra Babu asked, "Where are you going? When are you returning?" Ma replied, "Nothing is certain." Ma sent for Father and told him, "I am going out today." Father was not totally unprepared for this for he had during the past few days suspected that Ma was certainly going away. He also asked, "When are you returning?" Ma again replied, "Nothing is certain." Every time Ma goes away she generally says, "I shall go for some time. When you call me I shall return." But this time Ma did not say any of this.

Now Jyotish Dada arrived. Before he had a chance to ask anything, Ma said, "You have to go out of station with us just now." Seeing him keep quiet Ma asked, "Why, can't you go? You will have to!" He replied, "I shall go, but how can any arrangement be made for money and other things unless I go home once?" Ma said, "There is no need to go home again. Make arrangements from here." He went quietly towards the temple. Everyone stood near Ma silently. Girin Dada said, "I shall also leave today with you and then go towards Calcutta." Ma said, "Not today. Go tomorrow."

Everyone was standing, but I was sitting near Ma's feet and weeping with my head bent. Manorama Didi was also sitting a little distance away. Ma took off the golden sacred thread from her neck and slipped it on me without anyone noticing it. A few days earlier she had made Jyotish Dada wear a cotton thread and had put on the golden one herself. Now she quietly told me, "Keep this round your neck." I understood

Ma gives me a
sacred thread and
leaves Dhaka
with Bholanath
and Jyotish Dada
(June 2, 1932)

everything, but Manorama Didi who was sitting close by neither saw nor heard any of it. Whatever Ma desires is accomplished.

A little later it was time for Ma to leave. She rose and took me aside and told me whatever she had to say about the sacred thread and then set out. We wanted to go to the station but Ma forbade it. Nor did she let us hire any vehicle. She set out on foot. Didima and Dadamahaśaya were informed before she left and Didima came. But Dadamahaśaya was so sad and upset that Ma was leaving so suddenly, so late in the night, that he did not come. Ma bowed to Didima and said, "Baba has not come, he will regret it later on. I shall not go to anyone's house now therefore I cannot meet Baba now." With these words Ma left, accompanied up to the station by Yogesh Dada, Mathur Babu, Surendra Babu and Girija Babu. We went up to the road and then came back to the Ashram when Ma told us to return. It is beyond my power to describe my state of mind at that juncture. Ma left with only one set of clothes on Thursday, June 2, 1932.

CHAPTER XVIII

We had no news of Ma for very long. This time only Bholanath and Jyotish Dada had gone with Ma. Kunja Mohan Mukhopadhyaya and Dr. Upendra Babu had come to Dhaka during the festival. A few days after Ma had left, Upendra Babu had gone in search of Ma and travelled through many places in the Himalayas. When he reached Dehradun, he suddenly got the news that Ma was staying at a place called Raipur, five or six kilometres from Dehradun. He went there immediately and found Ma, Bholanath and Jyotish Dada on the veranda of a small room adjoining a Śiva temple. He wanted to stay on with Ma but Ma sent him back. We first received news of Ma from Upendra Babu's letter and later from Jyotish Dada's. Jyotish Dada's leave was over and therefore Kamalakant was sent to Raipur and Jyotish Dada returned to Dhaka.

I think it would not be out of place to mention here an incident that occurred during that time. When Jyotish Dada was starting for Dhaka, Ma instructed him to break journey at Kashi, have a bath in the Ganges and darshan of Vishvanath. When he went to the Ganges at noon, the bathing ghat was practically deserted. Just as he put his foot on a plank, he toppled over and fell into the water. He was nearly drowned when some man descended from the ghat and pulled him out. The man also scolded him sweetly. Jyotish Dada then had darshan

Ma's sojourn
at Raipur
(Dehradun)

A miraculous
incident

of Sri Vishvanath and Sri Annapurna and left for Dhaka the same day. Later when he went to Raipur, he learnt that on that very day, at that very time, Ma was seated behind the temple in Raipur when Kamalakant came near her and saw that all her clothes were drenched so thoroughly that it seemed as if she had just had a bath. She then changed her clothes. Once earlier when Jyotish Dada was suffering from tuberculosis and all doctors had given up hope, Ma had saved his life. This was the second time that Ma had saved him.

Ma had told us to stay in Siddheshwari Ashram and we were there when Jyotish Dada arrived from Ma and gave us all her news. Ma had gone straight to Dehradun from the Dhaka Ashram. No one knew where she was going. They met a gentleman in Dehradun and he chanced to mention a place called Raipur which had living accommodation in a temple. Ma immediately left for Raipur and began staying there. Bholanath would be engaged in his *sādhana* while Ma strolled about or just sat wherever she pleased. There was no one to speak to. Sometimes she ate a little boiled vegetable or if even that was not available, she ate one or two rotis. Ma had lived for long periods on just boiled vegetables in Dhaka also.

After Ma left Dhaka, we all spoke to each other and discovered that Ma had imparted to each person whatever instruction he or she needed and yet no one had realised that Ma would leave so soon. A couple of days before her departure, as she was walking about in the garden, she had told Father in solitude that he was to wear only a loin

The story of the
stay at Raipur

Ma's different
advice to various
devotees before
leaving Dhaka
for Raipur

cloth. After Ma left, Father stopped entering the home of householders and would be seated in *sādhana* wearing only his loin cloth. He would wrap a cloth around his waist only when going out. He had given up wearing shoes since a long time and used his *kurtā* only rarely. Ma had thus made him relinquish everything, little by little.

Father and I stayed at the room in the Siddheshwari Ashram. Ma had told us, "This time you will not come with me, for it is necessary for you to remain steadily in one place and do your work." But we were extremely restless because of our separation from Ma. Ever since we had met Ma we had been with her almost without interruption. Though she had left us a couple of times and gone out of Dhaka, it had never been this way before. Nothing was certain about when she would return.

We heard from Jyotish Dada that Ma was living with only one set of clothes. While Jyotish Dada was at Raipur, Nepal Dada had reached there from Kashi, but Ma had sent him back the very next day. No one was granted permission to go there.

In the month of August or September, Bholanath fell ill in Raipur and then Ma also had fever. Kamalakant was with them. In the month of September/October, Jyotish Dada took leave and went for a few days to Raipur. He fetched a doctor from Dehradun to examine Bholanath. When Jyotish Dada's leave expired he returned to Dhaka. Ma remained as she was. The fever kept coming on. Her hair had to be cut because it had got matted. She would not even allow a light to be

The fearless life
at Raipur

lit. They all occupied their places within their blankets before sunset. The room Ma had inhabited was in a courtyard with ancient walls around it, harbouring snakes and scorpions and other poisonous creatures, and surprisingly there was no arrangement to prevent them from entering the room.

Ma lived in Raipur for about six months and then went to Tarapeeth in the month of October or November, with Kamalakant and Bholanath in observance of earlier instructions. But no one was informed about this for all the devotees would have flocked to Tarapeeth if they just knew that Ma was there. The fact that Ma was at Tarapeeth did not remain secret, however. But since Ma had forbidden anyone to go near her, no one had the courage to go even from Calcutta. However, Nandu did not obey Ma's orders and landed at Tarapeeth from Dhaka. Ma and Bholanath stayed at Tarapeeth for nearly one and a half months and Jyotish Dada reached there during the summer vacation with Manorama Didi. Dr. Upendra Babu arrived in Calcutta from Pondicherry and went to Tarapeeth with the desire to meet Ma. Then Ma sent him back to Pondicherry. In December/January, Ma and Bholanath went to Nalhati (*pīṭhasthāna*) with Kamalakant, Nandu, Jyotish Dada and Manorama Didi.

Nandu and Bholanath pleaded with Ma persistently and finally obtained permission for all her devotees to come to Nalhati. Nandu wired to us and then went from house to house in Calcutta and informed Ma's devotees about Ma's

permission. All started for Nalhati from Dhaka with great joy. So did Father and I, and Dadamahaśaya and Didima followed later. In Nalhati also Ma was living in a courtyard adjoining a temple. We reached there in the evening. Yatish Dada and family from Calcutta and Baby Didi and Gīrin Dada with family had already arrived.

We saw Ma seated on the terrace, wrapped in a blanket. Her hair had been cut and her face was looking extremely thin. Devotees were sitting all around her and she was talking slowly with a sweet voice, being unable to speak louder. Bholanath also sat in the room. He had kept *mauna* for a few days after leaving Dhaka. Jyotish Dada returned to Dhaka when his leave expired. Manorama Didi took permission from her husband by telegram and proceeded to Kashi to devote herself entirely to spiritual practice. From then onwards she abandoned her home. She had also observed *mauna* since July or August, after Ma had left Dhaka. Ma stayed in Nalhati for about two weeks. Devotees arrived from various places and Ma was always surrounded by crowds.

Ma now intended to return to Raipur and told us to go back to Dhaka. What could we do? Ma's orders had to be obeyed. Before leaving, Ma took me aside alone and explained to me about *pūjā* and the *Gāyatri sandhyā vandana* and all that I had to do. She told me to learn everything from Father. He and I were also instructed to perform *havana* on *amāvasyā* and *pūrṇimā* days with fire from the sacrificial fire at Ramna Ashram. Ma told Father, "The place at Siddheshwari is

Sojourn of many devotees from various places at Nalhati following Ma's permission

Special advice to Father and me

extremely congenial to *sādhana*. It is sacred, and no one has ever sat down there to perform such practices as you are to do. You are the very first to do such work. The place has to be spiritually awakened. I do nothing by my own will. It seems such work is indeed yours and therefore you are being made to do it." Ma spread joy all around and gladdened her devotees for a few days. One day in Nalhati she sat and ate with me off the same leaf. The arrangements for meals were rather inconvenient there, but no one paid any attention to this. We were all immersed in bliss in Ma's company.

During the last few months in Raipur, there had been no opportunity to eat fish, but in Tarapeeth, fish had been offered as *bhoga*. Bholanath is a great believer in the *Śakta* faith (worship of *Śakti*) and therefore he started eating the *prasāda* of fish and meat as soon as he came towards Bengal. It is true that Ma had not forbidden him to eat non-vegetarian food, but I have already mentioned that Ma herself partook of a very little fish only when pressed to do so by others. Now I found that Ma hardly ever ate any fish and only ate a very small amount on days when Bholanath told her to do so. In the Dhaka Ashram Ma had forbidden the brahmacārīs to eat meat and fish. By Bholanath's orders fish was still offered as *bhoga* at the Kali temple in Dhaka, but the *prasāda* was distributed to others, while the brahmacārīs received only vegetarian *prasāda*. I had been having fish as *prasāda* of Ma's *bhoga* for three or four years by Ma's instructions. Then I obtained Ma's permission to stop it. Father was also instructed to

Ma in favour of
vegetarianism

take only vegetarian food. Maroni had on Ma's insistence been brought up on a vegetarian diet from childhood itself. All this shows that Ma has always been in favour of vegetarianism.

I noticed that Ma was now no longer wearing broad bordered *sarīs* as she used to in Dhaka and Calcutta, but was dressed in a dhoti with a narrow red border. The local people had also started coming to Ma recently and kirtan had been begun, but just then Ma left Nalhati.

She took all her devotees with her to Howrah station, and departed straight to Dehradun. From there she went to

Return to Raipur
from Nalhati
and advice to
devotees (Febru-
ary 1933)

Raipur accompanied by Bholanath and Kamalakant only. We were told to stay at Siddheshwari and go to Kashi and Vindhyachal if we wanted to. But Father stayed on where

Ma had left him and did not go to any other place. Soon after Ma returned to Raipur, we went to Siddheshwari Ashram and started to perform *pūjā*, *sandhyā* etc. as Ma had told us. The responsibility of the *pūjā* at the Annapurna temple in the Ramna Ashram vested with Yogesh Dada. Śiva *pūjā*, Durgā Saptasatī and Gita chanting were done by Kulada Dada. *Pāda-pīṭha pūjā*, *bhoga* and chanting were performed by Atul. Ma had told Father to perform the Śiva *pūjā* at Siddheshwari and later I also did it for some time. *Havana* was performed and *choru* was cooked every day at the Ramna Ashram. Ma had said that every day one resident of the Ashram was to eat only *choru*, fruit and unboiled milk. While at Dhaka Ma had herself eaten *choru* once a week and followed this regulation. Father was going to

Ramna Ashram every Saturday to partake of the *choru prasāda*. Apart from this the two of us did not go anywhere and stayed in the room at Siddheshwari day and night. By Ma's orders, Father sat for twenty-four hours at a stretch on his *āsana* on two days of every month. Ma had also taught him *prāṇāyāma kriyā* methodically because of which Father kept very fit and was able to sit on his *āsana* for very long. Ma has neither read all these subjects in any book, nor has she heard of them from any *sādhu*, yet she knows them all. I have already written that whenever any topic concerning *sādhana* was raised, Ma explained each detail lucidly. It may be that she does not use flowery language because she had no book knowledge, yet she has gained everything within herself. Therefore she spoke in simple language about attaining the spiritual goal and all who had heard her were enthralled.

Ma went to Raipur from Nalhati (in February, 1933) and remained there. In between we kept on receiving Bholanath's letters. A month after Ma returned to Raipur, that is in March, Jyotish Dada went on leave to Raipur again. We all guessed that after this leave, he would retire from service, take his pension and stay with Ma permanently. Ma remained in Raipur probably till April and then proceeded to Mussoorie via Dehradun. Sri Hari Ram Joshi came to know Ma in Raipur. He was a resident of Almora and posted at Dehradun on official work. Gradually others in Dehradun also came to know Ma. After spending some days in Mussoorie,

Stay at Raipur
and journey to
Mussoorie via
Dehradun.
Bholanath ins-
pired to have
Badri Narayana
darshan (May,
1933)

Ma sent Bholanath to Badri Narayana with Kamalakant in May 1933.

Meanwhile, at Dhaka Ma's birthday was celebrated in May 1933. Just as on the day that Ma left, she had been offered *bhoga* by *kāyasthas*, Baby Didi organised an offering of a similar kind of potato curry and *pūrīs* for Ma, by *kayasthas* and *vaidyas*. Ma's birthday celebration in Dhaka (May 1933) Uninterrupted *nāma-kīrtan*, living on *choru* alone and all such regulations were observed as before.

Jyotish Dada stayed on with Ma and went with her to Uttarkashi on foot. Uttarkashi is about 60 or 65 miles from Mussoorie and the route is through mountainous regions. On one day Ma walked twenty-five miles. From Uttarkashi she returned to Mussoorie and then went to Dehradun. (Earlier she stayed at Tapakeshwar). Ma toured Dehradun, Hardwar, Lakshman Jhūla and Rishikesh. People from various places including Kashmiris, Punjabis and Sindhis began visiting Ma and worshipping her in the faith that she was Devi herself.

(I am unable to describe incidents that occurred during this time in detail because I was not with Ma then. I am writing whatever I heard.)

Bholanath trekked to Badrinath, Kedarnath and Yamunotri and finally reached Uttarkashi. Perhaps he had already discussed all this with Ma. Ma had been to Uttarkashi before this. Many *sādhus* and *sainnyāsīs* were coming in contact with Ma. At first they did not go to her very often thinking that she was a woman. But after some time they began

Description of
incidents from
May to
December, 1933

pouring out their lives' stories to Ma and accepted a lot of advice from her about their spiritual practices.

When Ma was passing through Howrah station from Nalhati, Dr. Vyas a young Gujarati dentist had her darshan.

After some time he went to Ma and wrote to Stay at Lakshman Jhūla and Hardwar Calcutta and Dhaka in detail about her.

When Bholanath returned from Uttarkashi in September/October, 1933, Nirmal Babu and

family travelled to Dehradun. Not finding Ma there, they went to Hardwar and Rishikesh in search of her, and finally reached Lakshman Jhūla where they found her staying on the banks of the Ganges with Jyotish Dada. She had been there for a few days. The very day after Nirmal Babu reached there, she took them to Hardwar and they stayed at the Ganga Mandir. She told Nirmal Babu and his family to put up at the *dharmasālā*. The next morning Jyotish Dada went and called them to cook food at the place where Ma was staying.

After living in this manner for a few days, Ma went to Dehradun taking all her devotees with her. She stayed in the

In Dehradun Manohar temple in Anand Chowk most of the time, but also at other places occasionally.

Many people in Dehradun had become devotees of Ma and were performing kirtan and observing fasts according to Ma's instructions. Nirmal Babu went there and found that *yajña*, kirtan and similar activities were going on in full swing by Ma's orders and the joy of the devotees knew no bounds when Ma arrived in their midst during Durga *pūjā*. *Kumārī pūjā* and *Kumārī* feeding were celebrated jointly by all. Ma stayed on in Dehradun for a few days during these celebrations.

After the *pūjā*, Jyotish Dada got fever and since it did not come down, Ma took him, Nirmal Babu and others (before *pūrṇimā*) to Hardwar and stayed at the Ganga Mandir. The dentist devotee was also of the company. On *Kojāgar Pūrīmā* day, Nirmal Babu and family offered *bhoga* to Ma and then returned to Kashi. We received all the news mentioned above from Nirmal Babu's letter. He had written, "Ma now wears *dhotis* with a very narrow border. She does not wear a jumper but a kind of loose waist coat. She does not cover her head and her hair has now grown down to her shoulders. The skin of Ma's feet has been badly cracked due to walking on stony mountainous paths. Devotees have put shoes on her feet. Ma wraps a shawl around her body in the way men usually do. She moves about on foot and looks like a young brahmācārī. She has very few things with her ; just a small vessel, a blanket and a couple of clothes. Jyotish Dada has given up wearing shoes and *kurtā* ; he wraps on a four and a half yards long cloth and uses only a blanket and a shawl to protect his body. One never knows where Ma is going to stay ; suddenly at ten or twelve in the night, she shifts from one place to another. Many people around her are greatly attracted towards her..." and so on.

Father wrote to Ma and enquired why she was not calling us. Ma replied, "Baba did not write about coming in any letter. Baba has probably decided that he will go only when Ma calls him." As soon as Father received this reply, he wrote to Ma asking for permission to go to Dehradun. All these days he had been thinking, "Ma has left us and I will go

Another stay
at Hardwar

Father called to
Dehradun
(December, 1933)

to her only when she bestows her grace on us and orders us to come ; I shall not go against Ma's wishes by my own willing." Though he had been pining for Ma he never once asked her to allow him to go to her. Now he wrote for permission and also asked about a few other things. Ma made Jyotish Dada write that these issues could not be discussed without meeting Ma personally and therefore Father should come. This was in December 1933. We had met Ma the previous year in December, in Nalhati and had not had her darshan for a whole year. On receiving Ma's letter we were overjoyed and we got ready to go to Ma within a couple of days. Baby Didi came with us and Manorama Didi joined us from Kashi. Ma had stayed on in Hardwar for some time during Jyotish Dada's illness and then had arrived at Dehradun after visiting some places on the way. We had Ma's darshan in the Manohar temple at Dehradun where she was staying for a few days.

I observed that Ma had become very thin and that whatever news we had received about her in letters was correct. Ma's appearance and apparel had undergone a marked change. The change had occurred slowly during the past few months but it was quite noticeable. Ma was now surrounded by non-Bengalis all the time with a few exceptions which were Manmatha Babu, Nimai Babu and Ramesh Babu who came regularly. Ma was speaking in Hindi.

Dwarkanath Raina and his wife of Ananda Chowk, Prakash Babu, his wife and his mother, Kashi Nath Tankha and his wife and Triloki Babu and family and a few other Kashmiri families were regular visitors to Ma. Ma had named

Description of
Ma's life at
Dehradun

Kashinath's wife 'Lakshmi', Dwarkanath's wife 'Mira' and Prakash Babu's wife, 'Kausalya'.

Almost all these people discussed Vedānta and spoke about *Ātmā* and *Paramātmā*. People here seem to understand this

better. Many people were serving Ma and whatever they brought to offer Ma, they would put a little of it into her mouth and take *prasāda*. I heard that Ma and Jyotish Dada had been living on the veranda of the temple till recently and had now shifted into a small room adjoining the temple, because of the cold weather. Ma had not been going to any householder's residence after leaving Dhaka and was staying only in temples and *dharmaśālās*.

Jyotish Dada becomes known as Ma's spiritual son and as a brahmin

had been living on the veranda of the temple till recently and had now shifted into a small room adjoining the temple, because of the cold weather. Ma had not been going to any householder's residence after leaving Dhaka and was staying only in temples and *dharmaśālās*.

Jyotish Dada wore neither shoes nor a *kurtā* and was only wrapping a shawl or a blanket around himself even in that cold weather. Ma was eating just *rotis* and vegetables and Jyotish Dada also took that as *prasāda*. For some time, he had been told to beg for *bhikṣā* once a week and eat whatever he got. If he could not procure any *bhikṣā*, he had to remain fasting.

Ma had introduced Jyotish Dada as her spiritual son and because of the feeling Ma had in Shahbagh that Jyotish Dada was a brahmin, and since she had given him a sacred thread in Ramna Ashram, he was now known as a brahmin. When the people there came to know of Jyotish Dada as Ma's spiritual son, they called him 'Bhaiji'. They were very fond of him. Ma was also treating him like a child and addressed him with the familiar pronoun "*tui*". Because of Ma's attitude, Jyotish Dada's behaviour had also acquired a childlike quality. The feeling that he was a highly placed government official,

and intellectual by nature, had receded substantially and he was living with Ma just like a son, spending all his time in her service. He had retired from his job after his leave and was drawing his pension. He had no desire to return to the life of a householder. By Ma's injunctions he had written to his wife to give up the householder's life and join him at Hardwar or Kashi, but she did not comply. Ma also wrote to her, but all this advice had no effect and she refused to leave Dhaka where she lived with their only son Ramananda. She and her son took initiation from Bhagawan Brahmācārī Mahāśaya and practised *sādhana* according to their Guru's instructions.

CHAPTER XIX

Ma took us to see all the places where she had been living in Dehradun. By Ma's orders a sacrificial fire was being kept lit day and night and she showed it to us.

*Havana on
Janmashtami day
in the Manohar
temple*

A new temple was being constructed in the Manohar temple to instal the sacrificial fire in Ma's memory and we went to see it. We

heard that once when Ma had gone to Rishikesh or Lakshman Jhūla, some devotees from Dehradun had gone there to be in Ma's holy company on the occasion of *Janmashtami*. They reached there a couple of days before the festival. However, on the eve of *Janmashtami*, Ma suddenly turned up at the Manohar temple, bringing the devotees with her. The Manohar temple has deities of Radha and Krishna and another temple where a *Śiva linga* is installed. Every year *Janmashtami* is celebrated grandly here and all arrangements were ready this time also. By Ma's instruction, *havana* was to be performed as well that day, but a suitable spot could not be found. Finally a place which was in between the two temples was decided upon. This was where Ma had slept when she stayed at the temple. A few stones were removed at that spot and a pit was made for the sacrificial fire.

An incident occurred in connection with this spot. Some days ago when Ma was lying down on that veranda, a small black snake slithered on to the veranda. Jyotish Dada moved back in fear but Ma watched it quietly, sitting where she was. The snake rested at some spot and after awhile it crawled

away and could not be found. Jyotish Dada wanted to bring some people to hunt for it but Ma forbade it. The sacrificial fire for *Janmashṭami* was placed at the very spot where the snake had rested. Ma told us this and she alone knows the significance.

After the *havana* on *Janmashṭami* day, Ma went to the Jakham temple on Rajpur Road. The next morning when

History of the
installation of
the temple in
Ma's memory

Ma was in the temple it began to rain.

Nevertheless, Ma set out on foot for the Manohar temple. Hari Ram and others were

on their way to Ma and met her half way, so

they brought her to the Manohar temple in their car. The place where the *havana* had been performed was being cleaned when Ma said, "Preserve some ashes of this *yajña*."

Later when telling us about this incident, Ma said, "Look, if we had not met the car on the way, the sacrificial fire pit would have been cleaned out completely by the time we reached here on foot, and all the ash would have been thrown away. But whatever has to happen happens just this way." This ash was then buried in the ground at a certain place and the temple is being constructed at that spot. The *yajña kunda* will be placed at that very spot and every year *havana* will be performed there on *Janmashṭami* day. At other times also anyone can perform *havana* there if he wishes. The temple carries the inscription, "On the occasion of Sri Sri Ma Anandamayī's holy visit," and a large picture of Ma has been put up inside the temple.

A few days before this *havana*, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru's wife, Srimati Kamala Nehru had begun visiting Ma and had

become greatly attached to her. . When she came to Dehradun after *Janmashṭami* and heard of the *havana* and that every-

Ma and Kamala
Nehru—*yajña*
performed by
Srimati Nehru in
the Ambika
temple.

one had offered oblations of flowers and fruits, she asked Ma, “Mataji, why did you not ensure that I was present then ? I missed it all.” Ma replied, “It is alright, an suspicious deed can be performed at any time. You also

do it one day.” Srimati Nehru was greatly inspired by this and set out to make arrangement for a *havana*.

Ma took her to the Ambika temple which is situated in Rajpur and Kamalaji performed *yajña* there according to Ma’s instructions. Many men and women from Dehradun gathered for the occasion and the *yajña* was carried out with great aplomb. By Ma’s orders, the sacrificial fire was kept alive for three days in the Ambika temple, after which it was brought to the Manohar temple. Oblations were offered into it every morning and evening. Then a devotee of Almora (Bhairavji) took the fire to his house and kept it burning. I heard about all these happenings.

I witnessed Ma being decorated with floral garlands by Kashmiri, Punjabi and other ladies and their performance of

Worship of Ma
by Kashmiri,
Punjabi and
other ladies and
Ma’s teachings

Ma’s *ārati* with camphor. Ma had named someone ‘Gopalji’, another ‘Bal Govinda’, someone ‘Lakshmi’ and yet another ‘Meera’. She was preaching the teaching of the Vedanta that ‘the Brahman is One without a second.’

Ma explained, “Look we are all established in One. We walk one step by one step ; we eat one mouthful at a time, we write one letter at a time.”

Jyotish Dada had started kirtan in Dhaka with the words “Ma, Ma” and here also the refrain of the kirtan was “Ma, Ma.” I heard that Shankarananda Swami and Manorama Didi had spent a few days with Ma in Lakshman Jhūla, before we arrived and that Kulada Dada had also come from Mirzapur.

After we had spent about one month with Ma, she spoke consolingly to us about our returning. “My keeping you far away is also for your welfare. You will realise this later on.” On the Pausa Sankranti day (January 14), a few days before we left Dehradun, Ma instructed Father, Manorama Didi and me to wear yellow clothes thenceforth. Father was asked to totally stop wearing a *kurtā*. A few days earlier Ma had given me her narrow bordered dhoti and waist coat to wear and those were now dyed yellow. In addition to this change in apparel, Ma told us the various rules and regulations that we had to abide by.

Father, Manorama Didi and I are sent back from Dehradun, after a change of name and dress (January, 1934)

She named me ‘Gurupriya’, and Manorama Didi was given the name ‘Krishnapriya’. Father was named ‘Akhandaswarūpa’. We were told to stay in the Vindhyachal Ashram and Ma asked me to perform *havana* every day and live as a brahmachārī.

Ma told Father to construct a *yajña*-temple in Vindhyachal and gave him the details of how it had to be made. She said, “Get it made and keep it ready. The rituals will be begun whenever they have to.” She told Father and me all this privately. I have already mentioned that Ma reveals

whatever has to be achieved to only the person concerned. Therefore many of Ma's doings remain unknown. Ma sent us away in the month of (Magh) January.* Bholanath was still at Uttarkashi. Only Kamalakant remained with Ma.

As we were leaving, Ma raised one more point, "Find out from the scholars in Kashi whether the ritual of conferring

About women receiving the sacred thread, and later (Magh) January, 1935 *upanayana* for Maroni and me

the sacred thread on women is mentioned in our scriptures or not." Many years ago the subject of investing women with the sacred thread had arisen in Ma's *kheyāla* and she had herself taken on a sacred thread, though she was not wearing it now. She had given

it to me when she left Dhaka and had not donned a new one. As mentioned earlier, all regulations are observed by Ma, but nothing continues permanently. At Kashi we made exhaustive enquiries, from many scholars, about investing with the sacred thread. The unanimous reply was, "This tradition was prevalent in ancient times, but we cannot give an opinion for modern times."

Finally we decided that we could get the best solution from Mahamahopadhyaya Pandit Sri Gopinath Kaviraj and so we approached him. Ma had also suggested his name

* There is a special point about the day of our departure. A day had been fixed and till the eve of that day Ma had not said anything to us about the *yajña*-temple. But by chance we were unable to leave on the scheduled day and decided to go two days later. A day before we actually left, Ma took Father and me aside and told us about the *yajña*-temple. She gave us the measurements and all other details and told us to keep everything confidential. This is why it is said that Ma does not plan anything in advance, every incident occurs spontaneously within Ma at the opportune moment.

to us. He did some research on the subject and found many examples of instances where women had received the sacred thread. He proposed, "If Ma so desires, she can give the sacred thread to women even now. Ma's will is scriptural. No other opinion is necessary." We wrote and informed Ma about all this. Ma wrote, "There is no necessity for any further enquiry. I have a certain *kheyāla* and because people may doubt whether it is allowed by the *sāstras* I asked for clarification. I do not wish to begin this tradition for all indiscriminately. It is only for the specially deserving." Later I learnt that some people had given sacred threads to women even in contemporary times. Ma's words are enough for us. We just did what Ma had told us to do and there was no further discussion on the matter at that time. Only in Magh, 1935, Ma took us to Tarapeeth and executed the idea in a concrete form, when she had the sacred thread conferred on Maroni and me.

CHAPTER XX

We went and stayed at Vindhychal. Ma left Dehradun and reached Solan near the Simla hills, after touring some other places. That was in April 1934. Quite unexpectedly Father received a letter from Jyotish Dada which said, "Ma has said that you have to reach Hardwar by a certain day of the Chaitra month." (I do not recollect the exact date.) "Ma will also be there. Bring Shankarananda Swami and Manorama Ma from Kashi with you."

Ma's trip to Solan (April 1934)—Fore-knowledge about Father's taking *saṁnyāsa* and arrangements for the ceremony at Hardwar

As soon as we received this letter we left for Hardwar via Kashi where Shankarananda Swami and Manorama Didi joined us. At Hardwar we went to the *dharmasālā* mentioned by Jyotish Dada and found that Ma had reached there two days earlier. Our train had arrived very early in the morning and Ma was sleeping when we reached the *dharmasālā*. We touched Ma's feet and she began conversing with us as she was lying. After some time she sat up. The *dharmasālā* is right on the banks of the Ganges and is very beautiful.

In the evening, Ma beckoned Father and me to a place on the banks of the Ganges surrounded by stones, and said, "You know that I never say anything to anyone by my own will. When I called you to Dehradun in January, I had the *kheyāla* about your (Baba's) taking *saṁnyāsa*, but it seems the time had not come and therefore this topic was not raised then. So only a change was brought about in your clothing and

you were told to live in a spirit of renunciation.” Ma was addressing Father. “Then we went to Solan after journeying through other places. There arrangements were made for us to stay in a cave for some days. But on the very next day after our arrival, as I was lying down, I saw you in the garb of a *saṁnyāsi*. At the same moment I felt that the time had come and I asked Jyotish to write to you to come to Hardwar. A letter was also written to Bholanath that Baba would be initiated with the *saṁnyāsa mantra* on Chaitra Sankranti day 13th or 14th April. Probably you have the *saṁskara* for *saṁnyāsa*. As soon as the letter was dispatched to you, I also came down from the hills. All arrangements had been made for our stay for a few more days in Solan, but suddenly, I did all this and came away—even Jyotish is unaware of the reason. What can I do? I do nothing by my own volition. Whatever has to happen, happens.” Further she said, “There are people fit to give the *saṁnyāsa mantra* in places like Hardwar, Rishikesh and Lakshman Jhūla. They can be found if a proper search is made. Shankarananda must be sent to find out tomorrow”.

Father heard all this. Since Ma was telling him, he had no objection to taking the *saṁnyāsā mantra*. But he said, “Ma, I know that whatever has to be done for me will be done by you. But I cannot even imagine that I should take *saṁnyāsa* from someone else as my Guru.” Ma replied, “You know very well that I am unable to do anything with my own hands.” Father said, “When I first had your darshan, I had said that you should do whatever was necessary for me. I know nothing. If you tell me to ply the oar of the boat I shall row. What-

ever you ask me to do, I shall do. Now why are you casting me across to someone else? What you cannot do is totally unnecessary for me." Having said this much Father kept silent.

Ma said, "Alright, if this is how you feel, then there is no need to do anything. I just told you what I saw." And Ma said no more on the subject, but I noticed that she had become serious. The joyous mood in which she had begun to speak had vanished. I have described earlier that though actually Ma's state never undergoes changes within, some kind of external changes are perceptible sometimes. Ma had herself said, "These are necessary", and I have noticed in fact that many things are achieved because of these changes in Ma's external behaviour. Today also I observed such a change in Ma's mood. This conversation took place in the evening.

Late at night, Ma was strolling about alone. Father, it appeared, had been musing over the matter the whole evening and now, finding Ma alone, he went near her, did *praṇāma* and said, "Ma, I told you whatever I felt. I am now ready to obey whatever you order me to do." Ma expressed great happiness to hear this and said, "Good, if that is so, then let Shankarananda begin his search

Father takes
śrīrāyaṣa (April
13th or 14th,
Sankranti, 1934)
and is named
Akhandananda
Giri

for a suitable person tomorrow, for there are only five or six days left until Sankranti." She now explained to Father, "Look, why do you think I am sending you to another Guru? I don't do anything with my own hands. You had prayed to me that whatever had to be done for you should be done near me and therefore I have come. All are one. Where is the

second other than the One ? And then there is no relationship of master and disciple where a *saṁnyāsi* Guru is concerned. Therefore just do not feel that you are accepting a different Guru." Ma spoke at length in this fashion and pacified Father.

Yet this matter was causing a lot of perturbation in Father's mind. The very next day Ma sent Shankarananda Swami in search of a worthy person. He looked around and finally informed Ma that he considered Swami Mangalananda Giri of Kankhal an appropriate person. Then Ma sent Jyotish Dada and Father to Kankhal to meet Mangalananda Giri. Father told Ma, "Ma what shall I see ? You see and I shall do whatever you ask me to do." By chance, that very day, we had to leave the *dharmasālā* where Ma was staying and she went with us to Mangalananda Giri's ashram at Kankhal. Arrangements were made for us to stay there. Ma met Mangalananda Giri and also approved of him as a suitable person for giving the *saṁnyāsa mantra*.

Mangalananda Giri Maharaj was then about eighty years old. He had been a brahmacārī throughout his life. His Guru's Ashram was at Mathura and he had stayed there for forty years. We remained in his Ashram for about a week and all arrangements were made for Father's initiation into *saṁnyāsa*. It is necessary to be a brahmacārī before taking *saṁnyāsa*. That day Ma asked Father to sit down continuously for twenty-four hours and do *Gāyatri japa*. Then he had to perform his own *śrāddha* and other *kriyās* and receive initiation into *saṁnyāsa* at the break of dawn. Giri Maharaj did not normally allow anyone inside the room during initiation. Ma

stood near the window of the room, facing Father. That day not a single householder was present. Usually Ma is surrounded by so many devotees but surprisingly that day, no one had come. Ma mentioned this fact. According to the name given earlier by Ma, Father was named 'Akhandananda Giri'; the word 'ananda' was affixed to his earlier name on being given *saṁnyāsa*.

At the break of dawn, Father received his *saṁnyāsa mantra* and dressed in the new *saṁnyāsi's* apparel, he lay down flat on the ground at Ma's feet and did *praṇāma*. Ma blessed him with the words, "You have accomplished the householder's duties in a flawless (*akhaṇḍa*) manner, now let this work of yours be also performed in *akhanda bhāva* (completely and uninterruptedly). Ma rarely blesses in this way. Father was overwhelmed with gratitude and fell at her feet again and again. The impossible had become possible by Ma's grace.

For so many years now, Ma had been gradually guiding Father towards this path. For a person who could never do without shoes and shirt and who fell ill even if he tried to discard them, who had been observing such strict regulations in diet, Ma had brought about radical changes at the age of sixty (when Father first met Ma he was sixty years old), and by her grace, he was able to tolerate everything in his old age. Later, Ma had given him the *kamandalu* and the *kaupin* and gradually prepared him for this day. She had kept him with her all the time and dissolved several of his ties, after which, she had, by her grace made him leave his home and stay in an Ashram. And now at the age of about sixty-nine years, she had made him a *saṁnyāsi*. Ma's method of teaching is so very beautiful.

She has achieved so much great work playfully. Without the help of a special power, transformation of this kind is just not possible.

Here again was Jyotish Dada who had recently recovered from tuberculosis. In that extremely cold climate he was able to live without shirt or shoes. He too in spite of a week constitution had at an advanced age broken habits which were years old. Was all this humanly possible? If our all powerful Ma had not kept him with her constantly, infusing strength into him, his life could never have been protected in this way. His own relatives acknowledged that he was now healthier than when he had been living a life of comfort while in official service.

Manorama Didi also sat right through the night of Chaitra Sankranti and on the morning of 15th April, 1934, she received initiation into *saṁnyāsa* mantra from Mangalananda Giri Maharaj, who did not object to giving it to her though she was a woman, because of her onepointed devotion.

Ma stayed on in Kankhal for a few days after all this work was completed. Virajmohini Didi arrived from Vindhya-chal. She had been staying there for some time. She is related to Jnana Brahmachārī of Calcutta who is Ma's devotee. She is a widow with two sons who are married and she wishes to spend the rest of her life in spiritual pursuits.

A devotee of Bhagawan Brahmachārī Mahasaya, Vikas Babu, came to Kankhal for Ma's darshan. Virendra Dada arrived

Jyotish Dada's
surprising reco-
very of health by
Ma's grace

Manorama Didi
takes *saṁnyāsa*
(15th April,
1934)

About Viraj-
mohini Didi

from Agra and Nandu from Dhaka. Lawyer Pramatha Babu's elder brother and daughter came to Kankhal on a pilgrimage.

Kamala Nehru
although far
away has an
astonishing
darshan of Ma

They put a broad bordered *sarī* on Ma, who was then wearing narrow bordered *dhotis* which Bengalis did not like particularly. Ma does not object to anything. She kept the broad bordered *sarī* on throughout the day and then changed. A few days later we were astonished when Jyotish Dada received a letter from Kamala Nehru saying, "Bhaiji, you do not always give me news of Ma, but I am constantly pining for Ma's darshan and I see her from here once in a while. A few days ago I saw Ma dressed in a *sarī* with a broad red border." After her first darshan of Ma, Kamala Nehru would search for Ma in Mussoorie, Rishikesh or Lakshman Juḷa, every time she came to Dehradun, and would not return without having Ma's darshan. Ma remained for a month and a half at Mussoorie after her stay at Kankhal. Bholanath also went there. At that time Kamala Nehru came to Mussoorie for Ma's darshan and stayed overnight with Ma. That was probably her last meeting with Ma.

Ma stayed in Kankhal for about twenty days. She told Akhandananda Swamiji and me to go to Badri Narayan, but we were reluctant since Ma was not going herself. Ma said, "I tell you, you must go." What could we do then? We were compelled to leave. Shankaranandaji and Virajmohini Didi also joined us. Ma received a letter from Bholanath that he was unwell and so she went to

Ma tells us to go
Badri Narayan
and herself leaves
for Mussoorie
(May, 1934)

Mussoorie and it was decided that she would do whatever was necessary for his recouperation. We all accompanied Ma up to Lakhsman Jhūla where she stayed at the same *dharmasālā* as she had before. On the very next day, that is May, 1934, Ma left for Mussoorie with Jyotish Dada. We went with her till Rishikesh and after she left we returned to Lakshman Jhūla and began preparing for our journey to Badri Narayan.

On 19th Vaisakh, we started for Badri Narayan. Kunja-mohan Mukhopadhyaya had been to Devaprayag, Srinagar and other places. He came to Kankhal when he heard that Ma was there and went with her to Lakshman Jhūla and Hardwar where he stayed on while Ma proceeded to Mussoorie. Ma sent for Bholanath and his treatment was begun there.

We went from Badrinath to Kedarnath, Lakshman Jhūla, Rishikesh and reached Mangalananda Giri Maharaj's ashram at Kankhal in the month of Ashadh (July).

Our trip to
Badri Narayan
(4th May, 1934)
and return to
Kankhal (July,
1934). News of
Nirmal Babu's
death

We asked Ma for permission to go to her and she replied that we should rest for a few days at Kankhal, so we stayed on there. We received the news that Nirmal Babu had gone with family to Mussoorie to be near Ma. Sri Sachikanta Ghosh, Assistant Commissioner of Income Tax of Calcutta, also went to Ma at Mussoorie. This was his first darshan of Ma. Within a few days we came to know from a telegram that Nirmal Babu had passed away. Nepal Dada came to Kankhal with Nirmal Babu's wife and her children, Bacchu, and Taru. Nirmal Babu's *śrāddha* and other ceremonies were performed in the ashram at Kankhal, after which his family left for Kashi.

Ma had once been to Kashi from Giridih, probably in the Chaitra month (April). One night kirtan was to be held throughout the night. Kunjamohan Mukhopadhyaya was also staying at Nirmal Babu's house since Ma was to come there, but his wife could not spend the night there as her children were not well. Ma, Bholanath and many other people were sleeping there. Harendra Doctor's wife and Nirmal Babu's wife were singing *nāma* kirtan and dozing off in between.

At about two thirty or three in the morning, Kunja Babu's wife just could not remain in her home because she was so restless to be with Ma. She went downstairs and seeing that all the servants were asleep, she did not want to rouse them. Yet she was pining for Ma and wanted to get near her somehow. So strong was her yearning because of Ma's power of attraction that she did something which she could never have imagined she was capable of, either before or after the incident. She took a coat belonging to her son and wore it. She wound a sheet round her head like a turban, picked up a stick and walked out. She strode through various lanes until she reached Nirmal Babu's house.

Kunja Babu is a reputed citizen of Kashi. He never even let his wife go to the Ganges for a bath, without a vehicle. In fact Kunja Babu's wife hardly ever went out of the house. But in the face of Ma's power of attraction all this decorum evaporated. She reached Nirmal Babu's house and called from outside, "Was there not going to be *nāma* kirtan throughout the night? How is it that I do not hear the kirtan?" Nirmal Babu's wife was shaken out of her stupor

by the sound of Kunja Babu's wife's voice and she got up flustered and opened the door. Ma smiled and sat up. Everyone was stunned to see Kunjamohan Babu's wife's costume. She fell at Ma's feet and did *praṇāma* as she poured out her feelings to Ma.

A little later, Ma went into the garden to the south of the house and began strolling about. Observing something supernatural in Ma's condition, Nirmal Babu's wife and Kunja Babu's wife stood at a distance from Ma and sang kirtan. Nirmal Babu, who had been sleeping till then, woke up and came out of the door opening into the garden. He saw Ma at the door and lay down flat on the ground and did *parṇāma*. When he rose he was overcome with ecstasy and started dancing around Ma, swaying about with his arms thrown up exclaiming, "Sing the Name with all your hearts' might."

He was then about fifty-eight years old, very serious by nature and a member of the Theosophical Society. Not even his acquaintances, leave alone his relatives could ever imagine that he could express devotion with such emotional fervour. But that day he was immersed in ecstasy. Nirmal Babu's condition caused an excited response in the entire household. Everyone woke up and started singing kirtan loudly. Ma stood to one side unmoved, and Nirmal Babu continued in the same mood, singing, "Sing the Name with all your hearts' might", and dancing around Ma.

Dawn broke and people from outside, finding the doors open and hearing kirtan, came inside the compound and joined in the singing. Ma also began swaying and some people stood behind her to prevent her from falling. About

two and a half hours were spent in this way. Then Nirmal Babu regained his composure to some extent and again prostrated at Ma's feet. Immediately Ma fell to the ground. Nirmal Babu also lay down and rolled on the ground and then got up, but Ma remained lying in *samādhi*. The sun shone brightly and because of the heat, people lifted Ma and brought her indoors. Ma remained thus till about midday and then got up. All the inmates of the house were overwhelmed by a strange spiritual aura that day.

No arrangements had been made for *bhoga* and it was prepared swiftly only after twelve o'clock. Nirmal Babu's mood remained strange and his wife and Haridas began teasing him about his emotional outburst, for he always used to tease others about such emotional fervour. No one had ever before seen him in such a state and finding the opportunity everyone began bantering with him about it. Ma then forbade everyone to indulge in such banter.

A few days after this incident, Nirmal Babu told his wife and his daughter, "Ma has opened the flood gates within." And in fact, after this incident, whenever anyone spoke about Ma, his eyes filled with tears. When his only son-in-law and then his eldest son aged about twenty-seven, had died, no one had seen him shed a tear. It seemed as if Ma had just melted his entire being. We have seen other such examples of Ma's supernatural power.

At another instance, when Ma was in Dehradun, such an ecstatic mood was again observed in Nirmal Babu. He had gone with his family to Ma during the Durga *Pūjā* holidays and she had taken them all to Tapakeshwar. There, while

kirtan was going on, Nirmal Babu showed signs of such ecstasy, but Ma stopped the kirtan.

We stayed at the Mahananda Mission for some days and there we received a telegram saying, "Taru's condition bad".

Ma goes to
Dehradun from
Mussoorie and
we are called
there

Ma also received a similar telegram and Shankarananda Swami immediately left for Kashi for he was a close acquaintance of the family and went to them when another calamity seemed to bear down upon them so soon after the recent one.

Father refused to go anywhere without Ma's orders so we stayed on at Kankhal. A couple of days later, we received a telegram from Jyotish Dada that Ma was going to Dehradun and that we had her permission to go there for her darshan. We went immediately and on reaching the Manohar temple at Dehradun, we were told that Ma had arrived at the temple that very day from Mussoorie but had decided to stay at the Military College. Earlier Ma had stayed at the Military College a few times and had shown us the place when we had gone to Dehradun the previous year, so that we now knew where Ma was and followed her there.

It was nine in the evening when we reached and Ma and Jyotish Dada were asleep. They woke up when we arrived. We conversed for some time and then went to sleep for it was very late. Bholanath had gone to Mussoorie in July when Ma came to Dehradun. The next day also we stayed with Ma. The day after that Ma told us to go to Vindhyachal by the night train and to visit Taru at Kashi on our way. We heard that Ma had recently started eating only every third day.

Hariram Joshi took us to the station and put us on the train.

We went to Kashi for a couple of days and visited Taru. Taru was a child widow. She had made considerable progress in spiritual life, practising *japa* and *pūjā* under Ma's guidance. She derived immense happiness from all this. Ma was very fond of her. She was engaged in *pūjā* and other spiritual exercises most of the time and had intense devotion for Ma. After her Father's death in Mussoorie, she became bed-ridden because of the grief of bereavement and various physical ailments. About six or seven months after Nirmal Babu's death, at the age of twenty five, Taru gave up her body in Kashi. We went to Vindhyachal in the month of August.

We heard that Ma had gone to Rishikesh from Dehradun and lived in a hut on the banks of the Ganges for one and a half months. She then went to Solan and visited Baijnath in the direction of Punjab, where she stayed at Tarananda Swami's ashram. When Ma was in Rishikesh, Bhupati Dada went to Ma from Dhaka and stayed with her for a few days. Kshitish Dada with his family also went there from Calcutta for Ma's darshan.

The *yajñasālā* at Vindhyachal, which could not be completed the previous time, was made ready now. Then Ma told us to visit Dhaka. She said to Akhandanandaji, "You are the first *sannyāsi* amongst those who have come here. After this, whosoever is destined will become one. And see what

coincidence there is — Ramna Ashram was inhabited by *sādhus* of the Giri clan even earlier. You also belong to the Giri

Akhandanand
Swamiji and I
stay at Ramna
ashram (February
or March
1935)

group. It is necessary for you to stay at the Ramna Ashram for some time.” She also explained where he was to sit and how he was to perform *sādhana*. She then revealed the fact that Mangalananda Giri Maharaj of Kankhal

was connected with Ramna Ashram, because he had lived at that place in his previous birth. In the month of February or March, we went to Dhaka and stayed at the Ramna ashram.

Meanwhile Bholanath again went to Uttarkashi from Mussoorie. Kamalakant returned to Dhaka and was replaced by Atul Brahmācārī. Bholanath was having a temple constructed at Uttarkashi which was being financed by Ma’s devotees of that place.

CHAPTER XXI

We were present when Ma's birthday was celebrated in Dhaka, in May, 1935. We heard that Sachi Babu and others had got together at Yatish Guha's house in Calcutta and had celebrated Ma's birthday. Ma had been to Sachi Babu's house in Calcutta and had travelled in his car, but he had not met her as yet. He suddenly had a desire to see Ma when she was in Mussoorie and took leave to go for her darshan. He stayed in Mussoorie for some days and became greatly devoted to Ma. He poured out many incidents of his life to Ma. He had become a widower at a young age and had not remarried.

Ma's birthday was also celebrated at Dehradun.

In August, 1935 Akhandanandaji received a letter asking him to go to Uttarkashi with whosoever wanted to go, for the installation of the temple there. We started for Uttarkashi immediately and were accompanied by Prabhat Babu and Khagendra Babu. At Calcutta we learnt that practically all the members of Yatish Dada's family were leaving for Uttarkashi. Sachi Dada, Jnana Dada, Navataru Dada and many others were waiting for the devotees of Calcutta. They all met at Kashi and departed for Dehradun, where they were received by Hariram and many others. We heard from them that Ma had

Ma's birthday
celebration in
May, 1935
(Dhaka, Calcutta
and Dehradun—
About Sachi
Babu

Ma's trip to
Uttarkashi for
the installation of
the newly built
temple in the
company of a
large following
of devotees
(August, 1935)

left for Mussoorie and we followed her there. We met Ma on the way to Mussoorie.

Ma was accompanied by a Punjabi lady called Maharatan, who was the wife of an official of Dehradun. She had come till Mussoorie to reach Ma. Dr. Bhargava had also accompanied Ma and was to return to Dehradun from Mussoorie. Gopalji (Dwarkanath Raina, lawyer in Dehradun, who was a Kashmiri brahmin) was trekking with Ma to Uttarkashi as well as many others from Dehradun, and a large group of devotees had arrived from Calcutta. A great number of mules, and palanquins had to be hired to transport the congregation. Shashi Babu and Bankim Babu had arrived from Chittagong. Ma halted in Mussoorie for only one day and then started for Uttarkashi. All the Deities which were to be installed in the newly built temple and all the vessels and other materials needed for *pūjā* which had been sent from Kashi by Nepal Dada were packed and carried with us. Ma set out on the rugged, uneven mountainous path to Uttarkashi with her large batallion of devotees.

Everyone found it very difficult because many of them had never gone this way before. Only because Ma was with them, all the devotees went so joyously in spite of the hardships of the journey which they gradually learnt to tolerate. Ma would advance some distance and then wait for all the others to join her before proceeding further. Sometimes she sat in the palanquin and walked at other times. Shashi Babu took many photograph of Ma at various places on the way. The group consisted of people of all ages,

All climb the mountainous path happily because of Ma's company and reach Uttarkashi

from little children to the very old. Within five or six days we reached Uttarkashi with Ma.

The temple was still under construction under Bholanath's supervision and there were a few days left for the installation.

Installation of
the temple in
Uttarkashi
amidst celebra-
tions

During the previous birthday celebrations, Yogesh Dada had been summoned by wire to go to Ma in Dehradun, after which he was sent to Uttarkashi. He was now present there.

He had been maintaining *mauna* for the last two years. After the departure of Yogesh Dada, Kulada Dada had been entrusted with the responsibility of worshipping at the Annapurna temple in Dhaka.

On the day fixed for the consecration all the Deities were installed with due ceremony in the new temple. They were Kali, a *Siva linga*, Lakshmi, Narayana and Ganesha. *Sādhus* were entertained to a feast. The *dharmasālā* occupied by Ma was right on the banks of the Ganges and the sound of the gushing river was so loud that we could not hear each other speak.

Bholanath for the past two years had been staying in a small courtyard reserved for *sādhus* on the banks of the

Bholanath's
pilgrimage to
Gangotri from
Uttarkashi

Ganges. The river water is so cold that it is difficult to put one's hand into it even in summer. Bholanath had spent winter months in such a place, engrossed in his spiritual

practices day in and day out, exercising strict control over his diet. Many people there had great regard for him. Soon after the installation of the temple, he left for Gangotri with Atul and his family preceptor's son. (The latter had gone to

Uttarkashi for the installation of the temple and Yatish Dada's priest Lakshmi Thakur Mahasaya had also gone).

Ma stayed on with us for some more days in Uttarkashi and then started for Mussoorie. Before leaving, she fed the

Return from
Uttarkashi
led by Ma

Bengali *sādhus* with various kinds of preparations. She put Yogesh Dada in charge of worshipping at the temple. Doctor Upendra also remained there. Nishi Babu of Dhaka had lost his wife and had therefore gone away to Kashi after a few years. Later Ma had called him to Dehradun and made him stay at the Śiva temple in Raipur for his spiritual practices. He had accompanied Ma to Uttarkashi and returned with her to Raipur. I heard from Ma that Vikas Babu had also taken *śaṁnyāsa* and had assumed the name of 'Asimananda' and was now living in Raipur according to Ma's orders.

Ma returned with everyone to Mussoorie within three or four days. This time no one found it too difficult, for all were now somewhat used to the hardships and furthermore descent is always easier. All were very joyful during the trek. Yatish Dada, Kshitish Dada and others began kirtan as Ma's palanquin led the procession and the refrain of the kirtan echoed in the surrounding mountains. Whenever her palanquin advanced some distance, Ma would wait for all to join her and as they saw her seated, waiting for them, the devotees spontaneously burst into cheers of 'Ma Anandamayi Ki Jai'.

Food was a major problem on the way. Some suffered from swollen feet and some from headaches, and yet the joy pervading the group was unbounded. Most of the Calcutta

devotees had not even seen mountains, leave alone climbing them, but everyone was immersed in happiness because they were going with Ma.

Great joy pervades the pilgrims in spite of the travails of the journey because of Ma's affinity

Whenever Ma spotted raw mangoes or pumpkin stalks anywhere on the way, she would get someone to collect them. Later, at the next camp site, she would tell me, "Cook it and distribute it to all." The state of food supplies was such that squabbling ensued over such tit bits and by the time it was distributed to so many people, each one barely got a morsel. Thus did we travel forth happily.

At one camp site we found that all accommodation had been taken by the members of a marriage party. Later we learnt that the bridegroom's party belonged to the family of the Raja of Solan and the bride's party to a lawyer of Dehradun. Both parties were greatly devoted to Ma. They came to take Ma's blessings and handed over a letter from the Raja of Solan to Jyotish Dada. The letter requested that the Raja of Solan be allowed to take the burden of offering special worship in the Uttarkashi temple for some months. Immediately a letter was despatched to Bholanath to make best arrangements for this worship at Uttarkashi. Bholanath was to return to Mussoorie from Gangotri.

Ma halted at Mussoorie for a couple of days and took all the devotees to see the town. Then she went with them

Ma goes to Dehradun via Mussoorie

all to Dehradun and stayed in the Manohar temple there. Gopalji and Kishorji live close to the temple. They had walked to Uttarkashi

with Ma and had gone in advance to Dehradun and made

excellent arrangements for everyone's accommodation. Ma's devotees at Dehradun extended a cordial hospitality to the Bengali devotees. But the funniest phenomenon in this zoo around Ma was that most of us could not understand one another's language! Didima had come to Uttarkashi with us from Dhaka.

This time in Dehradun, I met a lady doctor, Miss Sharada Sharma. She was a very nice lady from Mathura, of pure character, about thirty-three years old and unmarried. We observed that Ma had great affection for her. In July, a day or two after we had gone to Ma at the Military College, Sharada had started coming for Ma's darshan with Hariram Joshi. Gradually she became extremely devoted to Ma and has now been coming to Ma for a year. We heard that earlier she used to be fashionably dressed but had now begun to dress very simply on Ma's advice. Ma had got her married to Nārāyaṇa Bhagavān and she had taken leave and gone to Rishikesh to stay with Ma.

Ma told us about Dr. Sharada's wedding in her own words, "Sharada is a very good woman. She is what one would call an extremely pure brahmacārīnī. She is about thirty-three years old but not once has any evil thought crossed her mind. She is a very straight forward girl. Before she met me she did not show much interest in God or religion. But other virtues like adherence to truth and dedication to duty were strikingly noticeable in her behaviour. She has a sister and no mother, her father is still living.

“Whenever Sharada visited me, another lady named Shanti would often question me, ‘Ma, will you not get this girl married?’ I would laugh and reply, ‘I am trying to find a bridegroom.’ I asked Sharada many times, ‘Will you marry or not?’ But her reply always was, ‘Ma, what shall I say? If I say I shall not marry and then get married because of my *samskāras* my words will be false.’ And at other times she would say, ‘I desire a boy, Ma, whom I’d like to educate till B.A. and M.A.’

Once, Sharada came to me with Prakashji’s daughter, and Shanti again raised the issue, asking, ‘Ma, will you not get Sharada married?’ I asked Sharada in response to Shanti’s query, ‘Well, will you not marry?’ She replied, ‘Ma you know everything. I shall do whatever you ask me to do.’ I said, ‘Would you marry a sweeper if I asked you to?’ Sharada replied, ‘I shall do whatever you tell me.’ When I asked Sharada’s sister whether she would marry she did not reply.

“However, I gave Sharada and Prakashji’s daughter two flower garlands and told them, ‘Tomorrow when you come to me, bring these garlands with you.’ Sharada took the garland home carefully and kept it in a room and locked the door. Prakashji’s daughter also kept the garland carefully but she did not lock the room.

“The next day when Sharada went to the room to fetch the garland, she found that though the lock was intact and every object in the room was just as it had been, the garland was missing. Prakashji’s daughter’s garland also suffered the same fate. The disappearance of these two garlands was baffling.

Sharada came and sat near me with her face downcast because her garland was lost. I did not say anything.

"The same morning the priest of the Anand Chowk temple gave a talk on the *saṃskāras* of the *jīva*. Sharada who was present was listening attentively. The priest said that if a *jīva's saṃskāras* remain unfulfilled, the *jīva* cannot attain liberation and he has to take birth again and again in order to complete the *saṃskāras* by enjoying the objects denied. These points made Sharada think that the situation was indeed terrible, for if her marriage *saṃskāras* remained incomplete, she would have to be reborn in spite of spending her whole life in spiritual pursuits. She was waiting impatiently to tell me all this.

"That morning, Prakashji's wife, Shanti, came to do *praṇāma* and she said to me, "Ma, I have a strong desire to plait Sharada's hair." I said, 'That is very good, plait it.' She plaited Sharada's hair very lovingly, parting it in the centre. This kind of partition is typical for married ladies in this place. At this juncture, Prakashji's mother arrived with a flower garland. Usually she did not come to me at that hour. In this way all arrangements for a wedding started occurring.

"A little later in the day, when everyone had left, Sharada finding me alone said, 'Ma, the priest was saying that unless the *jīva* exhausts his *saṃskāras* he cannot attain liberation. If I spend my entire life in spiritual practices and yet if my marriage-*saṃskāras* are left unfulfilled, will I have to take birth just to fulfil the *saṃskāra*?' I replied, 'That you will have to.' Sharada was very sad to hear this and to console her I said, 'I shall get you married to Nārāyaṇa in this birth so that

you will not have to perform your *saṁskāra* and neither will your marriage-*saṁskāra* go unfulfilled’.”

Ma does not reveal what she did after this ; only Sharada and Ma know what happened. After Ma got Sharada married to Nārāyaṇa, Ma told her, “First go and do *praṇāma* to Shanti because she was the primary cause for this marriage.” Sharada went to Shanti’s house to take her blessings and as soon as Sharada did *praṇāma*, Shanti went into her room and brought the *sindūr* and applied it to the parting in Sharada’s hair. Ma says, “Shanti herself will not be able to explain why she did this ; she did not know about Sharada’s wedding till then. No one except Sharada and I knew anything about it.”

Afterwards, when news of this wedding spread, some thought that Sharada was married to a boy named Nārāyaṇa and others thought that it was Lord Nārāyaṇa. Some of them came to me and asked, ‘Ma, show us Sharada’s husband.’ I replied, ‘Look, when a bridegroom comes home, you all try so hard to watch him clandestinely. In the same way, if you want to see Sharada’s husband, do *sādhana* and *bhajana*, you will surely get His darshan. Sharada’s husband is your Lord too. When it is not possible to get a glimpse of a human bridegroom without putting in some effort, is it surprising that you have to undergo some hardship if you want to see this bridegroom?’ One day, everyone gathered for kirtan and for a meal in celebration of Sharada’s wedding.

In connection with Sharada’s performance of the Kumārī *pūjā*, Ma described, “Once in Dehradun, Sharada and Hariram were having an argument and Lakshmi and Shankarananda

had also joined in. The next day this argument went on in my presence, and after some time they all fell silent. But I had the *kheyāla* to tell Hariram to fetch Sharada the next day because there had been a little unpleasantness between the two during their argument. He did as I told him and Lakshmi also came. I was then putting up at the Manohar temple. They were told that since they had argued and quarrelled in this way, Hariram and Sharada should perform Kumārī *pūjā*. And since Lakshmi and Shankarananda had participated in the argument, Lakshmi also was asked to perform Kumārī *pūjā* and Shankarananda was told to make everyone do the *pūjā*. The three of them agreed to do Kumārī *pūjā* as instructed and made arrangements.

“Meanwhile, Manmatha Babu’s son, Narsimha, who usually does not come in the morning, arrived and asked if he could watch the *pūjā* and he was told he could if he wanted to. The next day the three sat down for the *pūjā*. It occurred to me that Sharada was devoted to Krishna and yet was being made to do Kumārī *pūjā*. However this was only a mood. After the *pūjā* was completed, I told Lakshmi, “If you do Devi *pūjā* you get some boon in this world. You have got this girl. I am your daughter’ and I went and lay down in her lap like a child. Then, as soon as Narsimha arrived, I held his hand and made him sit near Sharada’s lap and told her, ‘Here is your M.A. pass boy.’ (Sharada had once expressed the desire that she would like to educate her son till M.A. if she had one. So this *kheyāla* suddenly arose in me).

Meanwhile these people wanted to take photographs of the Kumārīs. When I was made to sit in between Sharada and

her Kumārī for a photograph, I had an unusual *bhāva*. One feeling was that Sharada is devoted to Krishna but she is being made to do Kumārī *pūjā*. The second was a feeling of having lain in Lakshmi's lap like a baby. The third was having made Narsimha Sharada's son and his face in his childhood was appearing within. These three feelings were playing within me. In this condition the right side of my body experienced a kind of *bhāva* — Oh ! a small child — and with this *bhāva* a kind of lightning flashed within my body.' '(Whenever Ma relates this story and utters the sentence "Oh ! a child" — her body is as if electrified with a wonderful *bhāva* as if she wanted to describe this *bhāva* with her entire being. I am unable to explain Ma's *bhāva* of this kind in words.)' I felt an unusual change in my body. I touched the Kumārī while in that *bhāva*. Then I regained composure and sat for the photograph, but it was taken before the unusual *bhāva* was brought under control.

"The next day the photographer sent word that the photograph was spoilt but I said it should be brought just as it was. At first when it was brought no one could discern anything, but gradually it was clearly visible that a little child's image had covered the Kumārī's photographic impression."

The fact that Ma was thinking that Sharada, who was a devotee of Krishna was being made to do Kumārī *pūjā*, becomes evident as soon as one sees this photograph. That is the reason why the child's image covered the Kumārī's. The second point is that the right side of Ma's body is not visible, because it was Ma's right side which had moved towards the Kumārī and had caused the image of the Kumārī to be covered

by the impression of a child. The fact that Ma's unusual *bhāva* was persisting while the photograph was being taken, is apparent from the kind of smile on her face in the photograph. The emergence of an image from Ma during *bhāva* — what a marvellous phenomenon !

When Ma described this event she also mentioned, "It was not as if this image appeared from any other source." She did not say any more on this subject after this incident. She told us, "On the day after this incident the girl had fever and I felt that it was because of the unusual happening. The fever was very high but I had the *kheyāla* that nothing would happen." I said, "Ma, possibly Krishna's image appeared within the girl because of your touch, but since the girl was unable to clarify this feeling within her, she got fever." Ma said, "Not even the girl's nearest relatives could discern this."

Nevertheless, no one could understand anything about the photograph. A few days later, Amulya Babu of Dhaka saw the photograph and remarked, "Ma, is this Narsimha's childhood photograph by any chance ?" Ma replied, "Till now no one else has made such a comment." Saying this Ma laughed.*

I met Maharatan also and found her greatly devoted to Ma. If Ma went away anywhere, Maharatan would begin to weep. Ma made Sharada, Lakshmi Rani's friend. Prakash Babu's mother, Kaushalya Ma would express her love for Ma in

* I only heard the brief story about Sharada's wedding with Nārāyaṇa (about which I have written earlier). But only Ma and Sharada know the whole truth of the matter. It was not revealed to anyone.

various ways ; she started feeding Ma. As soon as Ma reached Dehradun, all the devotees garlanded Ma, anointed her with sandal paste and performed *ārati* with camphor. I also saw Narsimha, the son of Manmatha Babu, for the first time on this trip and observed his intense devotion for Ma. He had completed his M.A. and was looking out for a job. He came often to Ma. Ma had made him Sharada's spiritual son (*dharma putra*). Ma said, "This spiritual relation which is being established is in accordance with the connections prevalent from a previous birth."

This time I noticed that many Bengali gentlemen were visiting Ma with their families. Sachi Babu and some others left for Calcutta soon after they reached Dehradun, because their leave was exhausted. After three or four days Ma went to Mussoorie to bring Bholanath, as she had promised him. On the same day, all the people from Calcutta left Dehradun to visit Hardwar, Rishikesh and Lakshman Jhūla.

The very next day Ma returned to Dehradun with Bholanath. Almost none of Ma's devotees at Dehradun had seen Bholanath, therefore Jyotish Dada took him and Ma to all the devotees' houses. Everyone was extremely delighted. Then Bholanath went to the *yajña* temple at Ananda Chowk and performed *yajña*. This temple had been established about a year ago and Ma's photograph was there. All devotees were visiting it and some were regularly offering worship to Ma. At first Ma would enter *samādhi* in a wonderful manner, whenever she was worshipped in such a way, but now she sat or lay down quietly without saying a word.

After spending four or five days in Dehradun, Ma left for Hardwar with all of us. It had already been decided that

the Calcutta group would wait for Ma there and would stay in a *dharmasālā* belonging to a Punjabi devotee called Nanki Bai. Ma

took us all to the same *dharmasālā*. She went for strolls with us on the banks of the Ganges and in the streets of Hardwar. One day a Punjabi devotee, called Kishenji, took us all to a

sādhu's ashram beyond Rishikesh, where we all had a dip in the river and a meal and then returned to Hardwar. We thus spent a few days in bliss. The devotees from Calcutta set out on their return journey and Didima also went with them. Only Jnana Dada stayed back. A couple of days after the Calcutta group left, Ma, Bholanath, Jyotish Dada and Atul left for Punjab. Ma told Akhandanandaji and me to stay in Kankhal for a few days and then proceed to Vindhyachal. Ma alone knows why she was leaving me and going away again and again like this. After Ma left we went to Kankhal and stayed at the Mangalananda Giri Ashram.

Jnana Dada also went with Ma but returned to Calcutta after some days when his leave expired. From Jyotish Dada's letter we came to know that Ma had gone to Amritsar, Kulu, Jwalamukhi and many other places in Punjab and thence to Baijnath where she was staying for some days in Tarananda Swami's ashram. Bholanath was in Jwalamukhi with Atul where he would stay for some time and perform *sādhana*.

When Ma descended from Uttarkashi, her devotees pleaded with her to go towards Bengal. Ma had no particular objec-

tion but Bholanath did not agree. He wanted to stay longer and concentrate on his spiritual practices and go to Bengal later. Therefore Ma did not go either. The order to visit Tarapeeth for one day once a year was for three years. This time Bholanath had spent two years at Uttarkashi. We heard that he would again go to Tarapeeth this year. We spent one month in Kankhal and then went to Vindhyachal. A few days after we left, Ma arrived at Hardwar.

Srimati Bhramara Ghosh (Rai Bahadur's grand-daughter) had set out for Uttarkashi but was somehow not able to go.

About Srimati
Bhramara Ghosh
and her marriage
to Śiva

She had been seeing Ma since childhood and was strongly religiously inclined. Recently she had been corresponding regularly with Ma and receiving replies laden with advice from

Ma, which she collected and preserved. Ma had once given her a *Śiva linga* which she worshipped devoutly. (Ma had often had *Śiva lingas* brought from Kashi and distributed them to many people). Bhramara had made an almirah which looked just like the abode of Śiva, and which Ma had named 'Yogashram'. When Bhramara passed M.A. she informed Ma about it in a letter. Ma replied, "Now you should pass M.A. here also." Whenever Ma went to Calcutta, Bhramara would sit near Ma most of the time and sing kirtan for Ma. She was always simply dressed, without any make up or ornamentation. Since she could not go to Uttarkashi, she had asked Ma whether she could go to Ma at some place where she would be staying for some time. Ma sent her a letter from Baijnath, asking her to meet Ma at Hardwar. Accordingly, in September,

1935 Bhramara went to Hardwar and met Ma and then accompanied her to Dehradun.

Shankarananda Swami and Manorama Didi also went to Dehradun where Ma stayed for some days. Amulya Babu came from Dhaka with family and spent a few days with Ma in Dehradun during the Pūjā holidays. Bholanath also went to Dehradun from Jwalamukhi. Chintaharan Samaddar arrived with his family to spend a few days with Ma. Manorama Didi accompanied them to Vrindaban and other places and then to Kashi. Shankarananda Swami and Bhramara remained with Ma. Later I heard that Ma had got Bhramara married to Śiva. I do not know what actually occurred. Ma loved Bhramara greatly and called her 'Boro Ma'.

After some days at Dehradun Ma decided to go to Tarapeeth with everybody and stay there for some time. Ma sent Shankarananda Swami, Atul and Nishi Babu to Kashi and took Bholanath, Jyotish Dada, Bhramara, Hariram, Lakshmi and Sharada (whom she had named Seva) with her.

CHAPTER XXII

In November, 1935, after travelling to Faizabad, Etawah, Sultanpur, Allahabad and other places from Dehradun, Ma reached Kashi and went to the *dharmasālā* of the *pandas*. She had had a wire sent to us at Vindhyachal, to meet her at this *dharmasālā* and within two days of our reaching there, she arrived herself. Nirmal Babu's wife and son were waiting for Ma and stayed with us. Ma was accompanied by Hariram, Sharada and Kashinath Thanka's wife (Mahalakshmi) from Dehradun. For the past four years, Ma had been staying only in temples and *dharmasālās* without entering householders' homes.

I observed that Ma's condition was not normal. Her speech was indistinct and her face looked wan. I heard that in Faizabad there had been a change from her usual state : her body had become helpless.

At Kashi, Babu Bhagavandas Mahaśaya, who was a very great and famous scholar, met Ma and was happy about his conversation with her. Many people started gathering when they heard that Ma had arrived and she was surrounded by large crowds day and night.

Pt. Gopinath Kaviraj took Ma to his Guru Vishuddhananda Swamiji's Ashram, and we went with her. Swamiji was extremely happy to see Ma and on Ma's request, he transformed a flower into marble and produced the fragrance of a rose in a handkerchief.

Ma stayed in Kashi for five or six days and then set out for Tarapeeth. Hariram and Lakshmi returned to Dehradun from Kashi.

In the *dharmasālā* at Kashi, Ma made everyone sing *Nāma-kīrtan* and also sang herself. When Gopi Baba and others asked Ma to sing some songs, she sang in her own, naturally sweet voice. The words of the two songs that she sang are given below :—

Songs
that
Ma
sang

- (1) What is my name and race and
Where is my home ?
How shall I tell,
When they are uncertain ?
What more shall I say—
I belong to none,
No one is mine
In these three worlds.
I am without parents,
Nor do I know who they were
No one tells me
Nor have I ever heard.
My lord is virtuous
As per my destiny,
What happened in the burning ghats,
Who knows ?
Having suffered much anguish,
I have abandoned home,
Renouncing worldly life
I roam through forest and glade.

He brought me to the forest
To live.

I live alone

In the battle field of love."

(2) "O Mother mine, be kind,

Keep me like a child,

Leaving the beauty of childhood

Let me never grow up.

The desire to study scriptures and become
learned

Is no longer in my mind.

Remaining hidden in your bosom, Ma

I long to call out like a babe.

When the child is hungry

It cries 'Ma, Ma',

While afraid, its fear is quelled on receiving its
mother's touch—

Thus with the flow of childhood

O Mother, keep my life ever full,

If my body grows, let it be,

But keep my mind childlike."

Whenever Ma sat down to sing, she would sing these two songs. Another one which she sang is as follows :—

"What disease am I stricken with,

(I see) only Rama, dark as grass, with matted locks.

In the sky and on the ground, in front and at the back,

To the right and to the left, (I see) Rama holding his bow.

Where is my strength, my senses are weak,

Phlegm, bile and wind are active.

Where is the Supreme remedy which will enter my heart
 And destroy this disease ?
 The neural currents *sushamna*, *ida*, *pingala* and *trishara*
 Are flowing uncontrollably fast
 How oh how shall I hold my *prāṇa*,
 My strong nerves are giving way.
 When my eyes are closed due to the weakness caused by fright
 The trembling *prāṇa* cries out 'Rāma'.
 Rāma is the medicine, Rāma is the treatment,
 Rāma is the strengthening potion
 Which helps me across the ocean of *samsāra*.
 Rāma is the suffering in disease
 Rāma is the death in sensual enjoyment
 And what is the remedy for all this except Rāma ?
 Thinking of that Rāma
 What solace I get from this three-fold malady
 I cannot express."

Ma's father, Bipin Bihari Bhattacharya, (Dadamahāsaya) could sing beautifully even in his old age. Ma learnt this last song from him. Ma would sometimes sing *Harināma-kirtan* with all of us. Then she would sing, "Hare Krishna, Krishna, Krishna,"—just this name so sweetly that the minds of the listeners became calm and steady. Ma has often sung this *nāma-kirtan* with Bhramara, who herself performs kirtan beautifully. Ma also sang *nāma-kirtan* in innumerable ways along with Punjabi devotees. She also sang the same way amidst Bengali devotees, a sample of which is as follows :—

- (1) "*Bhajo Re Bhaiyā, Rāma Govinda Hare,*
Rāma Govinda Hare, Rāma Govinda Hare,

Rāma Govinda Hare.

*Bhajo Re Bahinā, Rāma Govinda Hare,
Jo Mukh Rāma Nahi, So Mukh Dhool Padi.
Kholat Gañṭhari, Bhajo Re Bhaiyā,
Rāma Govinda Hare.”*

- (2) “*Raghupati Rāghava Rāja Rāma,
Patita Pāvana Sītā Rāma.
Sītā Rāma Jai Sītā Rāma,
Jai Raghunandana Jai Sītā Rāma.
Gauri Shankara Sītā Rāma,
Brajavāsi Jai Rādhē Śyāma.
Jayatu Śiva Śiva Jānaki Rāma
Jai Raghunandana Jai Sītā Rāmā.*

- (3) “*Hari Bol, Hari Bol, Hari Hari Bol
Keśhava Mādhava Govinda Bol.*

Ma performed many such kirtans and also asked others to sing. Ma would say, “The environment is purified where *nāma*-kirtan is sung. The one who sings *nāma*-kirtan is of course purified, and so is he who hears it.”

Once, at Ramna Ashram, Dhaka, Virendra Dada was assailed by doubt about the efficacy of *nāma*-kirtan. Later one day kirtan was going on in full swing in the kirtan room and Bholanath was totally engrossed in it. Virendra Dada was standing nearby and the *nāma*-kirtan was being repeated by him mentally. Suddenly he saw a flash of light before his eyes (his eyes were shut) and an image of Sri

Virendra Dada's
wonderful
darshan and con-
dition during
kirtan

Krishna's face appeared in the centre of this glow. He was sweating profusely, standing where he was. Ma told Jatu "Fan Virendra a bit." Jatu did so and after some time Virendra Dada became a little steady, but a kind of intoxicated feeling persisted. When he was leaving the room, Amulya Dada called out to him, but he left without replying. The next day he said, "Amulya Babu, when you called me, I had a wonderful feeling of intoxication and was therefore unable to speak."

After the kirtan when Virendra Dada went to the veranda of Ma's cottage where Ma was seated, Ma laughed lightly and said, "Babaji, what you have seen today is only a shadow". Dada was stunned.

The same day Anath asked Ma, "Ma, why should we say, 'Hari Bol Bolo' rather than 'Hari Bolo'?" In reply to this Ma said, "As Hari Bol is repeated, Ma's comment on saying 'Hari Bol' the *praṇava* appears." Turning to Virendra Dada she said, "What you saw today is only a shadow of *praṇava*."

CHAPTER XXIII

From Kashi Ma went to Tarapeeth accompanied by Atul, Nepal Dada, Akhandananda, Jyotish Dada, Shankarananda and myself. Ma was already well known in Tarapeeth and crowds of people flocked to see her, the moment they received news of her arrival. Ma stayed in Siddhashram with us all. Bholanath spread his tiger skin on the veranda of the Tara Ma temple and spent most of his time there.

Many devotees from Calcutta arrived for Ma's darshan ; Yatish Guha and Arunkumar Babu with families, Pashupati Babu's wife, Navataru Dada and Jnana Dada. Srimati Sanjna Devi, wife of Sri Surendra Thakur Mahasaya, had come to stay with Ma for a few days. Almost every day bullock carts from Rampur arrived loaded with people who hailed from various places.

In Tarapeeth there are only a few houses belonging to *paṇḍās* ; the rest of the place is filled with burning ghats. Such a cremation ground became a joyous fair. Shops sprang up to cater to the needs of this large gathering. One day Yatish Guha performed an elaborate *pūjā* of Tara Ma. Sachi Babu came with a silk saree and a new bedding for Tara Ma. Bholanath's *paṇḍā*, Sri Yatindranath Thakur had become an ardent devotee of Ma.

A few days later, in December, 1935, Ma sent Jyotish Dada to Chittagong and made me accompany him, saying, "Go and serve your spiritual brother. It is not as if you have to serve

only your father. When you tread this path spiritual relations are most important." We did not know that we had to leave Ma, even an hour before we were sent. Ma had herself made arrangements for a vehicle for us through our *paṇḍā* Yatindranath. Throughout the day she lay in the temple of Tara Ma, while Bholanath gave initiation to many people. In the evening Ma arose and called us to the temple. She spoke about a few things and then declared, "Just go on doing whatever I tell you to do without creating any obstacles. Know that it is all for your best."

Before Ma sent us to Chittagong from Tarapeeth, Yatish Guha and Prankumar Babu with their families, Pashupati Babu's wife, Sachi Babu and the girls of his family came to the temple of Tara Ma to do *pūjā*. They all made Ma sit in the *Natmandir* of the temple and brought a great variety of eatables and set about making arrangements for *bhoga*. Strangely enough, Ma laughed terrifyingly at first and then started weeping. No one could comprehend these sudden changes in Ma's moods and all were afraid. After a long time Ma's condition became normal. This kind of thing happened two or three times at Tarapeeth. Inside the temple Ma put my hand in Jyotish Dada's and said, "You both are spiritual brother and sister. You must look after each other."

Even when Ma established this spiritual relationship, I did not know what her orders were going to be. After twilight, Ma left the temple, went to the Siddhashram and told Jyotish Dada and me to eat something. Then she took us to the kirtan that was going on in the *Natmāndir* of the Tara temple.

At that time many devotees from Calcutta like Yatish Guha's family, Sachi Babu, Prankumar Babu's family, Jnana Brahmacāri and Navtaru Dada, who had come for Ma's sudden order to both of us to go to Chittagong, soon after the relationship was established Ma's darshan were present, and we were all enjoying great happiness in Ma's company. All of a sudden, at about eight in the evening, Ma returned to the Siddhashram and ordered Jyotish Dada to leave for Chittagong and told me to accompany him. Jyotish Dada was not keeping well and there was no shortage of men who could have accompanied him. Ma however ordered me to go with him and turning towards Father (Swami Akhandanandaji) she asked, "What is your opinion?" Father replied, "I have nothing against whatever you say, but as Jyotish is not well would it not be better if some men were to travel with him?" Ma pointed towards me and declared, "Khukuni is a man alright; many people call her '*brahmacāri dada*.' She will have to go."

Most people present did not at all like Ma's order, but Ma was adamant, laughed loudly, and arranged for our departure without a trace of indecision. At nine we both left in a bullock cart. We caught the night train at Rampurhat, reached Calcutta in the morning and spent the day there. That night the Calcutta devotees returned from Tarapeeth and informed us that Ma was coming to Calcutta within a couple of days, but was proceeding to Dhaka without halting. She was to stay in Dhaka for seven days and return to Tarapeeth after spending some time in Calcutta on the way. Bholanath was keen to return quickly to Tarapeeth, because Sachi Babu wanted to offer a *pūjā* to Tara Ma, which was to be

performed by Bholanath. We left for Chittagong the very next day.

At Chittagong we came to know from a telegram that Ma had reached Dhaka. She was visiting Dhaka after four years and staying only for seven days, so that every-
Ma in Dhaka ;
Jyotish Dada and one there was crazy about her darshan. The
I return to Dhaka crowds were immeasurable. Many ladies spent the nights with Ma in the ashram. On the sixth day of Ma's visit to Dhaka, Jyotish Dada and I reached there from Chittagong. Ma was to leave the next day. We found the ashram surging with large crowds and it was difficult to even get near Ma. Bengal was colouring Ma red with *sindūr*. She had been draped in a sari with a broad red border. It seemed as though no one was satiated however long they had darshan of Ma. Ma went and sat outside in the compound, for the crowds could not be contained within the Ashram. Her face and eyes which were constantly being reddened with *sindūr*, were washed again and again. Her clothes were all red with *sindūr*, and yet no one seemed to be satisfied, possessed as they were of some kind of frenzy. Baba Bholanath was conversing with everybody. The hearts of the devotees were bursting with joy, but they were also apprehensive as Ma was leaving the next day and no one knew when she would return.

On Monday all of us travelled to Paruldiya because Rai Bahadur Yogesh Ghosh had been promised that Ma would stay at his place on her return and that the Radha Krishna temple which he had constructed would be consecrated by Bholanath and arrangements would be made for its functioning. Rai Bahadur Yogesh was very old and had been

nurturing a desire to take Ma to the temple at least once, and Ma did not let his desire go unfulfilled.

Hearing that Ma would be in Trivikrampur, Paruldiya for a day or two, many devotees flocked to Paruldiya. Quite a number went to Dhaka with the intention of seeing Ma and returning, but ended up by following her to Paruldiya, with only the clothes they had on. Ma reached Paruldiya with a party of fifty odd people.

There, Yogesh Babu had arranged a grand festival. Bholanath installed the Deities in the temple and Kamalakant who had been brought from Dhaka was to offer the daily worship. Rai Bahadur Yogesh, his wife and many others took initiation from Bholanath. Ma pointed toward Bholanath and said, "My Gopal will do many *pūjās* today; he does very good work therefore I shall put some clothes on him." So saying, Ma affectionately dressed Bholanath, just as a mother clothes her child. Bholanath bowed down and did *praṇāma* at Ma's feet. Ma said, "Gopal is Nārāyaṇ, so I shall also do *praṇāma*." And Ma bowed down to Bholanath. At night, after the Deities were installed with due ceremony, kirtan was performed. We stayed in Paruldiya for a few days and then left for Calcutta.

Having missed the mail train we reached Calcutta only at night. Ma was received at the station by a large number of devotees. A room had been booked for Ma in a *dharmaśālā* but the members of Yatish Guha's family had not eaten and *bhoga* had been prepared there, so Ma was taken to the doorstep of their house from the station.

Bholanath consecrates the Radha Krishna temple built by Rai Bahadur Yogesh

From Paruldiya to Calcutta

We all knew that for the past four years Ma had not entered the house of any householder. But now everyone started saying, "Ma, no one will eat anything, *bhoga* Ma sets foot in Babu Yatish has been cooked. Do not go to any other Chandra Guha's room, just enter the hall where we only sing: house in Ballygunje—about kirtan and which has been decorated with your Kshitish Guha pictures. Why shouldn't you enter that room?" Then Ma did not object and sat in the hall without entering any other room. A large gathering of devotees was present. Strangely enough, as soon as Ma reached the house all the electric lights got dimmed suddenly and everyone remarked, "What is this?"

Yatish Guha has two brothers and his entire family is very devoted to Ma. Their old mother, their wives, sons and daughters, all performed Ma's *ārati* daily. The Calcutta devotees gathered regularly in this house to sing kirtan of Ma's name. The middle brother, Kshitish Dada had been having fever since a few days. He came to the hall and did *praṇāma* to Ma. He was so fervently devoted to Ma that tears flowed from his eyes whenever he sang Ma's *nāma*-kirtan. He had built this house in Ballygunje, which Ma had now entered.

At about midnight, after *bhoga* was completed, we went to the *dharmasālā* in Kali Ghat to spend the night. The next day again Ma was taken to Guha Mahāśaya's house for kirtan. For the past two and a half years now, Ma was eating every third day and therefore she was not to eat that day. Bholanath and other devotees had their midday meal at that house. Ma conversed with devotees. Paramahansa Yogananda (who has

ashrams in Ranchi and America) took Ma's photograph and talked to her. Kirtan was also going on in between.

Kshitish Dada was lying in an adjoining room. He was sick but was not in the least disturbed by the noise. In fact he was extremely happy because Ma had come to their house and he was able to have her darshan. Almost no one was attending to the patient either, for everyone in the house was overjoyed to have Ma. Ma stayed in Calcutta for three or four days and on the day before her departure for Tarapeeth, she remained till nine o'clock at night at Yatish Dada's house. Kshitish Dada's condition was not too good, and before returning to the *dharmasālā* for the night Ma told Yatish Dada, "Give him the best treatment and show him to a specialist. Let Ma (Yatish Dada's mother) not sorrow in any way." I was startled to hear this and felt apprehensive about what Ma was saying this time again.

Ma was in a wakeful mood and spent the whole night talking to Bhramara. Some months ago Bhramara had gone from Calcutta to Ma at Dehradun, and had accompanied Ma to Kashi and then followed her to Calcutta. Later she went with Ma to Tarapeeth and had stayed with her there. Several times I have noticed that whenever a tragedy is afoot, Ma is in this kind of mood. Therefore observing Ma's mood I felt very worried about Kshitish Dada. At three a.m. we received news that his condition was very serious. Ma said "All of you serve him to the best of your abilities." Ma told Shankarananda Swami, and Jatu to remain all night in that house.

In the morning Ma was taken to other houses. In the afternoon when we were at Sachi Babu's house we got the

news that Kshitish Dada had passed away. Ma remained absolutely steady and calm, without the slightest change of expression on her face.

We heard that in the night before Kshitish Dada's death, a white goat had climbed up the two storeys of the house and gone near Kshitish Dada's wife's lap and then sat under the bed on which the patient was lying. After his death, when Kshitish Dada's body was being taken to the burning ghat, the goat went with it. No one knew where it had come from. When Ma heard about this she said, "Great souls assume various forms to come to escort pure souls in this manner. See the way this goat went and sat under the bed on which he was lying."

In the afternoon we went to Munsif Vinay Babu's house where Ma partook of *bhoga*. We were to leave by the evening train for Tarapeeth. Most of the devotees had gone for Kshitish Dada's last rites and to console the bereaved family at their house. Some people were saying, "Ma there is no need for you to go to Tarapeeth today; this tragedy has occurred." Ma replied, "As it has been decided earlier, we shall leave to day." And so we did.

While going to Tarapeeth, Ma's car was stopped in front of Yatish Dada's house in Ballygunge. Kshitish Dada's mother, his wife and her mother came to the car to meet Ma. All the men of the house had gone to the cremation ground; what a terrible situation it was! Ma consoled Kshitish Dada's mother and wife saying, "Kshitish's soul was extremely pure." Even though she was immersed in grief, Kshitish Dada's mother-in-

law was saying, "Ma we did not understand then, but we realise now that you came to bid farewell to that great soul." Ma also spoke privately to Kshitish Dada's wife. She remarked "It seems as if I entered the room only for the sake of Kshitish because he could not go outside. I do nothing by my own will. Whatever happens is alright." When Kshitish Dada died, many people also remembered the fact that the lights of the house got dimmed as soon as Ma entered. Having witnessed this grievous incident, we left by the night train for Tarapeeth and reached our destination the next day.

Ma left Bhramara at Calcutta. Bhramara's younger sister Tunti was very ill and Ma instructed Bhramara about a number of regulations to be observed and told her to stay in Calcutta for some days. Ma does not reveal what she tells one person to anyone else. She only tells each one what is necessary for him or her. Therefore no one knows why Ma left Bhramara and what regulations she asked her to follow. Actually, Tunti took a turn for the better thenceforth. Ma also gave Tunti her own shawl. All this happened spontaneously, Ma does not do anything wilfully. It happens for some people and it seems as if Ma's actions occur in accordance with the *karma* of each individual. Ma often says, "It is just as you people get it done."

(Note—Incidents which occurred after Ma went to Tarapeeth are narrated in Chapter twenty five. In the next Chapter (Chapter twenty four) some earlier incidents are recorded.)

Ma's secret
advice to
Bhramara about
Bhramara's
sister's serious
illness and
appeasement of
the disease by
following the
advice

CHAPTER XXIV

Once when Ma was at Surendra Mohan Mukhopadhyaya's house, his elderly mother prepared *bhoga* for Ma with a variety of items. Virendra Dada was present there. The practice prevalent then was that Bholanath would offer *bhoga* and Ma would sit beside him. That day Ma told Virendra Dada, "Today you offer *bhoga*," and she remained sitting upstairs. Virendra Dada went downstairs and offered *bhoga* and then came upstairs to call Ma and Bholanath for lunch. As soon as a mouthful of one curry, I do not know which curry it was, was placed in Ma's mouth, she questioned, "What, is this a curry of colocasia leaves?" But there was absolutely no possibility of anyone mistaking that curry to be made of colocasia leaves. Virendra Dada was however astonished, because that day a large number of curries had been prepared for *bhoga* and the lighting in the ground floor in many Calcutta houses was very poor, so that when Virendra Dada was offering *bhoga*, this particular curry was far away from where he was sitting and he could not see it properly. He therefore offered the curry thinking it was made of colocasia leaves. But the place where Ma was being fed was well illuminated and yet when the curry was placed in her mouth she asked, "Is this colocasia leaf curry?" Virendra Dada then narrated to all present what had occurred and Ma laughed.

Some years ago Ma had gone to Dinesh Bandopadhyaya's house in Rajendra Street, Calcutta and spent the night there.

A marvellous
incident in Cal-
cutta during
Ma's *bhoga*

In the morning before Ma awoke, a professor arrived with his little son. As soon as Ma rose she saw the boy and began to weep and revealed that this boy had been her own brother in his previous life. Further she said that some time before he died, his father had pushed him in a fit of anger and his arm had been injured. No one noticed that his arm had become crooked as a result of the injury and he died soon after. In this birth he had been born with those signs and so saying, Ma drew the boy near her and showed that one of his arms was crooked. The boy's father told Ma, "He has been this way since birth and therefore I have come to show him to Ma." Ma replied, "I can also see other signs of his previous birth. This sign will not be erased, it will be good enough if you can save his life." Having said this much Ma kept quiet.

The boy's father and others started pleading with Ma to show them how they could save the child, but Ma did not say anything. Ma then went to Yogendra Rai Mahāśaya's house and the professor followed Ma there with his son. He was now extremely apprehensive about his son's life after what he had heard from Ma and wanted some assurance from her. They had first come to Ma to show the boy's crooked arm, but they were now saying, "Ma, let his arm be anyhow, but let him have a long life by some means or other." After everyone pleaded with Ma for a long time, she took a ring from her finger and gave it to the boy and asked him to keep it with him always. Then she told Bholanath what regulations had to be followed. Finally they did *praṇāma* and left. Later they met Ma two or three times again ;

I also saw the boy. After that we did not hear from them anymore.

When Ma came to Bengal, she bequeathed new names on many devotees in Tarapeeth and devotees also gave her various names. This naming game was started by Ma in Paruldiya. Devotees were all giving her one name each and Ma made Bhramara note them down. Then Ma told me to write down the names everyone gave her in Tarapeeth. The collection was probably a hundred to a hundred and fifty names. I have heard that Ma had five names in her childhood. 'Dakshāyani, Tīrthavāsini, Gajagangā, Vimalā and Kamalā'. Didima had named her 'Nirmala' and Ma was known by that name. Later Jyotish Dada named her 'Anandamayi' and Ma is now known by this name.

Ma once described, "When various *kriyās* began manifesting in this body, a kind of '*khat khat*' noise could be heard in the spinal column as if something was rising.

Ma's description of a *kriyā* which occurred in her body I then recalled something I had observed in Shripur when I was staying in my brother-in-law's house. My brother-in-law was a station master and his house was close to the station. Sometimes when a bogey was made to climb on to a track the same kind of '*khat khat*' sound ensued. I remembered that."

Often Ma would say, "*Sādhanā* means '*sva*' (own) '*dhana*' (wealth) and this wealth is inexhaustible." Then again she interpreted the word '*Gṛhasṭha*' to mean one whose house is in his hands (*gṛha hasṭha*). Formerly people practised complete brahmacharya before becoming *gṛhasṭhas* and therefore the

home could not ensnare them so that they were in control of it. Therefore they could take on *vānaprastha* and then *sannyāsa* after the completion of their duties as householders. The home was not a bondage for them.

I recollect an incident which occurred when Ma was at Bajitpur which she had herself narrated. Bholanath was once laid up with an acute stomach ailment in Bajitpur. Ma was then very young. Bholanath became unconscious at night and Ma was alone. She took Bholanath's head on her lap and invocations began pouring forth from her lips spontaneously, loud and clear. Simultaneously she began dusting his entire body from head to toe with her hand. Ma said, "This action of my hand occurred spontaneously." Within some time Bholanath got relief. The very next day Ma gave Bholanath rice and the neighbours objected to this. But after eating the rice Bholanath got progressively better.

An incident in Bajitpur—Bholanath's astonishing recovery from illness

Ma lays a great deal of stress on *Gāyatri japa* for brahmins. She tells each one to do as much *Gāyatri japa* as he possibly can. In Solan Ma had explained the meaning of the *Gāyatri* to me which I have recorded as follows :— The meaning of *Gāyatri* "He who creates, preserves and destroys, whose form is Universal, He Himself inspires our intellect, He Himself is Parabrahma and the Knower within each creature ; I meditate on His venerable effulgence."

The meaning of *Gāyatri mahā-mantra* as given by Ma

Bhoodev Babu of Dhaka, while talking about Ma told us, "Ma cooked very well. She made item like chops and cutlets

which are the rich man's fare and served us though she was a poor man's daughter and a poor brahmin's wife. But I cannot

Reports from
contemporary
observers about
Ma's appearance
and characteris-
tics

possibly describe how delicious her preparations were. When Ma's highly evolved characteristics became manifest in Dhaka, I teasingly told her one day, 'Because of your present condition, we can no longer enjoy your delicious cooking.' Some days after I said this, Ma invited me to a meal of a variety of dishes made with her own hands."

Bhoodev Babu's wife said, "Ma's looks were famous in Bajitpur. Ma was so beautiful that whenever she went to the bathing *ghāt*, the *ghāt* would light up with the radiance of her beauty." Because of this many people called her "*Ranga Didi*."

From her childhood onwards everyone loved Ma dearly and if viewed impersonally, there seems to be no reason for this. Possibly Ma's incomparable beauty and bliss permeated personality were the cause of this. Many people called Ma "*Khusir Ma*'.

Once, in Kashi Ma was lying down when she saw an apparition approaching Nirmal Babu's wife and asking for gold. (The popular belief was that asking

An incident in
Kashi

for gold meant asking for a boy). Ma told the apparition to go away by a particular route.

Later, Ma asked for information to be gleaned from the residents along that route. It was found that two people along that route died of small pox though at that time there was no small pox epidemic there. Ma says that the personification of a disease can be seen vividly.

A few examples of Ma's ability to discern events that happen at a distance : — During Durga Pūjā at Shahbagh,

Examples of
Ma's omnis-
cience and insight
into each indi-
vidual's mind —

(1) Incident at
Vidyakut

Dadamahaṣaya and Makhan were with Ma while Didima was in Vidyakut. One day Ma told Makhan, "Father and you must go home soon because Ma is longing for you both. I saw that Ma's eyes were filled with tears as she lit the lamp near the *tulasi* plant."

Makhan and Dadamahaṣaya returned home and when they told Didima what Ma had said, she exclaimed, "Really, since you did not come for the *pūjā* I was very sad and worried, and when I was lighting the lamp near the *tulasi* one day, I began to weep because I was so upset."

In November or December, 1935, when Ma went to Dhaka, she was seated in the midst of a large crowd of devotees in the Ashram. Jyotish Dada and I had just arrived from Chittagong. I was sitting in the compound and talking to Amulya Dada and others about Ma, when Nagendra called me and the story I was narrating remained unfinished. Amulya Dada and others also dispersed when I got up.

A little later when I went to Ma she said, "You were narrating a story which remained unfinished. Go and complete it." I was wonderstruck. How did Ma know that I was narrating a story in the compound and that I left it incomplete? Such incidents are nothing new, I have witnessed examples of the fact that nothing escapes Ma's attention. Yet her *līlā* appears ever new and therefore we do not cease to derive

bliss from it and are also constantly amazed. I went out but did not find anyone. The next day I told Amulya Dada about this and he declared, "Our Ma not only knows what happens within all of us, her gaze encompasses the entire universe!"

Then one day, we were having a discussion about grace (*krpā*) and the fruit of action (*karma phala*). In those days

(3) Divine Grace and the fruit of action we were often having arguments and differences of opinion about this subject in Ma's presence.

But that day when Ma was sitting in our midst, she herself raised the topic of *karma phala* and said, "Each one obtains results exactly according to his actions. God's Grace also obeys the law of *karma*." I then said, "If that is so then some say that nothing happens without grace. If we accept grace then it means we are accepting a fault in God's favour." Ma replied, "One has to accept that *karma phala* is the cause of everything. Each one gets the fruit according to his actions. Yet there is a state in which a spiritual aspirant experiences divine grace and at that time he declares nothing happens without grace. But actually his own *karma phala* has made him worthy of that grace." We all realised that Ma had understood our problem and had brought an end to our argument.

CHAPTER XXV

At Tarapeeth, Vimala Ma and Ananda Bhai of Adyapeeth had visited Ma twice earlier. They had first met Ma at Adyapeeth and then Sachi Babu had taken them to Ma at Tarapeeth. Some days later Sachi Babu and many others came again from Calcutta. On a Tuesday or Friday, I do not recollect exactly, Sachi Babu was to perform pūjā of Tara Ma but finally did not do so and it was decided that it would be done later. The reason for the postponement was that Sachi Babu had to leave. Ma then said, "Look, you people say that Kali and Tara are terrifying gods ; it is not right to go without performing the pūjā on the day that you had decided on. If by some particularly unavoidable circumstance you are unable to perform it, you must at least do something mentally that day. Just see, the pūjā was not done on the day it was supposed to be done and Kshitish left his body. Another day was fixed but that also did not work out." Ma then told Jyotish Dada, "Bring a pair of scissors and cut off a lock of hair from my head and bury it under the ground below the peepul tree." Ma was then seated below a large peepul tree in the Siddhashram. All that she wanted was done. Ma declared, "Now I am dead. All those who have touched me, come, we shall go to the *Jivitā Pushkārini* and bathe and I shall come back to life." (There is a great history behind the *Jivitā Pushkārini* in Tarapeeth which can be found in the life of Vāmākshepa). She did not enter the room again nor did she let anyone

even touch the laundered clothes, but went with everyone and bathed in the *Pushkārini*. Sachi Babu who was about to leave for Calcutta, was dressed in his coat and pants and had a dip just as he was. Swami Akhandanandaji constructed an altar where the hair from Ma's head had been buried and installed her footprint on it. Arrangements were made to light a lamp and offer flowers at the altar every day.

Almost every morning Ma went for a walk around the compound with Jyotish Dada. On days when she did not eat, she remained in the compound from eight or nine in the morning till sunset. People from neighbouring villages heard of Ma and came for her darshan and Ma was always surrounded by crowds. It appeared as if there were a festival going on continuously. New shops sprang up and made good business. Ma and Bholanath had been coming to Tarapeeth for the last seven or eight years. Bholanath was extremely fond of this place and he had attained highly elevated states here (this has been described already). Earlier there were no shops or trade here. After Ma's arrival, the temple, the village and pond were greatly improved. I have observed that in many places, old temples have been revived after Ma's visits. (Pramathanath Basu Mahasaya says that he feels that one of the purposes of Ma's life has been the restoration of important places of pilgrimage which had been neglected over the years). The farmers here believed that once during a drought Ma's arrival brought plenty of rain so that now seeing her walking in the fields they were very happy. Wherever and however far Ma walked in the fields she was

surrounded by Hindus and Muslims as soon as they spotted 'The Mother of the Farmers'.

This time there was a lunar eclipse on one day and a large number of people came for Tara Ma's darshan. But we heard people say that such huge crowds had never been seen on any earlier lunar eclipse day, and people professed to have come from great distances for darshan of the Ma of Dhaka. The doors could not be shut, such was the surge for darshan! The people pleaded to just have darshan—to look at Ma once—and they stood outside and gazed at Ma's face.

On some days, a householder in Tarapeeth decorated Ma with flowers as if she were Krishna, with a flute made of flowers and ornaments of flowers all over her. Ma also sat bent, immersed in *bhāva*. On some days Ma was adorned with flowers as if she were Sri Rama with matted locks made of floral garlands and a bow and arrow in her hand made of flowers. What a beautiful sight it was!

One night in the month of February, around ten o'clock, Ma was walking on the road when she suddenly jumped into the *Jivita Pushkārīnī* and began to swim wearing her shawl, warm *kurtā* and other clothing. Jyotish Dada who was standing some distance away heard the sound and turned around to witness the scene. A little later Ma emerged from the water and standing outside the Siddhashram, where I was cooking food for her, she called out to me, "Khukuni". I ran out and Ma laughingly told me, "I wanted to find out what it felt like to dip into the water with all my clothes on. And the water

was beckoning to me as I went near it and so I embraced the water without leaving anything behind." And Ma began to laugh. We hastily changed her clothes and fed her. She was restless throughout the night.

On another night in Tarapeeth, at ten o'clock, Ma left us all at Siddhashram and went to the temple where Bholanath was. She told us, "If I do not return tonight no one should go in search of me. I shall come whenever possible." Ma did not return the whole night through. We presumed she was in the temple but we were worried at the possibility that she may not be there. Since Ma had forbidden it, we could not go in search of her. Ma finally returned in the morning and we came to know from her that on that cold winter night Ma had been roaming about alone in the fields and had then rested in a mosque till daybreak, after which she returned. None of us knows why she did this.

A boy named Manik, who was a great devotee of Ma, was employed at Kashi. At Tarapeeth, when Ma was visited by large groups of people from various places, Ma indicated one lady from the crowd and said to us, "Look, this lady's face resembles Manik's mother's quite a bit, doesn't it?"

In the evening Ma went for a stroll and sat in some place and said again, "If Manik were to come today I would make this lady his mother." That lady was to leave the next day and there was no possibility of Manik's arriving that day. But just as night fell Manik turned up to our great surprise. His mother had passed away some time ago.

Another incident
in Tarapeeth

Manik's un-
expected arrival
and Ma's predic-
tion of this

Sometimes Ma called all the devotees together and referred to some as 'Ma', fed some others, gave new names to others

like to children, delighting all around her. A

Construction of
a *yajña kunda* in
Tarapeeth and
initiation of
yajña (Pausha
Sankranti, 1935)

certain boy had to be given the sacred thread and an auspicious date had to be fixed for the ceremony. Ma said, "Just find a date for a

sacred thread ceremony for us also." A little later she said, "Find out a date for a wedding

also." Yatindra Pandaji looked up the dates. We then heard that a *yajña kunda* was being constructed in front of the temple of Tara Ma and that a *yajña* would be initiated there. All arrangements were made under Ma's supervision. All Ma's work gets done perfectly under marvellous circumstances. Meanwhile Bholanath had gone to Calcutta to perform kirtan and offer solace to the Guha family. As soon as he returned he left with the Calcutta devotees for a bath in Gangasagar, taking Swami Akhandanandaji and Virajmohini Didi with him. Jyotish Dada received a letter to say that his presence was required at home. Ma told him, "You must leave today and since you once wanted to visit Puri, you should fulfil that desire also." Jyotish Dada remonstrated, "Neither Bholanath nor Akhandanandaji are here and the *yajña* will be started soon, so I cannot go now." But who was to listen to him! Ma replied, "Nothing will cease, everything will go on." And so it was. Ma sent away Jyotish Dada and Yatindra Pandaji's son, Shyam that night. Ma's work never gets delayed and the *yajña* started as scheduled (Pausha Sankranti Jan. 14th 1935). Before Jyotish Dada left Ma gave him the flower flute that had been placed in her hand when she had been dressed as Krishna, and asked him

to put it in Sri Jagannath's hand in Puri and bring it back.

It was then that we heard that Maroni (Maroni's life has been described earlier) was to be married here and she and I were to be invested with the sacred thread.

Construction of
a small house
opposite the
yajña-kunda—
Ma's wonderful
way of working
and achieving
work

Ma gave orders for a small house to be built in front of the *yajña kunda* and told me, "After your investiture you can live there."

Immediately masons arrived and began the construction work. Everything about Ma is marvellous. There can never be any delay in

whatever she does. Nor will she say anything much beforehand. All arrangements are made with whatever is readily available and surprisingly everything works out perfectly to the tiniest detail. Even if by chance things are not quite alright, know for sure that when required for Ma's work, everything turns up. Not once but several times have I actually observed such happenings. Ma had the *yajña* performed on the predetermined date and before we knew it the house was also ready.*

* At the time of Maroni's wedding, the fact that Ma's work gets done perfectly without any previous preparation was vividly illustrated. Firstly the wedding was held in the midst of a cremation ground in the temple of Tara Ma where there are no facilities except the residences of a few *pandās*. The wedding was to be performed but there were no ladies amongst us with all the traditional auspicious marks of married ladies. The close female relatives present were either widowed or were too old. But on the day before the wedding, two married ladies arrived unexpectedly from Vikrampur. We were related to them but they had never come to Ma before, nor did I have much contact with them because I had been travelling so much of late. Nevertheless they reached Tarapeeth just then and it was their first visit to this place. These two sisters had never seen Maroni before, but they performed all the rites done by ladies for Maroni's wedding. Hailing from the same place as Maroni, they were well versed in all the traditions pertaining to Maroni's background and they executed

Some days later Bholanath returned after a bath in Gangasagar. He left Father in Calcutta to purchase the necessary items for the sacred thread ceremony. Jyotish Dada also turned up after some days.

Bholanath's return to Tarapeeth after a bath in Gangasagar

A few days before the ceremony Ma went into the fields and organised an open air picnic in which many people of the poverty stricken place received *prasāda*. Virendra Maharaj and many other boys had begged for *bhikṣā* and gathered lots of provisions. Right after the meal there were heavy showers—so heavy that it became difficult to stay in Siddhashram and Ma went into the Śiva temple from the field accompanied by Bhramara and me. A couple of days later Jyotish Dada had such acute breathing difficulty that he seemed to be dying, but he was saved by Ma's grace. He remained bed-ridden for many days.

Picnic in Tarapeeth and free distribution of *prasāda*

Maroni had been adopted by Bholanath as his own daughter. This was because Maroni's *gotra* as inherited from her father turned out to be the same as her fiancé's. (Maroni had been engaged to Kulada Dada's son by Ma). This discussion had

all the work so smoothly, it seemed as if they were doing the wedding rites for someone of their own household. They were supposed to stay only for a day but they stayed on to do everything necessary for the wedding and left only about the time when the bride and bridegroom departed. It appeared as if they had come just to do this work. They cooked a meal and fed Ma one day. Ma said, "See, there was none amongst you to do the work specified for married ladies and these ladies turned up at the correct hour." And Ma started laughing. Maroni had been brought up in the Ashram and her wedding was also performed by total strangers. All of Ma's work gets done this way without any aspect remaining incomplete.

arisen earlier also but Ma had said, "Whatsoever is predestined for each one will come about." Therefore it was decided that Bholanath would adopt Maroni and perform the *kanyā danā* so that the bride and groom would not have the same *gotra*. Maroni's father, Chinu's mother, Matari Piśima, Piśamahaśaya (Kaliprasanna Kushari) from Thakuriya, Piśima, Dadamahaśaya and Didima, Makhan and all the relatives came for Maroni's wedding. A large number of devotees also arrived. Piśima had promised Ma long ago that she would perform the 'Uma-Maheshvara vrata' and she did it now under Bholanath's guidance. The *vrata* is extensive and was a source of great bliss.

A devotee's son had his sacred thread ceremony first and then on January 14th Maroni and I were invested with the sacred thread. Bholanath initiated Maroni and Sri Dineshchandra Bhattacharya initiated me. Women are not usually invested with the sacred threads, but Ma had been having this *kheyāla* for the last so many years which was now being fulfilled. The Income Tax Commissioner of Calcutta, Sri Surendranath Bandopadhyaya's son Panchu and daughter Nani had come to Tarapeeth for Ma's darshan. After the sacred thread ceremony Panchu took movie camera pictures of Ma and us which came out very well.

Maroni was married on January 19th. The bridegroom arrived two days before the wedding. He was also just like an ashramite and therefore the wedding was most enjoyable. Bholanath did the *kanyā dāna*, and since he was so fond of Maroni, he began to weep as he gave her hand in marriage.

Maroni's and my
sacred thread
ceremony,
January 14, 1936

Many people had come from nearby villages and so there was a big crowd at the wedding. On the day after the wedding,

January 20th, the newly married couple and almost all the relatives and close friends left. It was decided that the wedding night was to be at Piśamahaśaya's house in Calcutta. The

couple were instructed to perform *yajña* every day and were given the fire of the *yajña* performed at Tarapeeth.

The sacred thread ceremony and other rites were performed during the *yajña* that had been initiated by Ma. After the sacred thread investiture Ma told me, "This sacred thread which you have received is not a trivial matter ; you must be an ideal brahmacāriṇī. Maroni is married, but you must always keep up your diet and other routines just as you have been doing during the sacred thread ceremony." For a long time I was made to give up even sugar and salt.

On January 21st night, Ma also left Tarapeeth, accompanied by twenty or twenty five bullock cart loads of devotees.

It was a moonlit night and the path was through deserted countryside. We left after nine in the evening and reached Rampurhat station around one thirty a.m. This midnight

journey of Ma and her devotees was an exquisite experience. Bhramara began to sing *nāma* kīrtan to the accompaniment of the harmonium atop the bullock cart. Soon all the devotees joined Ma in singing the beautiful name of God and all were immersed in bliss. From Rampurhat station we left by the two a.m. train for Srirampur.

Ma leaves
Tarapeeth (on
January 21, 1936)

It was a moonlit night and the path was through deserted countryside. We left after nine in the evening and reached Rampurhat station around one thirty a.m. This midnight

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CHAPTER XXVI

The next morning we reached Srirampur. At first arrangements had been made for Ma to stay in Govardhan Gosai's house (Ma's long standing devotee) but since Ma does not go into householder's homes, she was put up at the Gauranga temple.

Ma in the Gauranga temple in Srirampur

A lot of kirtan and *bhoga* was organised. Govardhan Gosai, Sucharu Babu and Triguna Babu, some of the main devotees of this place, were constantly engaged in Ma's service. Many people took *dikṣā* from Bholanath there.

The next day we left for Navadveep, where Ma's brother Makhan struck a friendship with Doctor Girindra's nephew, who had come to see Ma. Sachi Babu and many of his relatives came to Navadveep for Ma's darshan. Ma went for a bath in the Ganges with everyone on the day she was leaving. Sachi Babu's widowed sister has lovely long hair; such long hair is quite rarely seen. Ma emerged from the Ganges and wrapped this lady's hair around her own neck and declared, "Now my cough will cease. This is my warm wrapper." She told Sachi Babu to cut a lock of this hair and hang it up in the room.

From Navadveep Ma went to Behrampur at the earnest plea of Sri Abani Sharma who had been waiting in Navadveep for a long time to take Ma. While at Behrampur, we toured round Murshidabad and other places. After about a week's stay Ma left for Tatanagar, Jamshedpur, where Ma's devotees had been

In Behrampur and Tatanagar

repeatedly making persistent requests for her visit. Some of them had even gone to Tarapeeth to call her. Arrangements were made for Ma to stay in the Kali temple at Tatanagar where many devotees spent most of their time in Ma's company, abandoning their homes. Kirtan was performed with great joy. Ma was accompanied by eight or nine people and the devotees of Tatanagar did their best in offering their respectful hospitality. There again, approximately twenty people received initiation from Bholanath.

After about a week in Tatanagar Ma left with us for Vindhyachal. We passed through Howrah station on the way,

Ma at Howrah station on the way to Vindhyachal and a large crowd of devotees there

where devotees arrived with a variety of food-stuffs for Ma during the two hours' halt.

They fed Ma and Bholanath with great reverence and gave food to everyone travelling with Ma. They all requested Ma to

stay in Calcutta for a few days but Ma did not comply. She laughed and said, "This time there will be no halt here."

After the tragedy in Yatish Guha's family, Yatish Dada had not met Ma. Being involved to some extent in worldly problems and partly because he was hurt and offended with Ma, he did not go near her. That day he did not come to the station either. His mother, his wife, Kshitish Dada's widow and all the girls of the family had come and Ma spoke to them consolingly. But the crowd was so large, there was no opportunity for much conversation. Prankumar Babu had come with family, so had almost all the devotees of Calcutta except for Yatish Guha.

Just before the train left, Yatish Dada arrived and murmured, "I have sent Kshitish's boys for their examinations and come. There was no one else at home."

Special attention
to Yatish Dada
at Howrah
station

He was extremely offended with Ma and bowed to her gravely and went and stood far away. A little later Ma looked all around and asked, "Where is Yatish? Call him." I beckoned to him and Ma told him, "But Jyotish is your friend. Keep writing to him always." Yatish Dada could no longer remain unmoved by such great love. He ran to Ma and bowed at her feet while tears flowed from his eyes. It was as if all his feelings against Ma were washed away in his tears. Ma patted his head. Just then the whistle blew for the departure of the train and all the Calcutta devotees descended from the train and began to cry, for they did not know when they would see Ma again. Everyone's gaze was fixed on Ma and eager longing for her was written large on their faces. Ma also gazed at all the people with the utmost compassion.

The train departed and Ma lay back. Who knows whether or not Ma was moved by the pitiful weeping of such a large gathering of devotees? Outwardly of course she remained composed and calm. What a wonderful sight it was of an amalgamation of firmness and tenderness! I have never seen its like anywhere. Many people questioned Ma, "Ma, we love you so much; don't you love us even a little bit?" Ma laughed and replied, "You love me only because I love you. And your love for me is not even an iota of the love I have for you — that is

Arrival at
Vindhyachal
Ashram

something that you do not understand.” Three days later we reached the Vindhyachal Ashram.

On the way to Vindhyachal we visited Doctor Girindra's house at Betiya. He had erected a tent in front of the temple for Ma to stay in and we remained there for two days.

This time Ma spent some days at Vindhyachal. Almost every morning Ma went for a walk in the hills. On the days on which she ate, she had a meal after the walk, and on the days when she did not eat she either lay down in the room upstairs or conversed with the devotees. Bholanath, Akhandanandaji, Jyotish Dada, Shankarananda, Bhramara, Virajmohini Didi, Maśima (Ma's cousin) and I were staying with Ma. Ma received a letter from the devotees of Dehradun requesting her to come there since they had built an Ashram for Ma which would be installed in her presence.

About one and a half years ago, Swami Akhandanandaji had had a *yajña-śālā* constructed at Vindhyachal and a large *kunda* had been made inside it, as instructed by Ma. It had been kept closed for so long because Ma had said, “This work of yours is remaining. Keep the *yajña-śālā* ready. When it is time to start the *yajña* it shall be started.”

Now Ma told him to start the *yajña*. About ten *pandits* had been called from Kashi and oblations were to be poured in the *yajña* with the utterance of one lakh of *Gāyatri mantra*. The sacrificial fire performed during the sacred thread ceremony at Tarapeeth had been brought to Vindhyachal by Jatu (a devotee) who had been instructed by telegram and the same

About Ma's stay
at Vindhyachal

Installation of
yajña-śālā in
Vindhyachal
(Holi Purnima,
March 1936)

fire was now installed. The *yajña* in Vindhyachal was started on *Holi Purnima* day in March, 1936. Bholanath and other brahmins performed *yajñas* for five days. Ma had appointed some devotees to do *Gayatrī japa* during the oblations. Dr. Upendra Babu, Nepal Dada and others undertook this responsibility. One lakh of oblations were completed and arrangements were made to preserve the fire. A brahmin called Anangmohan Bhattacharya from Kashi, who had abandoned home and was living like a brahmacārī, was called and entrusted with this job. Oblations were to be offered every day.

One day, while this *yajña* was going on in Vindhyachal, Ma sat in a room adjoining the terrace of the Ashram and composed a song on the spur of the moment and sang it with her own extremely sweet voice. Those who had the good fortune of hearing it were enthralled, mystified and exhilarated. The song was as follows :—

Sri Sri Ma's self composed song :—

“The ultimate state will not be reached by the *jiva* without detachment. Therefore make renunciation and discrimination your sole objective, giving up all desires.

What is the extent of renunciation,

You will know when you are engrossed in action,

Then you shall see constantly,

In which direction your mind will be drawn.

Offering all your activities

Adhere to man's *dharma*

You are the eternal, changeless Brahman

Meditate on this in your heart repeatedly.

Beckon the mind which wanders outwards

Keep it within your heart continuously
 Mount the raft of Brahman
 And cross the ocean of *samsāra*.
 When your ego is annihilated
 And all duality transcended
 You shall see that you repose in your true nature
 Which is the Supreme Truth to be realised."

Sri Mahesh Chandra Bhattacharya had built a house near the Vindhyachal Ashram and he came to Ma regularly. Ma told him to observe certain regulations for a year and said that he should make a Panchavati in front of his house and sit there for at least some time every twenty-four hours. Many people came to Ma from Mirzapur. Abhay Babu, Gopal Babu and many others with their families got initiation from Bholanath.

A gentleman called Kshetra Babu arrived, dressed in saffron coloured clothes. He had got totally disgusted with the turmoil of worldly life and had donned the saffron cloth. Ma told him, "Wearing the saffron cloth is not a game. In your present mental condition it is better for you to give up the saffron cloth and wear ordinary clothes. It is good enough if you live a pure life, and do *japa* and other *sādhana*. Later we shall see; whatever has to happen will happen." And so it was. Kshetra Babu gave up wearing saffron and resumed ordinary clothes and took initiation from Bholanath. (Later he began longing for his home and returned to the life of a householder). Hearing this, Ma laughed and remarked, "Some time ago I got him

Sri Mahesh
 Chandra Bhattacharya and Ma
 in Vindhyachal

Kshetra Babu
 with saffron
 clothes

to leave off wearing saffron clothing. While many make people take on the saffron cloth, I make them give it up."

It was decided that Kshetra Babu would stay on in the Vindhyachal Ashram. He tried to live on food collected from *bhikṣā*. Since the person safeguarding the sacrificial fire was observing *mauna*, Kshetra Babu was to help him whenever necessary. We left Swami Turiyananda, Kshetra Babu and Anangmohan Bhattacharya (who was protecting the fire) in the Vindhyachal Ashram and started for Chitrakut with Bholanath and us. Bhramara went to Calcutta. At Vindhyachal Sachi Babu's brother's wife and others came and took *dikṣā* from Bholanath. Then another day at Vindhyachal, Yatish Guha, Sachi Babu, Prankumar Babu and others came for a day and had Ma's darshan. Kulada Babu and Shankarananda Swami from Mirzapur joined us on our way to Chitrakut.

CHAPTER XXVII

We reached Allahabad and stayed in the Kali temple. A High Court lawyer, Sri Jitendra Chandra Mukhopadhyaya* had made all the arrangements for Ma's stay there. After a day at Allahabad Ma went to Chitrakut where she stayed for two days and went to many places. On the third day she returned to Allahabad for two more days before proceeding to Agra where she reached in the evening. There Professor Virendra Chandra Mukhopadhyaya†, who was a long standing devotee of Ma, had made all arrangements. Here also Ma stayed at the Kali temple. Gradually people heard of Ma's arrival and began pouring in for Ma's darshan. Many derived great joy from conversation with Ma. One day the devotees took her to a garden where many college students and professors came for Ma's darshan and spoke to her. On everyone's insistence Ma remained in Agra for eight or nine days.

From there Ma went to Mathura and Vrindaban for three or four days. There the Raja of Bardhaman has built a temple and a *dharmasālā* type house next to it where Ma stayed with us all. The manager of this temple, Virendra Dada's friend, extended respectful hospitality to Ma. Later we came to know that he was a relative of Dinabandhu of Coxbazar. Vrindaban has many ashrams of *sādhus*. Devotees took

* J. C. Mukherji, first cousin of Gurupriya Devi.

† Upendra was Gurupriya Devi's eldest brother.

Ma around to see these. Good and bad exist everywhere. The devotees were happy with the behaviour of some *sādhus* and could not feel happy about some others. For Ma, of course, everyone is good. From Vrindaban we went to Jaipur where we saw Govindaji's temple and other places. After a day's halt there we proceeded to Delhi.

Ma has many devotees in Delhi. An elderly Kashmiri lady had gone to Tarapeeth and accompanied Ma from there and was going everywhere with Ma. We all called In Delhi her Nani. Ma had first met her in Dehradun. She was the paternal grand-mother of the lawyer Dwarakanath Raina. Her son owns a big shop in Delhi. He had made all arrangements for Ma's stay in Delhi where we spent two days and then left for Dehradun, reaching the next morning.

The devotees at Dehradun (Sri Hariram Joshi, Sri Dwarakanath Raina and others) took Ma to the Krishnashram from the station. Some gentleman had built this Stay at Dehradun for his guru. Ma sometimes went and stayed there. Ma stayed in Krishnashram for some days and devotees came there to meet her. Sri Nishikant Mitra, one of Ma's earliest devotees, arrived in Dehradun on Ma's orders. Ma told him to stay in Raipur. He had been with Ma all these days. When Masima* fell ill in Vindhyaachal, Ma told Nishi Babu and Virajmohini Didi (who was a widow, had abandoned home, and was staying with Ma) to remain with Masima

* Ma's cousin who had abandoned home and was staying with Ma. She was a child widow. In Vindhyaachal Ma had made Nishi Babu, Virajmohini Didi, Masima, Didima, Jatu and Nirmal Babu (of Kashi) shave their heads and wear yellow clothes.

until she recovered and then to take her to Kashi for Vishvanath darshan before proceeding to Raipur,* (Dehradun) for a longer stay. On hearing that Ma was in Dehradun they came to Krishnashram for her darshan. Other devotees of Raipur and Swami Asimananda also came. Ma stayed on quietly for a few days.

Then she became unexplicably restless. One evening when many people had gathered for Ma's darshan she suddenly told Bholanath that she was leaving immediately for Raipur alone and neither Bholanath, Jyotish Dada or I were to go with her. Ma would spend the night there and return the next morning. Raipur is about six miles away. Ma definitely does what she says she will do. She kept on saying, "Whatever happens is for everyone's welfare." Immediately Narsimha and another young devotee took Ma by someone's car to Raipur. Virajmohini Didi, Masima and Nishi Babu were delighted to see Ma. Ma had then been suffering from indigestion for some days and we had resolved not to feed her anything that day at Dehradun. But we heard that at Raipur Ma ate whatever the devotees offered her without the slightest hesitation though all she ate was least suitable for a person having indigestion.

The next morning the lady doctor Sharada Sharma brought Ma to Krishnashram from Raipur in her car. But Ma did not become calm even when she returned and declared, "I

* After leaving Dhaka Ma had stayed for ten months in Raipur. Bholanath had formed spiritual practices there. Ma stayed in the Śiva temple. All people there greatly revere Ma and Bholanath. Ma sometimes sends some people there to practise meditation in solitude.

shall roll on the ground", and began rolling about. The entire day was spent thus till she slept at night. Jyotish Dada slept near Ma's feet and I slept next to Ma. Ma's restlessness after her return to Dehradun and our worry that this portended some calamity Suddenly Ma's body began turning and rolling and settled down only after some time. The next day again, Ma was laughing while tears flowed from her eyes. I have always observed that such *bhāva* in Ma is a prelude to some calamity and therefore I was worried.

Some days later Gopalji (Ma had named Sri Dwarakanath Raina 'Gopalji') came and requested Ma to go to the Manohar temple in Ananda Chowk. Ma often stayed in that temple and a *yajña kunda* has also been installed there, about which mention has been made earlier. The Manohar temple is near Gopalji's residence. The day after Gopalji's request, Ma said, "Yesterday Gopalji was asking me to go to the Manohar temple. Come let us go today." She said no more. We packed the provisions for food and sent it to the Manohar temple. In the evening Ma went walking with everyone to the temple. As soon as we reached there we received a letter saying that Bholanath's sister's son, Sri Kaliprasanna Kushari's second son had died leaving behind two children. We calculated the dates and discovered that this death occurred on the day that Ma had suddenly left for Raipur.

Ma's birthday was imminent and the Dehradun Ashram was to be inaugurated during the birthday celebrations. On Ma's birthday (19th Vaishakh) Bholanath and four other brahmins were to start a *yajña* in the new Ashram and one lakh of oblations were to be made. A huge *yajña kunda*

had been constructed in the Ashram. Hamsa Devi, Hariram and all other devotees were busy organising the function.

Preparations for
inauguration of a
new Ashram at
Kishenpur,
Dehradun

During this time, one day, Ma walked to Raipur from Manohar temple with all the devotees. The next morning she returned to Manohar temple in Sharada Devi's car. It

was arranged that Ma would stay in a temple near the Kishenpur Ashram from that day onwards, and all the devotees would be put up in a house close by. The *yajña* was to start the next day. That afternoon Ma went to the Jakhan temple near Kishenpur and the devotees shifted to the empty house. It was decided that on Krishna Chaturthi day, Vaishakh, (Ma's birthday) Ma would enter the new Ashram.

CHAPTER XXVIII

As scheduled, the *yajña* was started in the new Ashram on the 19th Vaisakh, by Bholanath and four other brahmins. The

Unique gathering of devotees from various places and the joyful inauguration of the Dehradun Ashram with a *yajña*. 4th May 1936

previous day Doctor Upendra and Turiyananda Swamiji arrived from Mirzapur and Kamalakanta brahmacārī from Dhaka. The later had become very restless and had therefore come to Ma with the intention of doing whatever she ordered once he came to her.

The responsibility of doing *japa* during the *yajna* was entrusted to Doctor Upendra and me. By and by devotees from various places started arriving to participate in the function. Professor Trigunanath Bandopadhyaya from Srirampur, Professor Virendrachandra Mukhopadhyaya from Agra, Nepalchandra Chakravarti, Nirmal Babu's son and wife and Manik from Kashi, Sri Shraddhananda Swami from Mirzapur, Bhramara Ghosh from Calcutta, Virendra Maharaj and others arrived in Dehradun at Ma's feet.

On some days Ma went in the mornings to see the *yajna* and then returned to the Jakhan temple. All food was taken to the temple. In the afternoons many devotees from Dehradun town came for Ma's darshan. Dr. Sharada Sharma, Narsimha*, Hariram, Hamsa Devi, Gopalji and other devotees came.

*This boy is extremely good natured and Ma is very fond of him. He has passed M.A. and is looking for a job and has refused to get married till now. He lost his mother in his childhood. His father, Sri Manmatha Nath, works in Dehradun. He is the only child of his parents. Ma has made him the spiritual son of Dr. Sharada Sharma.

almost every day. Hariram and Hamsa Devi had taken great pains to construct this Ashram which had come into being only because of their enthusiasm. During the function also they were the foremost organisers. Hariram had been the first amongst the Dehradun devotees to meet Ma at Raipur and it was through him that many others had the opportunity of getting to know Ma. He felt extremely happy whenever anybody came to Ma's feet, and he was just crazy about Ma's name. From Delhi the Kashmiri lady (she had been in Delhi when Ma came to Dehradun), her daughter and son-in-law arrived.

On 10th May, Hamsa Devi and other devotees were engrossed in decorating the Ashram with flowers, leaves and coloured paper. Banana saplings and aus-

Inauguration of the Kishenpur Ashram by Ma's entering with devotees amidst the joyous blowing of conch shells, ringing of bells and *ulu* sound. 10th May 1936

picious urns were installed. A large photograph of Ma was kept in the central hall which was reserved for kirtan. Manmatha Babu was to offer *pūjā* to that picture at the close of night which is the time of Ma's birth. All were very busy with the various jobs to be done for the function. The Ashram which had been

built so painstakingly was now going to be worthwhile because it would be blessed by the touch of Ma's holy feet. Those who had worked for it would feel gratified and blessed.

Some time after nightfall devotees started arriving from Dehradun. The Ashram is about five miles away from the town. At the close of night, which was the time of Ma's birth, Ma and Bholanath and all the devotees entered the new

Ashram. There was a loud chorus of rejoicing from conch shells and bells, and since a large number of Bengali ladies had gathered there was no lack of *ulu* sounds. Bholanath and Ma were made to sit in the central kirtan hall on the ground floor and everyone performed *ārati* with flower garlands, camphor and other offerings.

Manmatha Babu began the *ṣoḍaśopacāra pūjā* for Ma. Ma's beauty glowed as she was decked with *sindūr*, garlands and new clothes. It seemed as if the place had been lighted up with the lustre of her beauty and a perfectly radiant goddess had appeared. What an exquisitely beautiful form it was—I am at a loss to describe it! Those who could not see it missed a great opportunity in their lives.

Time passed and many devotees took leave as others arrived. The crowd was large, for everyone was eager to receive the dust of Ma's feet. Kirtan was started in the room where Ma was seated. She sometimes conversed laughingly with everyone, and sometimes sat absorbed in *samādhi*. All the people were gazing at her with rapt attention, motionless like statues.

The Ashram has a big hall for kirtan in the centre, surrounded by four small rooms at the four corners. The room at the northern corner was provided with a space for Ma to sleep in, and upstairs one room called "Dhyāna Mandir" was kept closed where by Ma's order only one person at the time could enter for silent meditation. Later Ma had a *Vyāsa gaddī* installed there and anyone who entered the room had to keep *mauna*.

After attending the kirtan for some time Ma went into her room, lay down and conversed with devotees. *Prasādā* was

being distributed and people were returning to their homes after a day of joyful festivity. Gopalji's family, Kashi Narayanji's family (Kashi Narayan Tankha was the contractor who had undertaken the construction of this Ashram) and others stayed back. Hariram's wife had passed away before he had met Ma and he had two small children. That day he stayed in the Ashram with them.

The next day (May 12) the *yajna* was completed. Baba Bholanath and the other brahmins sprinkled the holy water of peace on everyone present. Ma was to eat that day and Bholanath and she were offered *bhoga* in a room on the southern side of the Ashram, after which everyone received *prasāda*.

Completion of
yajna and sprink-
ling of holy
water, May 12

Then arrangements were made to enable Ma to rest for a little while but it turned out to be futile for devotees were continuously pouring in, in large groups. Ma chatted with them smilingly without a trace of fatigue. Everything about Ma is wonderful.

Gracious Ma
remains remark-
ably tireless

In Dhaka, Calcutta and Kashi I have observed on many occasions that Ma conversed with devotees day and night without tiring even slightly. Devotees arrived ceaselessly till two or three in the morning and I have seen Ma sitting in the same serene mood while the crowds persisted, not for one day but for many days consecutively. Now here, Ma rested at night and those who had come from other places stayed in the Ashram.

Three or four days after the function, the famous strong man Sri Rama Murti sent a car and an escort for Ma to visit his 'Shakti Ashram'. Ma went there in the afternoon and

he offered much respectful hospitality to her. Later Sri Rama Murti came to Ma's Ashram with his disciples. Ma called him 'Baba' and he was served with sweetmeats. He fed Ma with his own hands ; Ma's meeting with 'Rama Murti' — a joyous experience for all Ma also fed him and the scene was most enjoyable. Anyone who comes into contact with Anandamayi becomes immersed in bliss (*ānanda*). Rama Murti wanted to hear kirtan and so Triguna Babu sang. After spending some time with Ma, Sri Rama Murti did *praṇāma* and left. Due to a major injury he was unable to walk. He got in and out of his car with great difficulty, with the help of others.

Some days later Bholanath had a severe stomach ache and felt very unwell. Dr. Bhargava, who is a staunch devotee of Ma, had come with family just that day for Ma's darshan. Hariram called Dr. Bhargava, Dr. Sharada and others. Bholanath suffered intense pain throughout the night. The next morning the pain subsided slightly but he could not get up from bed. Ma was walking about on the terrace and going to the patient's room and sitting down in between. The next day Bholanath was brought to a room on the ground floor.

Triguna Babu, Manik, Shraddhananda and other devotees took leave of Ma. Shankarananda Swami went to Badrinath for the third time.

Two or three days later Bholanath's stomach pain subsided but he was still confined to bed. In the morning Ma closed the door of his room and talked to him. Again around midday she talked to him behind closed doors and then sent for Jyotish Dada. When she came out of the room, we learnt that Ma

was leaving the same evening by the five o'clock train for Solan. Bhramara, Nepal Dada and I were to accompany her. Ma told all the others, "When Bholanath recovers you all bring him to Solan !" Later we heard that Ma had told Bholanath when he would recover and be able to go.

When Nirmal Babu's son Baburam heard that Ma was leaving he began to cry and set up quite a tantrum and though his mother was reluctant to send him as he was her only son, he caused such a situation that Ma could not leave him behind and he finally went with her. Professor Virendra Chandra Mukhopadhyaya told Ma, "We just don't understand all this. When Bholanath recovers we could all go together within three or four days. How could that inconvenience you in any way ? Why do you have to leave today ? I could spend my summer vacation with you, but you insist on leaving us and going. What is the meaning of all this ?" Ma replied in her characteristic serene and smiling manner, "I am also unable to explain the meaning of all this to you. Know for sure that I do nothing by my own will. Whatever happens at any time is for your welfare. Why do you worry ? As soon as Bholanath gets well you all may come with him to Solan. I shall leave today." No one has the capacity to disobey Ma. Preparations for her departure were made immediately.

Raja Durga Singh of Solan was a great devotee of Ma. He was requested by phone to send a car to Kalka station to receive Ma. No one in Dehradun knew of all this. Hariram, Sharada, Lakshmi, Gopalji and others, however got the information and arrived. For the last few days Gopalji's family, his grand-

Departure for
Solan

mother (the Kashmiri lady) and her daughter had been staying in the ashram and all were very sad that Ma was leaving. Such a festive mood prevailed and Ma was leaving right in the middle of it ! Who could tell when she would return ? Nothing about Ma is certain and neither is anything under anyone's control. Whenever Ma says she will do something it is almost always carried out to the letter. Only sometimes changes have been made so as to obey Bholanath's orders, though he also rarely raises any objections to carrying out Ma's kheyāla.

We left Dehradun in the evening and reached Kalka the next morning. The Raja's car had not yet arrived. Ma said she wanted to have a bath and so I bathed her under a tap. Ma was to eat that day so I fed her the few fruits we had with us, as we sat by the roadside. Just then the Raja's car arrived and we reached Solan within about two hours. Ma had been to Solan two or three times before this and had also met a very old and famous sādhu named Shogi Baba who lived there. That time she had stayed in a cave. Shogi Baba had had two temples constructed next to the Raja's Radha Krishna temple and had installed images of Śiva and Durga in them. Around these temples a number of rooms had also been constructed which were lying vacant. Knowing that Ma would not stay in any householder's home Raja Saheb had had these rooms cleaned and kept ready for Ma. As soon as we arrived, the Raja's staff made all arrangements for our stay. Hariram's younger brother Madan Mohan Joshi was a Doctor in this state and he also came. There was nothing lacking. Raja Saheb had seen to all the details of Ma's sojourn.

Occupation of
room next to a
temple

Within a little while the Raja arrived and did *praṇāma* at Ma's feet. He was a serene person. Ma had named him

Solan Raja, his mother, his wife and others pray at Ma's feet

'Yogi Raj'. Such a flawless character was generally not found amongst royal families.

The only sorrow was that he had no issue and yet he had no desire to remarry though every-

one urged him to do so. He asked whether food should be sent from his house but we had been forbidden to eat food cooked by others and so we said we would cook it ourselves. All provisions were immediately brought by the Raja's employees. This Bengali Mataji's limitless power was apparent even in these hills. The Raja, his *Vazir*, (he was a foreign returned barrister), his physician and all were standing in waiting on Ma. In the afternoon the roads were enclosed by curtains (*purdā*) and the Rani (Raja's wife) and Rajmata (Raja's mother) came for Ma's darshan. Their maids were with them and all were eager for Ma's darshan. Ma smilingly enquired about their well-being. Since Ma was eating that day the Rani fed Ma with some fruit which she had brought.

In the evening they all left and other devotees started arriving. Hearing about Ma, new people flocked for her darshan every day. Punjabi devotees brought *bhoga* for Ma and fed her themselves and it seemed as if she belonged to that place. She ate their curries and exclaimed, "It is excellent!" and they all felt delighted.

Seven days after we reached, Bholanath, Akhandananda Swami, Virendra Dada and Bacchu's mother arrived. We heard that Ma had told Jyotish Dada to stay on in the

Dehradun Ashram with Kamalakant brahmacāri. For the last three or four years Jyotish Dada had always been with Ma and

Bholanath and
others arrive—
news of Jyotish
Dada's ill-health

now why this order suddenly? Ma alone knows. Jyotish Dada was very upset about it but what could be done? Ma's orders have to be obeyed. Jyotish Dada had become very

weak and anaemic and Ma had said he had to be treated methodically. He had sent word that he had begun to take a course of injections.

CHAPTER XXIX

After spending about two weeks at Solan Ma decided to go to Simla. We knew nobody at Simla but Ma merely said,

From Solan
to Simla

“Some arrangement will be made once we reach.” I have observed that this is exactly what happens and by Ma’s grace there is never any hitch. Ma had never allowed us to make any arrangements when we went to unknown places on earlier occasions and when devotees tried to make arrangements on their own they never succeeded. Finally they just depended on Ma and followed her. And I have found that far from being harrassed by inconveniences we end up having excellent facilities for our stay, much better than what we could ever wish for. Truly if we can rely totally on Ma, there will never be anything lacking. But do we ever depend so completely on Ma? The Raja of Solan rang up his agent in Simla and asked him to prepare a place for Ma’s stay and the agent said he would make arrangements in the Kali temple. We left for Simla in the Raja’s car.

The route was through mountainous regions and the road wove through the hills. How enchanting the scenery was!

Ma’s premoni-
tion of two
deaths on the
way to Simla —
stay at Kali
temple

Ma alone knew why she was going to Simla. Who can explain why she moves about from place to place? Ma herself says nothing except, “Whatever has to happen happens for sure. It is just as you all get it done. I know nothing.” In fact, Ma neither makes resolutions nor has

doubts, so what can she say? A little later Ma said, "I can see two corpses." She was looking outside and smiling. I wondered whose corpses she was now seeing. Bholanath's younger sister Matari Pisima was very ill in Dhaka. Who knew what had happened to her? We had started at two and reached Simla at four and went to the Kali temple which is very beautiful, with ample space for many to stay. It is provided with a theatre hall, library, club and other amenities. The facilities were excellent.

As soon as we reached the Kali temple, the secretary, Sudhir Sen, came to inform us that an 84 years old sādhu named Dayal had just left his body. He had been visiting this temple for many years and people had immense regard and devotion for him. Ma immediately went to the room where the body lay and we followed her. It seemed as if the sādhu had turned over and was fast asleep. A brahmacārī recited the Bhagavad Gita. Gradually Bengali gentlemen started arriving. They were coming for Ma's darshan and were also organising the last rites for the sādhu. Many were saying that the sādhu had asked just before his death, "Anandamayi was to come — has she arrived?" Some people had found out that Anandamayi Ma was scheduled to come, from the agent who had gone to book the room in the temple for Ma.

We told the gentlemen who had gathered that Ma had remarked on the way that she had seen two corpses. One we had found here. They immediately replied, "About a month ago, the head priest of the Kali temple died right here." Ma said she

News of a sadhu's
passing away in
the Kali temple

News of the death
of the head priest
of the Kali temple

had seen just that — that one was lying in a place and the other had expired recently. Ma often makes predictions in a vague manner in this way and we are not always able to comprehend. Later when the incident occurs Ma explains it to us.

On the day we reached Simla, a couple of Bengali gentlemen came to see Ma at night and conversed with her for some time. The next morning Ma went for a short walk. I saw that by and by a few people began coming to Ma. They said, “We had great regard and staunch devotion for Dayal Baba who has become one with God. We were sure to have been greatly agrieved over his death. But with your arrival just then we did not feel the blow so much. We are getting immense happiness from your darshan.” Ma on her behalf was talking to everyone as if she had known them all along. She said : “I am your little daughter. It is of course natural for a father to be happy on seeing his daughter, when she is coming after such a long time !” Ma seemed to have actually become their long-lost daughter. And now no one wanted to leave and the number of people started increasing so that the little room became full of men and women. At night too the numbers of people who arrived became larger and finally even at 1 a.m. many people kept on sitting instead of going home. Some people came for Ma’s darshan in the mornings before going to office. What attraction Ma’s eyes have because of which these gentlemen kept on repeating, ‘I am going’ when it was time for office, but were unable to tear themselves away ! Many felt that now they were enjoying the fruit of building a Kali temple in Simla and doing kirtan

Big gathering of devotees in Simla for Ma’s darshan

in it all these days. For see, Ma was now present Herself ! Everyone of them had Ma's darshan every day and talked to her and felt gratified.

In the afternoons ladies started coming for Ma's darshan and their numbers increased day by day. The people living in the neighbouring hills were arriving to see Ma and became so enamoured on meeting her that they climbed over hills and mountains to get to her every day. They declared, "We just cannot live without seeing Ma and therefore we come every day from so far." Bengali ladies also collected daily from great distances. The difficulties of walking over mountainous paths or through rain showers could not stop them from coming to Ma. Ma seemed to be pulling them here. As the crowds swelled day by day, Ma's little room became a market place of bliss. Ma told the ladies, "Can the mother remain without seeing the daughter ? That is why you come taking so much trouble." The ladies replied, "We do not feel any trouble at all. Ma, we are all the time fraught with worry as to when we can finish serving food and send our husbands to office so that we can rush to you for a few minutes !" How very eager they were for Ma ! Can such longing be wrought within an acquaintance of two days ? Virendra Dada said, "Ma, may be the *Gopīs* were eager just like this to send their husbands away, so that they could meet Krishna." We were also enthralled to see how these people had begun longing for Ma in such a short time. Ma's grace seemed to embrace everyone and all the people were feeling blessed to have Ma's darshan.

Hill-women and
Bengali ladies
arrive at Ma's
feet — Ma's
wonderful power
of attraction

Simla being a hill station has beautiful scenery all around. Ma went for walks every morning and evening and was followed by a large crowd of devotees in the evenings. They all felt very happy to hear her invaluable advice. One afternoon Ma was sitting on her bed for rest after lunch when some Punjabi ladies arrived. They asked, "Ma, what kind of *sādhana* can householders perform?" Ma replied, "Service and *japa* of mantra is the ideal *sādhana* for householders." They questioned further, "Alright; does mantra *japa* have to be done only once daily or should it be done two or three times a day?" Ma replied, "Just as you have to eat twice a day to sustain the body, similarly meditation and *japa* have definitely to be done regularly morning and evening to the best of one's ability. Then right through the day just as you drink water, eat betel leaves or fruit, it is necessary for you to think of Him or do *japa* in between to the extent possible. That also helps on the path to Truth."

The ladies again asked, "On some days the mind gets fully absorbed while doing *nāma-japa* but on other days it just cannot concentrate and gets restless — why is this?" Ma said, "Look, there are many reasons for this. There is surely something wrong in your behaviour or your food which causes the mind to become restless and does not allow it to do *nāma-japa*. And moreover your mind can be disturbed by the blemish from some invisible object or by the touch of some person or by conversation with someone or in many ways which you are not even aware of. Therefore

Ma's advice regarding simple *sādhana* for householders

Ma's advice — staying in solitude, *satsanga* and meditation on Truth absolutely necessary

I say that if anyone wishes to advance in this direction, it is absolutely necessary for him to leave all company and live in solitude. First of all he must be careful to avoid everything that might put obstacles in the way of his mind's progress towards God. Of course, it is not possible for householders to leave all company. They should cultivate *satsanga* and talk about spiritual subjects. Meeting saints and sages or even reading about their lives purifies the mind and helps in advancing towards God."

"Very often the deeds of previous births appear as aids or hurdles on the path towards Truth. The effect of karmas of past births manifests in this birth and that sometimes causes a particular mood to dominate."

"Always when any work is performed, if it is done with the constant remembrance that it is a service to God, then just as old leaves of a tree fall off as new ones appear, the attachment to worldly objects gives way to attachment for God and outward tendencies are turned inward. This is the most natural process. Again see, the old leaves which have fallen to the ground become manure for the tree ; so nothing is futile — know this."

In Simla, one afternoon, many ladies came and Ma was conversing laughingly with them. One of them said, "Ma, the mind does not become steady in any way. How can it be made steady?" Ma replied smilingly, "The water in a pot shakes as long as the pot is being moved ; but if you leave the pot in one place you will see that the water also gradually becomes quiet. Similarly try to keep your body still for a long time. The longer

Ma's advice
about steadying
the mind

you are able to sit still with one-pointed determination the more steady will your mind become. Just as restlessness is the nature of the mind, so also are calmness and steadiness its true nature. Try to sit without moving for as long as you can and repeat His name. The mind may go hither and thither, but do not relax your effort. If the mind refuses to give up its dharma, why should you let go of your dharma ?”

In the evening all the gentlemen arrived straight from office, some of them had not even been home for a drink of water or a change of clothes. Ma would tell us, Ma’s attraction “If there is something to eat bring it and give it to them.” They would eat a little fruit or sweetmeat and settle down to hear Ma’s words. After getting Ma’s darshan no one seemed to desire anything more. Ma would say, “Have you all gone mad ? What has happened to your eating refreshments after office, your evening stroll ? You seem to have forgotten it all. I am your daughter, with a body of flesh and blood. I am one of you. What do you come to see ?” What reply could they give to this ? They would just gaze at Ma’s face. They themselves did not know what attraction drew them here. They all declared, “We do not know what kind of intoxication this is. We cannot explain.”

One evening all were seated around Ma. Ma was sitting on her bedding which consisted of a blanket with a small bed cover on it. The windows were open. Mountains and hills dotted with fields and houses were visible as far as the eye could see. Far away the mountains seemed to touch the sky. All the people

Meaning of the word ‘*Samādhi*’

were watching Ma's other-worldly, bliss-permeated form in absolute silence. At times the house was perfectly quiet and peaceful even with so many people crowding in it, whereas at other times the little room resounded with the happy voices of Ma's devotees. All these situations seemed to purify the mind. Those who came to Ma forgot their worldliness at least for the time being. Various kinds of conversation ensued. Someone asked, "Ma, what is *samādhi*?" Ma said, "I say Baba, that the total completion (*samādhāna*) or end of *bhāva* and karma is *samādhi*." Again she said, "From the worldly point of view I say that it is just like after working, eating and drinking the whole day long you finally have deep sleep at night."

CHAPTER XXX

Today is 21st June, and being a Sunday many gentlemen came to Ma in the afternoon. Ma sat on her small bedding and spoke to her devotees with her characteristic smile. Haran Babu queried, "What is the solution for all our problems Ma ? Do tell us." After a moment's pause he said, "Alright Ma, He is self-Illumined—then why should we call out to Him ?" Ma replied, "Baba, I know nothing, yet I speak whatever I am made to speak. Don't you see that when a seed germinates within the soil it manifests such strength that even the ground vibrates and as the seed sprouts the ground is torn apart. In exactly the same way your heart's yearning ! 'What is the solution ?' is the vibration of the ground. And this vibration occurs only because He is Self-Illumined. Longing for him is the real nature of the *jīva*."

Another day when all the devotees had gathered, a discussion was on as to taking initiation from the family preceptor (*kula guru*). Many people were reluctant to take initiation from their family preceptors because they believed that the preceptors knew nothing. Yet they were afraid to bypass their preceptors. The topic of *bija mantra* also came up. Commenting on all these problems Ma said, "Look, just as a seed which is planted in the soil and is covered with earth will not germinate if the seed is taken out and looked at again and again, similarly if you keep the *bija mantra* secret within the mind,

The efficacy of
the *bija mantra*
regardless of the
quality of Guru

—regardless of who gives it to you—and do japa regularly, the *bija* will sprout and yield a tree with flowers and fruits—there is no doubt about this. Just like the seed of a tree, keep it covered and water it regularly. At the appropriate time the tree will surely manifest. However the Guru may be, the *bija* you receive is God's name certainly, then why do you feel that it will not be effective? Suppose a little child gives you a seed without knowing what seed it is. Probably you also do not know. But when you wholeheartedly work at it, at the opportune moment when the tree emerges and yields flowers and fruits, then only will you know what kind of seed it was. Just because the seed was not known, does the tree not emerge if you have nurtured it regularly? Similarly regardless of the guru's stature, if you work regularly on the *bija* you will certainly obtain results."

Ma also narrated a story to illustrate this point. "Once a man who was very eager to get initiation, approached a *sādhū*. But the *sādhū* refused to give initiation, yet the man was equally persistent about receiving it. Finally the *sādhū* blurted out impatiently, 'Go, take Gopiya Nandan!' The man did *praṇāma* to the *sādhū* with the utmost reverence and faith and began doing *japa* of 'Gopiya Nandan', day and night. He forgot to eat and drink nor could he sleep. He only sat and repeated 'Gopiya Nandan'.

All the people around him now started worrying that he would go mad if he gave up food and sleep in this way, so a relative went up to him and said, "I shall do the *nāma-japa* instead of you. You go and have some food and sleep. I shall do *japa* of your 'Gopiya Nandan' name for you." But

the man refused to budge. Finally when many people requested him insistently he gave in. He entrusted the repetition of the name to his relative and had a meal and slept.

The relative saw that the man was fast asleep and thought, "Why should I bother to do the *nāma-japa* now? Moreover can 'Gopiya Nandan' be a *bija mantra*? I shall get up." And the relative stopped the *japa*.

Immediately the sincere spiritual aspirant awoke and found that his *nāma-japa* had been stopped. Like a mad man he ran to his relative and demanded, "Give my name back to me." He believed that once he had given away his mantra he could not take it back until it was returned. Scornfully the relative retorted, "Here, take your 'Ghanta Nandan'!" But the man did not take this as an insult, instead he happily began doing *japa* of the name as he received it from the relative to whom he had entrusted his *nāma*. He left the village and sat beneath a tree and began repeating the name 'Ghanta Nandan'.

Now Sri Krishna's *āsana* began to shake. He told Radha, "Come, I shall take you to see my devotee who surpasses all other devotees." Radha was curious to see the great devotee and they both went. Sri Krishna's nature is to remain hidden, so he stood concealed under a tree far from the devotee, while Radha assumed the garb of an ordinary woman and went to the *sādhū*. She found him repeating, 'Ghanta Nandan' with his eyes shut. She asked him, "Whose name are you repeating?" When she questioned him thus many times over the *sādhū* recognised Radha with his eyes closed. He laughed and said, "I am repeating your Lord's name." Radha asked, "Can you say, then, where my husband is?" The *sādhū* had

acquired divine vision as the effect of his *nāma-japa*, so he laughed and pointed out, "See that tree over there—He is standing beneath it." Thereafter the *sādhū* had darshan of Radha Krishna together and he attained liberation."

Having narrated this story Ma concluded, "Look, one-pointed *sādhanā* and simple faith is the means of realising God. The devotee got liberation even by repeating 'Gopiya Nandan' and 'Ghanta Nandan'."

After various such conversations, Ma had a little milk and fruit and went to sleep at about one o'clock.

The next day again all the devotees assembled. The men folk usually arrived in the evening after office. Ma sometimes

rested for some time in the afternoons but if ladies arrived at that time she would talk to them and would not rest. Around four o'clock the ladies would leave and the men would

arrive. At about six, Ma would usually go out for a walk after which she would return to her little room and sit on her small bedding. Then devotees flocked in, group after group so that there was no room for them to sit and many remained standing. The doorway and the veranda became chock full of people. Ma spoke on various topics, smiling and laughing all the time. The visitors were so eager to at least get one glimpse of Ma through the big crowd. This kind of routine went on till one o'clock in the morning.

During these conversations Ma once said, "Look, '*Ṛṣi*' I say is one who has become permeated with his *rasa*; he is a *ṛṣi*. And '*muni*'—one whose mind (*manas*) has merged in Him; I call him a '*muni*'."

Ma's interpretation of the words *ṛṣi*, *muni*, *duniyā*, *samsāra*, *ghar*

With regard to the word ‘*duniyā*’ Ma said, “That which is made of the two is called ‘*duniyā*’. You must try to give up this attitude of accepting duality and live with the idea of One ; only then will you gradually attain peace. If you live with One there is nothing lacking thereafter and therefore no agitation arises either. That is verily a mantra, in One there is Truth, Peace and Bliss.”

About the word *samsāra* Ma said, “ ‘*samsāra*’ means ‘*sang*’ (clown) + ‘*sāra*’ (essence), that is mistaking one’s role in the world for the Real. So long as you forget who you really are and regard your disguise as the substance, can you attain peace ? Until you become what you are in Reality, till then how can you get peace ? That is why I say : try to realize your Self.”

Ma laughingly questioned almost everyone, “Where is your home ?” Some without realising the significance of this query would talk about their worldly homes. Ma would laugh and say, “But that is the home of your breath. You will be allowed to stay there so long as you breathe. After that ? Do you ever think of your very own home ?” In this way Ma explained deeply significant matters with examples from day to day life.

A Solar eclipse occurred on a Friday in June. All the devotees sang *nāma-kīrtan* in Ma’s presence during the eclipse.

One evening Charu Babu and others were asking Ma various questions. Ma was talking about *ātma* and *paramātmā*. “Like the tree and its shade — if you concentratedly look at the tree, you do not see the shadow and if you look only at the shadow, you do not see the tree. But if your atten-

tion is not steadily focussed on one then you can see both the tree and its shade. Similarly so long as the tree, the shade and the identification of the *ātma* with the body exists, you differentiate between *ātma* and *paramātmā* ; therefore this going and coming, birth and rebirth continue. When your attention is steadied you will see that there is nothing other than the One. The shade is that of the tree and nothing else."

One man told Ma, "Ma, my mind does not dissolve by *pūjā*, *japa* and other practices." Ma replied, "Look here, does the date palm yield juice as soon as it is cut ? Only after it is pierced deeper and deeper does the juice flow out freely. And that juice is used to make so many solid foods. Similarly the mind will melt gradually by doing *nāma-japa* with devotion and faith. Go on doing *japa* and other *sādhana* regularly."

CHAPTER XXXI

Monday, 22nd June. Many devotees gathered around Ma and decided to do *nāma* kirtan the next day. People here do akhanda *nāma*-kirtan once every year from six a.m. to six p.m. in the Kali temple and it was this that was going to be done the next day. *Adhivāsa* (preliminary function) was to be performed the evening before the kirtan. Devotees had detained Ma for this day and had not let her leave earlier. They had requested Ma most pressingly and made her stay on.

Adhivāsa and other initial preparations for the yearly kirtan in Simla

Baba Bholanath derives great pleasure from singing kirtan and would join all the devotees. The *adhivāsa* ceremony was started and Ma was taken there. First Ma and Bholanath were garlanded and anointed with sandal-wood paste and curds. Then the *pakhāvaj* (drum) and *kartal* (cymbal) players received sandal marks on their foreheads, after which all the devotees were decorated with garlands and sandal-wood paste marks. A platform in the middle of the kirtan hall had been decorated with flowers and leaves ; pictures of Sri Krishna, Gauranga Mahaprabhu, Nityananda (Nitai) and others were put up all around the platform. The pictures had been adorned with garlands and sandal-wood paste.

The kirtan hall is right opposite the Kali temple which had also been decorated with flowers and leaves and illuminated with electric bulbs. In memory of Ma's visit Sri Deven Babu donated a huge, very beautiful chandelier for the kirtan hall.

Ma sat on the veranda of the kirtan hall and devotees began circumambulating the circular altar in the kirtan room and singing the name that was to be kept up throughout the next day. They were all singing the prayer of the Vaishnavas thus :—

“*Sri Kṛṣṇa Chaitanya, Prabhu Nityānanda
Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Rāma, Sri Rādhe Govinda.*”

Bholanath joined in and danced. *Adhivāsa* was started around nine o'clock. Haran Babu sang *nāma*-kirtan beautifully and Virendra and other devotees also sang. Ma's presence with the mountains in the background in the darkness of night made the Name sound very sweet. Their apparel and the decoration of the room, all looked beautiful. After some time the kirtan was stopped since it was to be resumed the next morning at six. All did *praṇāma* to Ma and departed and Ma also went to her room and lay down.

Tuesday, 23rd June. Today kirtan was begun at six in the morning. Some who could never get up early and usually joined in singing only in the afternoons, this time even they turned up at six a.m. to do their bit. When they were leaving the previous night Ma had told them, “Baba, come early tomorrow morning. You must take some trouble at least on one day. That is itself *tapasyā*. The meaning of *tapasyā* is ‘*tāpa* (suffering)—*sahana* (to endure, to bear)’.” And because Ma had told them to come early almost everyone came in the morning. Ma sat on the veranda. Everyone did *praṇāma* to Ma and Bholanath and began singing kirtan decked with fresh garlands and sandalwood paste. Bholanath enjoys kirtan

Nāma yajña in
Simla. Ma's
interpretation of
tapasyā

greatly and danced immersed in *bhāva*. His presence brought great joy to all the others. The sound of *nāma* kirtan was spreading sweetness all around. Large groups of people arrived and joined in the singing. The ladies were seated behind the chick in the veranda.

The rhythm of the kirtan was maintained by the drums and cymbals and devotees were dancing to this rhythm. The hearts of the listeners were also dancing. Durgadas Babu did *praṇāma* to all present and offered garlands and sandal paste to them.

Meanwhile preparations were going on for a meal for all on a large scale. In a room upstairs *bhoga* for Gaur-Nitai was being prepared separately. '*Mālsā bhoga*' typical of *Vaiṣṇavas*, had also been provided and no detail was lacking. The devotees who were singing kirtan were all educated and highly placed and therefore all rules and regulations were being observed minutely. Ma's presence added greatly to the joy.

Ma had been sitting on the veranda of the Kali temple in front of the kirtan hall for about two hours. Baba Bholanath noticed that some changes were occurring in Ma's body and so he told me to take her inside and I did accordingly. Since it was the day for Ma's meal I washed her mouth and made her eat some food. I found that Ma's body was trembling and she was unable to place her feet steadily.

About five years ago I had witnessed Ma's various *bhāvas* during kirtan in Dhaka, Calcutta, Kashi and other places.

Ma's wonderful *bhāva* during the *nāma yajña* But now for the past few years no *bhāvas* had been manifesting. Today a hint of that *bhāva* was perceptible, but Ma was keeping it under control by talking about various things, taking a

walk on the road outside and lying down on her bed for some time. Yet her face was flushed with a supernatural glow and her eyes were red. Her countenance and behaviour radiated a brilliance like that of lightning and she was hardly able to contain it.

At about one o'clock I tried to feed Ma but she could not eat at all. She said, "I am not able to eat and the body feels strange — not quite alright." Twice she nearly fell down because her legs were trembling. She got up and went to the kirtan hall and then returned to her room. It was nearly two o'clock. Ma went amidst the ladies seated near the kirtan hall and sat on the lap of Charu Babu's wife, who embraced her tightly as if she were a little child. Ma's tear filled eyes were limpid yet her smile was there just as usual. Bholanath was still moving about and singing kirtan. Since six in the morning he had been participating in the kirtan without even a sip of water. Everyone was amazed to see him go on with such stamina and exuberant joy during kirtan at his age. They had never seen the like of this! Noticing Ma's condition Bholanath became anxious for he knew in what a terrible state Ma had once been during *bhāva samādhi* and how difficult it had been to rouse her.

Earlier it had so happened that a total semblance of death was manifested in Ma's body. We had all been gripped by panic and had only sung *nāma* kirtan fervently. Some people had sat near Ma's feet and had done *nāma japa* and yet that had not brought about any change in Ma's condition. Because of this precedent Bholanath now entered Ma's room and said,

Ma immersed in
bhāva in spite of
being cautious

“Look, don’t go much into the current of the kirtan so that you do not get into this kind of *bhāva*.” Ma replied, “You have been seeing all along that I don’t do anything by my own will, then why do you speak like this?” He rejoined, “I do know that. Nevertheless the moment you perceive a hint of that *bhāva* just get up and come away.” Ma said, “That is what I am doing yet it is happening of its own accord.”

Meanwhile the melody of the Name was wafting all around and gaining fervour. Devotees were dancing to the rhythm of the drums and cymbals. To outside observers it seemed as if Ma were in a vivacious mood the entire day. A little before dusk Ma went to the ladies seated near the kirtan and Suresh Babu’s wife called Ma and made her sit on her lap. (We learnt that Suresh Babu’s wife had established a Gita Samiti for ladies and was taking the lead in organising such elevating activities. She was greatly respected by all.) Ma sat on her lap like a little girl for some time and then got up and sat on her own *āsana*.

Some time ago the women devotees in Dhaka had performed kirtan beautifully on Ma’s injunction and since then they were meeting every Sunday to sing kirtan. Ma mentioned this fact to the gentlemen in Simla but no one paid attention to it, particularly because they had hardly ever heard of ladies singing kirtan. But Ma reiterated, “Look, don’t leave the women behind, for if you proceed without them your progress will be obstructed. Teach them to join in this work and you will also gain strength.” Therefore Ma has roused interest in kirtan amongst

Ma’s external
vivacity

Introduction of
ladies’ kirtan
in Simla

women in various places. Women in Dhaka and Calcutta sing kirtan very well. Ma spoke about all this in Simla but no one heeded it. Who can understand Ma's will?

Suresh Babu's wife spoke up on her own initiative, "Ma, today your sons have sung *nāma* kirtan for you ; tomorrow we daughters shall sing *nāma* kirtan for you." Ma asked, "When will you sing?" They decided they would sing kirtan from twelve to four the next afternoon and all ladies were informed there and then. Everyone agreed joyfully.

After that Ma sat quietly on her *āsana* and listened to the *nāma* kirtan. Suddenly she stood up and before anyone could

Wonderful
supernatural
kriyās in Ma's
body during
kirtan

discern what was happening, she went to her room with lightning speed and lay down. I followed her and she told me indistinctly to shut the door. I did so quietly. A little later

Swami Akhandananda and Bacchu's mother entered the room and as they enquired about Ma, she started rolling about on her bed. Now her body began to assume various states in a wonderful manner. Virendra Dada heard of this and came running from the next room. Seeing Ma's condition he threw open the door. Bacchu's mother ran and told the devotees to come and witness Ma's state but before they arrived Ma's body started revolving like a wheel and moved towards the kirtan hall. Ma's clothes and hair were disarranged and I was unable to set them right because her body was turning very fast and it seemed as if she might fall down and hurt herself any moment. But as soon as it touched the ground her body would swerve and rise again. Virendra Dada and I moved on either side of Ma and she crossed the steps in

this manner revolving in time with the kirtan and at the doorway of the kirtan she collapsed to the ground.

It must have been about seven thirty in the evening. The gathering of devotees was amazed and enraptured. They sang louder with doubled enthusiasm and Ma's body began rising slowly in time with the rhythm of the kirtan. It appeared so light that it seemed to fly in the wind and rise and fall as if it were weightless. Again she fell and started rolling very fast on the ground. Ma's body, like a cloth flying in the breeze sometimes fell, sometimes rose, then rolled on the ground and sometimes revolved and swayed. Thus various *kriyās* occurred in Ma's body.

None of the people in Simla had ever seen such a sight before. But almost all of them were highly educated and religious and well versed in literature like Chaitanya Charit-āmrita and they did not take long to realise that this *bhāva* was not of any ordinary kind. They were watching Ma in amazement and keeping the crowd back. All were singing kirtan moving around Ma. In the twinkling of an eye Ma fell to the ground from the upright position and began rotating like a wheel. I was near Ma trying to save her body from injury. Most of the time she fell on me but her body had become so light that though she was falling so swiftly I didn't feel the impact at all, nor did she get hurt in the least. After a moment she sat down.

Then invocations* began pouring forth in a continuous flow from Ma's lips as it had happened before. How beautiful

* These invocations and incantations have already been described earlier. No one has been able to understand that language till now. They

the pronunciation was ! The words were lucid but no one could understand the meaning. Ma's tongue was twisting in

various ways as she pronounced the words. Spontaneous emergence of invocations from Ma

Ma says, "These words seemed to push themselves out and to cease gradually of their own accord." And it was so now. Invocations poured forth fluently. Ma extended her legs and then her entire body. Gradually her right hand rose and the space between her eyebrows was pressed by a finger. The invocations stopped gradually. Ma says, "This raising of my right hand and the pressing of the spot between my eyebrows with my finger was not done purposefully by me. Just as these invocations start of their on accord, when they cease the hand raises itself and some *kriyā* of this kind occurs. Then these invocations are over."

Ma says many a time, "It is as though I were seated somewhere and am watching these *kriyās* of the body. All the *bhāvas* that occur during kirtan are but *kriyās* of the body. I am myself able to see these *kriyās* of this body." Not once but many times has Ma repeated, "These are bodily *kriyās*— I am always steady in one *bhāva*. I see these various *kriyās* coming about in the body." With regard to all activities Ma

emerge from Ma's lips spontaneously and also cease of their own accord. Mahamahopadhyaya Gopinath Kaviraj opined that it was not the Sanskrit language of the present era and that it was a divine language. When these invocations emanate from Ma spontaneously, the first word is the *praṇava*. Ma says, "In childhood I heard that women are not supposed to utter the word 'Aum' and in obedience to my elders I also never uttered the *praṇava*. Later these words pushed themselves out from within. And then the feeling that these words should not be uttered never arose."

says, "These are happening spontaneously within this body." Ma has explained her laughing, crying, walking, talking and all activities as just bodily *kriyās*. She does not identify herself with her body. We have observed this fact many times in Ma's behaviour and she has also said as much. Yet we fail to comprehend !

As Ma's utterances ceased, people started pushing forward to do *praṇāma*. Those whose family members were not all present sent home for them to come for all just had to take the dust of Ma's feet today. Ma withdrew her feet slowly but her eyes were closed. In between she opened her eyes but her gaze was unblinking and most beautiful. There is no way of imagining that gaze unless one actually sees it. As it is the expression of Ma's eyes touches one's heart and during *bhāva* it becomes most exquisitely beautiful. The colour of Ma's face was red and flushed with radiance. Sometimes it has become even black during *bhāva*.

Some minutes later Ma lay down on the ground and became unconscious. The climate there was cold and Ma was lying on the bare floor. Devotees lifted Ma and laid her down on her bed. Her eyes were closed and her body was cold. Some people rubbed her hands and some her feet. After a long time Ma opened her eyes but her gaze was unblinking as before. A little later tears started flowing profusely from her eyes and she closed them again. We rubbed her body for a long time and then she sat up. The room could not contain the crowd of devotees. The gentlemen were saying, "The kirtan which we have been performing all these years in this Kali temple has

Difference in
Ma's external
behaviour during
bhāvā

had its reward today. It is the immense good fortune of the people living in Simla that Ma herself was gracious enough to come here and give us all darshan and purify Simla. Today we are indeed blessed !”

Bholanath had not even sipped water throughout the day, nor had he even sat down during the last twelve hours. He

had been dancing during the kirtan. He was now resting. People were remarking, “We derived great joy from Bholanath’s presence at the kirtan.” After resting for some time

Bholanath went for his meal.

Ma was sitting but her gaze was unblinking. All were staring at Ma with a fixed gaze. Ma’s tongue was numb and

speech could not emerge. We were trying to make her say something. I told everybody, “Call out to Ma.” Haran Babu, Durgadas. Ma’s condition before emerging from *bhāva*

Babu, Charu Babu and others began calling Ma loudly and repeatedly. Ma was looking up at them once in a way with watery eyes and a smiling face but was unable to speak. Her eyes kept closing as she was overwhelmed by the exalted *bhāva* and some time was spent thus. Then she started speaking softly in an indistinct voice. We could not understand much but her gaze was naive and her speech was lisping like that of a little child. All watched and listened enthralled. Her face was still red and lit by a divine glow. A little later Ma fell asleep. Everyone left around midnight.

At about one a.m. we tried to make Ma eat something. Devotees had left all the items of *bhoga* for Ma and they were all desirous of feeding Ma a little bit, but Ma was unable to.

swallow anything. We have seen this often but those who were seeing it for the first time kept saying, "Keep a little sweetmeat in Ma's mouth and see what happens." I placed a piece of sweet in Ma's mouth but she was unable to swallow it and sat with it in her mouth. When told to spit it out she could not do that either and in fact she did not seem to understand at all what we were saying. She just stared at our faces vacantly in such a way that it seemed she just did not know what she was asked to do. What a wonderful state! With great difficulty I managed to throw the piece of sweet out of her mouth. Then I took her inside and made her sleep. Like a little child she said, "Shall I sleep then?" and fell asleep.

The next day was her fasting day so around two a.m. I again tried to make her drink some warm milk. After I shook her and called out to her many times, like rousing someone from deep sleep, she drank a little milk. Then she seemed to fall asleep again, such was her state. The whole night through and till eleven the next morning she lay motionless like a stone.

CHAPTER XXXII

Wednesday, 24th June. The ladies here who had decided to sing *nāma* kirtan arrived at eleven o'clock, drenched by the downpour. At twelve o'clock Ma took them Ladies' kirtan in Simla under Ma's leadership all to the kirtan hall. Their numbers were so great that the hall could not contain them. Today again all the ladies were adorned with garlands and sandal paste. Two or three small boys were playing the drums and cymbals. Ma had had the altar prepared just like on the previous day. At first the kirtan did not gain much tempo because the ladies did not know how to perform *nāma* kirtan but finally Ma stood up and started singing and went around the altar dancing and walking. The ladies followed her and did likewise. What a wonderful sight it was !

The kirtan gained fervour and a little later the situation was such that all the singers forgot themselves and lost all sense of timidity and shyness ; raising both hands and putting them around each others' necks they danced and sang kirtan fullthroatedly. They were perspiring profusely. I don't think anyone had ever seen the ladies of traditional homes sing *nāma* kirtan in this fashion. Ma was dancing in beat with the rhythm of the kirtan and seemed to be teaching the others. Whenever she put her arms around anyone's neck that person felt gratified and as soon as they saw this the other women bent their heads towards Ma's hands. Ma never leaves anyone's desires unfulfilled ; she embraced each lady one by one and sang *nāma* kirtan.

Electric lights were switched on in the room and it was raining outside. No one had witnessed such a marvellous scene ever before! Many of the women were commenting, "Ma, we had only heard the story of '*rāsa līlā*'; today you have shown *rāsa līlā* to us." All were immersed in bliss. It was four o'clock but the *nāma* kirtan continued and stopped only at four thirty. *Prasāda* was distributed and the women did *praṇāma* to Ma and left. Before their departure a proposal was made to hold a session of kirtan by ladies every year in this manner, after the *nāma yajña*, to commemorate Ma's visit to Simla. All agreed to this joyfully.

After the ladies departed Ma sat on her bedding. The gentlemen arrived after office. In course of conversation Ma said, "Today the girls sang kirtan very beautifully. For some time they were not aware of the manner in which they were dancing. Not one had her head covered." Some of the men whose office was close by had been able to hear the kirtan there. They said, "Ma, we heard the kirtan sitting in our office; it was very beautiful."

Most of the people left at night. Ma was speaking to Charu Babu, "When you have *akhaṇḍa* darshan or understand the *akhaṇḍa bhāva* then only do you realise the *akhaṇḍa* Truth and become established in the *akhaṇḍa* state. It is then that *savikalpa samādhi* manifests the complete solution of *bhāva* and karma. It is like being fully immersed when bathing. No limb is left dry."

Thursday, 25th June. This afternoon again Ma was seated on her bed when the women devotees gathered around her.

Those who had been unable to participate in the kirtan, since they had not received prior information expressed great sorrow. Ma's speech was not fully distinct and she was not able to speak properly. The ladies still retained much enthusiasm for kirtan and they were saying, "Ma let us have some kirtan today also." Ma laughed and said, "That is very good, do it." They all said, "Ma, you sing and we will join you." Ma sang 'Hari Bol' in her sweet voice and the ladies joined in. *Nāma* kirtan went on for a long time and the ladies who had missed participating the previous day were somewhat consoled.

The women narrated to Ma all that had happened when they returned home the previous day after the kirtan. They were enjoying Ma's company greatly and their faces were radiant with happiness, as if a big and imposing inhibition had been removed by Ma's grace. They had never been able to sing kirtan in this manner but Ma had now given them that happiness and they were telling Ma this in various ways.

Ma decided to leave for Solan the next day. Everyone opposed Ma's decision. Some said "Take us along with you otherwise we shall lie down in your way and not let you go." Devotion seemed to be overflowing, they had become so very close to Ma within those few days. What attraction made them so crazy? Ma's power of attraction is indeed marvellous! All seemed to be mad for Ma's company. Though these were passing sentiments, hearing about them gave us much joy.

In the evening Ma went for a walk and on returning sat down on her bed with devotees placed all around her. Talk of her departure for Solan the next day began and everybody vehemently protested against her leaving so soon. Ma explained to them sweetly that it would be appropriate for her to depart the next day but they alternately prayed and again became grave and cajoled her in various ways to stay on. When they found that she showed no signs of giving in, Haran Babu proposed, "Ma, don't leave tomorrow. On Saturday we shall all accompany you to Solan and sing kirtan for twelve hours from six in the evening to six in the morning." Bholanath heard the mention of kirtan and agreed to stay on and Ma was then compelled to consent. It was decided that all would accompany Ma on Saturday and sing kirtan throughout the night and return on Sunday. The Raja of Solan was informed by phone. Everyone was delighted at the thought of enjoying Ma's company for a few more days. After deciding all this the devotees left at about one a.m., having done *praṇāma* to Ma and Bholanath. Ma also went to sleep.

Friday, 26th June. In the morning Ma woke up and went for a walk with Charu Babu and others. Today was Ma's day of fasting. She returned and sat on her bed. Devotees arrived two or three at a time and went. Some came before office to take the dust of Ma's feet. When everybody had left, Ma went upstairs and walked about as she pleased. A little later she lay down on her bed and then the ladies started arriving. Gradually the room filled up and Ma rose. The women expressed their sorrow at not being able to go to Solan.

Ma's advice—
"Do not waste
time in useless
chatter"

They all sang kirtan for some time. Ma remarked 'You should not sit empty mouthed—do something. Either do *nāma* kirtan or chant passages from scriptures or think over and discuss spiritual subjects. It is necessary to do something useful and not waste time in useless chatter.' At about four o'clock the ladies left and the gentlemen began to file in.

Around five Ma took a walk accompanied by many people. At dusk she returned to her room and sat surrounded by devotees as on other days. About thirty-five people had decided to go to Solan with Ma and they were all very happy that they would sing kirtan with her. Ma told them, "Your Dehradun kirtan hall has been made well. There no one knows how to sing kirtan the way you do—it has to be sung standing. You all sing kirtan standing from beginning to end. Well, if convenient you all can go to your Dehradun Ashram once and perform kirtan." They all replied, "Ma we have already decided that the moment we receive news of your arrival in Dehradun on our return from Delhi, we shall go to Dehradun and sing kirtan to our hearts' content. Then we shall also take you to Delhi." Ma replied, "If this body keeps well then, when the time comes whatever has to happen will happen. That you will all meet and sing kirtan is indeed a matter of great joy." After conversing on various topics the devotees left at one a.m. and Ma lay down to rest.

All rejoice in the
opportunity to
accompany Ma
to Solan

CHAPTER XXXIII

Saturday, 27th June. Today Ma started for Solan. The Raja had sent three cars and Ma left with thirty odd devotees after lunch. The cars could not accommodate all of them, so many travelled by train. Ma reached Solan before dusk. The Raja came and did *praṇāma* at Ma's feet. Dr. Madan Mohan Joshi took Ma to see the room which had been prepared for the kirtan.

Ma's departure
for Solan

It was large, adjoining the temple and had been tastefully decorated with flowers and leaves with an altar in the centre on which images of Radha Krishna had been placed. Accommodation had been reserved for devotees and all the items necessary for meals had been kept ready and were being brought to the temple by the Raja's staff. All the devotees went into the kirtan room together. An *āsana* was spread for Ma and she sat down. Everyone did *praṇāma* to Ma and put garlands round each other's necks and sandal paste on their foreheads before starting the kirtan. The Raja mingled with his subjects and participated in the kirtan and so did the Vazir and the boys. The Rani, the Rajmata and the ladies of the royal household sat behind the chick inside the temple. In Simla no one had sat down during kirtan but kept standing from start to finish. Today again they circumambulated round the altar or stood in one place and sang. It was raining heavily outside. Ma sat for the kirtan throughout the night. Bholanath danced amidst all during kirtan. He had started observing *mauna* for

Great bliss in
kirtan with Ma
in Solan

about four years from today and therefore he did not chant the name loudly. Kirtan was performed throughout the night with great joy.

Meanwhile in another room a short distance away, Viren Dada was relating to Sri Sudhir Sarkar and others about Ma's earlier life. They were so enthralled listening to stories of Ma's *lilā* that though they kept on repeating that they had to join the kirtan, they were unable to tear themselves away. They were discussing amongst themselves, "Alright, how would it be if Ma were suddenly to appear here?" A prayer thus rose within them, "Let's see if Ma comes here leaving the kirtan. After all we are also doing Ma's kirtan now!" It was about two a.m. and rain was pouring heavily. Ma suddenly got up and walked through the downpour and reached the room where Virendra Dada and the others were seated. They were stunned. Ma laughed and ran back. I changed her clothes and she returned to the kirtan.

An amazing incident about Ma ; devotees' wish fulfilled

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were discussing amongst themselves, "Alright, how would it be if Ma were suddenly to appear here?" A prayer thus rose within them, "Let's see if Ma comes here leaving the kirtan. After all we are also doing Ma's kirtan now!" It was about two a.m. and rain was pouring heavily. Ma suddenly got up and walked through the downpour and reached the room where Virendra Dada and the others were seated. They were stunned. Ma laughed and ran back. I changed her clothes and she returned to the kirtan.

The Raja, Rani, Vazir Sahib and others were all present till four thirty a.m. after which they took Ma's permission to depart. There is a line in the kirtan which says, "Servant, slave, king and farmer all join to sing *Haribol*." Today Ma had actually brought about this situation when people ranging from the Raja to employees and servants had participated in the kirtan and danced. The kirtan ended at six thirty a.m. A variety of preparations for *bhoga* arrived from the Raja's palace—it was a sight worth seeing !

Sunday, 28th June. Most of the devotees took light refreshments and returned to Simla right after the kirtan since they had

to get back for important work. Some stayed on and decided to leave after meals in the afternoon. Heavy rains were continuing. Ma went to sleep at ten o'clock and awoke at one thirty. She conversed with devotees and sang one or two songs at their request. Ma said, "No one here has ever before heard kirtan sung for twelve hours in this manner ; if you find it convenient to do kirtan this way every year it will be good. A sādhu, well known as Shogi Baba who lived here, has left his body. He had this temple built and it is by his will that you all have come here to do kirtan." The temple has images of Radha Krishna in it. Ma said, "It appears that Sri Radha Krishna had the desire to hear *nāma* kirtan sung by you and therefore you came and sang the Name." Ma thus spoke of various matters.

At five p.m. devotees were leaving for Simla. The Rani and Raja also came for Ma's darshan and at that time the Raja requested the devotees "If you can come every year in this way according to your convenience and sing kirtan, we would be very happy." When Ma had told the devotees to come and sing kirtan every year the Raja had not been present, neither had he even heard about it. Ma was very pleased to hear the Raja's request and she said "That is very good indeed ; even if this body is not present you all can come and perform kirtan." Everyone exclaimed, "That won't do Ma. You will have to come. Otherwise there won't be any kirtan." The devotees departed and Ma conversed with the Rani and Raj-Mata. Since the Rani and Rajmata could not appear before

Advice to have
kirtan every year
at Solan

The Raja's
request because
of the appro-
priate inspiration

ordinary folk, Ma spoke to them behind closed doors. After they left Ma went to sleep at ten and we all, wrapped into our blankets, slept around her.

Monday, 29th June. Today Ma slept till about ten a.m. She was to eat today and therefore I called out to her and woke her. Ma's body seemed limp and the effect of kirtan was continuing. I had been observing a marvellous change in Ma's *bhāva* after the kirtan in Simla. Ma's mood now was what it had been like long ago—absent minded,

Change in Ma's *bhāva* from a stern intellectual mood to one overflowing with love

eyes red and brimming with tears and face shining with a red glow. This mood had become very rare during the past four or five years when she had been in a very lively mood. Sometimes she was serious and preached Vedānta; a stern intellectual mood like that of a learned scholar was prevalent most of the time. But now again she seemed to be immersed in *bhāva* and danced and sang "*Jaya Radhe Jaya Radhe*". The soles of her feet and her palms were red, it looked as if they had been painted with vermillion. On touching her hands I could feel that they had become swollen and very soft. When she sat for meals she was unable to eat because this *bhāva* was persisting. Her eyes were filled with tears but a smile played on her lips. What a beautiful smile it was! Those who have not seen it cannot imagine its sweetness.

I told Ma, "Ma, you have not eaten anything." Ma laughed and said. "*Jaya Radhe Jaya Radhe*" clapping her hands all the time. She was in great bliss. We were worried, for how could her body survive like this? But what could we do and who had the capacity to interfere with Ma's *bhāva*? Ma

said, "If you all work with *sadbhāva* this body will keep well. Of what use is this food?"

Tuesday, 30th June. Ma went for a walk in the morning and I washed her face and hands when she returned. She strolled around for some time and then lay down. In the afternoon devotees arrived. A boy came from Simla who wished to take Ma's photograph, so Ma and Bholanath went with him. Meanwhile the Rani and Rajmata arrived and sat waiting for Ma. Ma returned and talked to them till nine p.m. After they left Ma slept at ten p.m. and we spread our blankets next to her bedding and also went to sleep.

A boy takes Ma's and Bholanath's photograph

Ladies from several provinces sing *nāma* kirtan by Ma's inspiration

Wednesday 1st July. Today Ma did not go for a walk. She sat or lay down or just strolled about. She spoke a few words to the people who were coming. In the afternoon many women arrived. They hailed from Almora, Kashmir and many other places, there were no Bengali ladies in Solan. Ma told them, "Sing kirtan. It is not right to sit idle."

Ma said to me, "You sing first and they will repeat after you." And Ma began to sing *nāma* kirtan herself. We all joined her. After some time she stopped singing and we continued for a long time in obedience to her order. One observation I made was that after the *nāma yajña* in Simla, there has been some *nāma* kirtan sung near Ma every day. Sometimes it is Rama *nāma* kirtan, sometimes Hari *nāma* kirtan and sometimes Ma *nāma* kirtan.

Almost every evening the Raja, Rani and both Rajmatas were coming for Ma's darshan. It was nine thirty p.m. when they

finished conversing, did *praṇāma* and left. Ma strolled around and talked to all who were present. At ten she went to sleep.

On some nights Ma would be absolutely quiet once she lay down to sleep and not even stir. But on other nights she would sit up after a little while and say, "There is no mood to sleep tonight." On certain nights she sat up and swayed from side to side throughout the night. Sometimes as we slept she would get up quietly and walk about. I saw this only if I awoke, otherwise I never came to know until I heard of it from Ma the next day.

CHAPTER XXXIV

Thursday, 2nd July. Ma was not eating today and she slept till nine after which she awoke and I washed her face and hands. As I was changing her clothes she suddenly went to the window and spotted some colocasia leaves growing on the slopes outside and exclaimed, "Look, colocasia plants—shall I eat colocasia leaves?" And she burst out laughing; we also laughed.

Then the ladies started arriving and Ma made all of them sing *nāma* kirtan with her. Ma was just distributing the name all around and telling everyone, "Do *nāma* kirtan, everything can be achieved by *nāma japa* and *nāma* kirtan." Someone asked Ma,

Ma's advice
about *nāma japa*
and kirtan

"Ma what happens if we do *nāma japa* and *nāma* kirtan?" Ma said, "*Nāma japa* purifies the mind, and the place where it is done is also purified. Kirtan also purifies the mind of the one who does kirtan and the place where it is done. And the minds of those who hear kirtan are also purified." Ma was telling some to devote three hours, some two or even half an hour out of the twenty-four to *nāma japa* or kirtan. In addition she was telling each one to dedicate ten minutes at a particular time every day to God. She said, "Everyday at any set time you should sustain the remembrance of God for ten minutes. Even if you are not able to sit quietly in one place because of worldly occupations, then at least keep *mauna* during that particular time while working

Set aside a particular time for remembering God every day

with your hands and think of Him in whatever way you like. It makes no difference whether you are clean or unclean nor is it necessary to change your clothes to become pure. So much so that even if you have to go to the toilet at that particular time there is no objection. You can sit there and pray to Him. Feel that you have given Him those ten minutes and just as birds and beasts call out at a certain fixed times and are not stopped by any hindrances so must you try to give Him that particular time. Sustain the attitude that you have dedicated that time to Him."

This beautiful advice from Ma had such a wonderful response that even when someone's husband or son had just died and when the body was still in the house the wife or mother remembered Ma's injunction and sat up during the time set apart for God and repeated His name for ten minutes after which she went back to her weeping! Even amidst her terrible grief she was mindful of Ma's words, "Remember that this time has been given to Him for life," and tried to follow this advice to the letter.

Ma has said, "You should never forget to invoke Him at that time though you may be in the midst of worldly joys or sorrows. Remember that you have given that time to Him." Further she added, "Without accepting pure bonds you cannot get rid of impure bonds." People were trying to follow this invaluable advice in every home. Ma would say, "Look, one cannot be sure of the next breath. Keep this in mind and meditate on Him. Your life time is fast slipping away and with every breath your life span is decreasing." Ma was constantly giving such advice.

Other advice
from Ma

At ten p.m. Ma lay down and while conversing with Virendra Dada the topic of Krishna *lilā* came up. Ma said,

Sri Krishna *lilā* is supernatural and cannot be understood without transcending nature

“Krishna *lilā* is transcendental and unless one rises above nature one can neither enact such a *lilā* nor can one understand it. This *lilā* is not bound by nature so how will those who are enslaved by nature comprehend it? They try

to absorb its essence from their stand point only. I have heard someone say that all the *ṛṣis* took birth as the *gopīs*.

Virendra Dada said, “Ma *ṛṣis* were *Brahmajñānīs*, how then did they get the desire to participate in this *lilā*? Then again

Sri Krishna and *Gopīs* essentially the same—*ṛṣis* born because of *prārabdha* arising from earlier desires. Characteristics of a complete *Vaiṣṇava*

it is said that those who are *Brahmajñānas* are also of the nature of *Brahman* and therefore there is no difference between Krishna and the *ṛṣis*. Another opinion is that He Himself assumed various forms and enacted *lilā*. *Gopīs* and Krishna were one.” Ma replied, “This is quite true. But in answer to the question as

to where then did desires come from, one can say that earlier desires act in the form of *prārabdha*. No desires exist in the *jivanmukta* state but the *kriyā* of *prārabdha* does exist. However the *jivanmukta* does not experience any sorrow or joy because of this. Yet, know for sure that this is *akhanda* (uninterrupted) and everlasting *lilā*.” Further Ma said, “The *Gopīs* attained Krishna after performing the *Katyayani pūjā*. Nowadays do *Vaiṣṇavas* worship Devi thus? But one who is a complete *Vaiṣṇava* will have a total revelation of all the *bhāvas* within him.” This kind of conversation went on till midnight after which all went to sleep.

Friday, 3rd July. Today Ma was to eat and she slept till seven a.m. On some days when she had to eat Ma would lie down quietly with her eyes shut because I would tell her to eat as soon as she rose since she had not even sipped water the previous day. And on some days she would go out for a walk at the break of dawn and not return till eight." The previous day there was talk of Ma's eating colocasia leaves. This morning the Rajmata sent a variety of foodstuffs for Ma's *bhoga* and surprisingly enough she had also sent some colocasia leaf curry. In the past so many days that we had stayed at Solan, no one had ever given colocasia leaf curry. Now seeing the curry and remembering Ma's words of the previous day, we were astonished. Of course, we had witnessed such occurrences in Ma's presence earlier also. When Ma sat down to eat she saw colocasia leaf curry and laughingly remarked, "Is there colocasia leaf curry too? It was mentioned and it arrived immediately!"

Ma rested for a little while after her lunch. She was not keeping too well and seemed to have a cold. In the evening the Raja and Rani arrived as they had been doing all these days. The Raja came every morning around eleven o'clock for Ma's darshan in addition to his visit in the evening. At eight p.m. the Raja and Rani left and Ma talked for some time and lay down to sleep at ten.

The next day, Saturday, 4th July, Ma was not eating. She took a walk in the morning and then lay down. Ma's comments on the illness of her body In the afternoon many ladies arrived; Ma sat up and spoke to them. Kirtan was performed for some time. The Raja and Rani came in the evening.

and left at 8-30 p.m. Ma had a feverish cold but she laughingly said, "Just as you all come to me, diseases also have shapes and come and play within this body sometimes. They stay for a few days and then go away. I don't rebuke you for coming nor do your visits inconvenience me in any way. Similarly these illnesses do not cause me any trouble when they come. So when I don't rebuke you why should I chastise them? They have come, let them play awhile, then they will leave of their own. All is bliss. Even while suffering major illnesses Ma has said the same thing. I have never seen Ma miserable during sickness, she has always been blissful. She says, "I can see the form of a disease distinctly." She lay down at ten p.m. and sang a couple of devotional songs. After a long time she became silent and shut her eyes.

The next day Ma was to eat. She took a morning walk and on her return I washed her face and hands and fed her some milk and fruit. A Punjabi lady who had great regard and devotion for Ma, had brought lunch for Ma and was waiting with it. At ten o'clock we were still cooking when Ma went to the Punjabi lady and ate what she had brought out of the lady's hands without waiting for us to finish preparing her meal. She said, "She is waiting and won't leave without feeding me." Ma ate very little but the lady was gratified and exclaimed, "I and my children have been praying fervently since the morning that Ma should accept this *bhoga*!" Ma is utterly compassionate and she herself went and accepted the *bhoga* prepared with so much devotion saying appreciatively, "This curry is extremely tasty, the *roti* is excellent." Meanwhile we were thinking,

Ma—fulfiller of
earnest prayers.

"It would have been best if Ma had eaten as soon as we finished cooking. Why is she in such a hurry?" But our Ma is the knower of each individual's heart and she knew how eager the Punjabi lady had been to feed her. The lady did not have the courage to say much to Ma, therefore Ma did not delay and sat down to eat. Ma also told us, "Just keep whatever you have prepared. I shall eat it in the evening." Ma understood that we would feel sorry if she did not eat what we had cooked and therefore she said this. After the meal Ma lay down. At five p.m. we offered the *bhoga* we had kept ready and she ate a little of it.

Today there was talk of our departure and it was decided that we were to leave the next day. The Raja is a great devotee of Ma, he has a noble character and a devout heart. He was extremely sad to hear that Ma was leaving but he did not dare to stop her. He only prayed that he should get darshan again. When Dr. Madan Mohan Joshi heard that Ma was leaving he was also very sorry. All the ladies arrived and though they had Ma's darshan only for the past few days, they began to weep. Ma laughingly explained to them and also advised them in many ways. Many were gratified to get such invaluable advice and felt blessed (though in practice we are mostly unable to obey Ma's injunctions and to progress).

In the evening the Rani and Rajmata came and Ma sat with them behind closed doors. A man arrived to sing kirtan for Ma and he sang in another room. At ten p.m. they all left.

Ma lay on her bed and talked about various matters with Virendra Dada. He said, "I told everyone in Simla, Ma is like a musical instrument. Each one hears whatever he plays. When anyone comes with a particular attitude of mind, Ma understands it and speaks in response to that mood. If anyone wants to chat Ma also chats a lot with him. If anyone approaches Ma with the feeling that he is a child, Ma speaks to him in a motherly fashion. If anyone comes as a disciple Ma responds as a Guru."

Hearing all this, Ma burst out laughing. Then as she lay on her bed she sang,

Ma—the preacher
of the Name

*"Gauri Śankara Sitā Rāma,
Hare Kṛṣṇa Hare Rāma."*

Virendra Dada laughed and said, "I could have told all the devotees in Simla that Ma gives *dīkṣā*. If I had you could not have escaped, for everyone would have pestered you to give them *dīkṣā*. This *nāma* kirtan which you are singing is verily the distribution of the Name. Whoever desires can accept it as a mantra." Ma heard this and laughed.

Then the conversation turned to the kind of attitude of an individual. Virendra Dada said, "The child who does not wait for meal time and pesters his mother for food, gets it very fast." Ma rejoined, "The mother's attention is attracted more towards the boy who does not trouble her but sits quietly and waits ; she feeds him as fast as possible. Therefore though *sādhana* is of two kinds the fruit is the same," After conversation on various topics Ma became silent at twelve and went to sleep.

Thursday 2nd July. Ma and her devotees are to leave Solan in the evening. Ma slept round midday and awoke at 1.30. It was not decided where we were to go. From Solan to Dehradun People talked of going to Kashmir. In the afternoon there was a phone call by Hari Ram Joshi, earnestly requesting Ma to go to Dehradun. Thus Ma started for Dehradun with all of us. Virendra Dada and Bacchu were returning to their places on the way as their colleges were reopening. Ma, Bholanath, Swami Akhandanandaji and I proceeded to Dehradun. Just before we left some gentlemen from Simla arrived to take Ma to Simla because they had arranged for another *nāma yajña* on the coming Sunday. After much discussion it was decided that since we had set out for Dehradun we would now proceed there. We would reach Dehradun on Friday, leave for Simla on Saturday and arrive there by ten a.m. on Sunday in time to start the *nāma yajña*.

We left by the Raja's car at nine p.m. for Kalka from where we took the twelve o'clock train. The next morning Friday 3rd July, at eleven a.m. we reached the Dehradun Ashram.

Glossary
of
Sanskrit Words

GLOSSARY

Adhivāsa Ceremonies performed on the eve of any auspicious function.

Akhaṇḍa Uninterrupted, unbroken.

Amāvāsyā The night of the new moon.

Ānanda Bliss of the Supreme Self.

Āratī A devotional ceremony in Hindu worship with the waving of lights, incense etc. before the object of adoration.

Āsana 1. Yogic posture or physical pose. Every posture corresponds to a particular state of mind.

2. Small mat or carpet used as a seat by each person individually.

Āśrama 1. The four *āśramas* (*brahmacarya*, *gṛhastha*, *vānaprastha*, *saṁnyāsa*) are the four successive stages of life from the viewpoint of a pilgrim on the spiritual path.

2. hermitage, abode of ascetics.

Aṣṭāṅga Yoga The eight stages of yoga, namely, *yama*, *niyama*, *āsana*, *prāṇāyāma*, *pratyāhāra*, *dhāraṇa*, *dhyāna* and *samādhi*.

Ātmā The true Self. Supreme Existence or Being that is of the nature of Self-awareness and Self-delight and behind all manifestations in nature.

Aum The sacred sound symbol for Supreme Truth.

Bela Wood apple. (*Aegle marmelos*)

Bhagavatī Mā The Divine Mother.

Bhāva 1. State of being, inner disposition.

2. Divine mood.

3. Devotion for one's object of worship.

4. Spiritual ecstasy, transcendental mood, generally emotional in nature. *Bhāvas* usually occur at elevated stages of the path of *bhakti*.

Bhoga Food offering to the object of worship.

Bhikṣā Begging alms.

Bija mantra Literally 'seed mantra'. A mystic syllable which is, as it were, the seed of a particular aspect of Divinity. By concentrated, sustained repetition of the seed mantra that aspect can be realized.

Brahmacārī A religious student observing the practice of austerities and strict celibacy.

Brahmacāriṇī A female brahmacārī.

Chapāti A thin flat cake of wheat flour roasted on a flat pan.

Charu An oblation of sunned rice boiled in milk without sugar or clarified butter.

Dāl Split peas, beans, lentils. Boiled dal with rice or unleavened bread is the most common food in India.

Danda A staff symbolising renunciation.

Darshan Sight, vision. One speaks of having darshan of a saint, sage or deity, which means to be blessed by his sight or presence.

Dharma The law of being. It signifies the inner principle of religion. Man's *dharma* is to realize his innate Divinity. The word "dharma" conveys in Sanskrit the idea of righteousness in thought, life and action and implies in addition a sense of inwardness in outlook, purity in aspiration and

integrity in character. Dharma is derived from the root *dhṛ* which means to sustain. Dharma signifies the sum-total of the essential characteristics of anything which makes it what it is. Thus heat and light constitute the sun's dharma; a cold and dark sun is unthinkable.

Dharma putra Spiritual son.

Dharmaśālā Resthouse for pilgrims.

Dīkṣā Initiation into the spiritual life, effected through the grace of the Guru who represents the Divine. During *Dīkṣā* a mantra or one of the potent names of God is usually communicated to the disciple, who is asked to repeat it regularly and in a specific manner.

Duniyā The world, Literally : *du niyā*—based on duality.

Durgā Saptasatī or *Candī* Part of the *Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa*. It deals with the descent of the Supreme Power the manifests to conquer the evil forces that invade not only humanity but also the realm of the *devas*. It consists of three sections representing the victory of the Divine Power in three different ways over three destructive evil forces on three memorable occasions taken from history.

Gāyatri mantra A sacred mantra of the *Rigvedā*, a hymn to the Sun, which is a prayer for enlightenment, recited daily by the Hindus of the three upper castes after they have been invested with the sacred thread.

Ghar House (in Bengali and Hindi)

Ghāt Bathing place on the bank of a river.

Gopī Milk maid.

Gr̥hastha A householder.

Havana Sacrificial fire.

Janmāṣṭamī The eighth day of the dark fortnight of Srāvana, the birthday of Śrī Kṛṣṇa.

Japa Repetition of a *mantra* or a name of God, imparted by the Guru at the time of *dikṣā* (see *dikṣā*). The repetition, as one of the daily disciplinary exercises may be for a fixed or indefinite number of times. There are three kinds of *japā*, namely vocal (*vācikā*), semivocal (*upāmsu*) and mental (*mānasa*). The last is supposed to be the best. The sound should, as a rule, be inaudible to others. *Japa* may be done either without rhythm or rhythmically, following the natural rhythm of one's breathing. The counting during *japa* may be done with the help of one's fingers in the prescribed manner, or with the help of a rosary.

Kamaṇḍalu A water-pot used by ascetics.

Kanyā dāna Giving away a girl in marriage.

Karma Action, the result of action, as well as the law of cause and effect by which actions inevitably bear fruit. Karma originates from the individual self in its ignorance functioning as an active agent. When man realises his own true Self, karma ceases for him.

Karma phala The fruit of action.

Kartāla Cymbals.

Kaupīna A small piece of loin cloth worn by Indian ascetics.

Kāyastha The writer-caste amongst Hindus, proceeding from a *Kṣatriya* father and a *Śūdra* mother.

Kheyāla Ordinarily a sudden and unexpected psychic emergence, be it desire, will, attention, memory or knowledge.

Ma, however, has given the word a much wider meaning. She describes as *kheyāla* the incomprehensible acts of the Supreme, as for instance His dividing Himself in creation, etc. In Ma's case there is no ego to account for her movements, feelings and thoughts. When she uses the word *kheyāla* with reference to her own person, it must be understood to denote a spontaneous upsurge of Will, which is Divine and therefore free.

Khicḍi A preparation of rice, dal and vegetables cooked together.

Khīr Rice cooked in milk and sugar.

Khuṣīr Ma The Happy Mother.

Khol A percussion instrument like a longish tomtom.

Kīrtan The chanting or singing of the names or glories of God. It may be performed by one person or by a group of people to the accompaniment of musical instruments, chiefly drums and cymbals. It is meant to be audible to others so that they may benefit by listening.

Kriyā Creative action. In *tāntric* literature *kriyā* is used in the sense of activity that is eternally associated with knowledge and leads to perfection, in which knowledge and action are found to be identical.

Kṛpā Grace.

Kṣatriya A man belonging to the second of the four castes of the Hindus, viz. the warrior class.

Kumārī Eternal immaculate virgin, divine in nature—the Mother of creation.

Kunda Pit.

Kurtā A kind of shirt.

Līlā Literally 'play'. Movements and activities of the Supreme Being that are free by nature and not subject to laws. *Vaiṣṇavas* explain Creation as the *līlā* of God.

Mahālayā The new-moon day immediately preceding the autumnal worship of Goddess Durga.

Mahāsaptamī The seventh day of the bright half of the month of Aswin (October) on which Durga Puja is commenced.

Manas Mind.

Mantra A series of sounds of great potency. It is the sound representation of the *Iṣṭa Devatā*. Name and form are inseparable; if therefore, the name is instinct with life, the form that it represents is bound to reveal itself, provided the practice is intensive enough. A *mantra* is a word of power, divine power transmitted through a word.

Manuṣa Kālī Goddess Kali in a human form.

Mauna The practise of silence. It may either mean to abstain from speech; or to abstain from signs, gestures and writing as well as speech; or the complete stilling of the activities of the mind as well.

Maunī One who is observing silence.

Muni Sage.

Nāma Name.

Nāma kīrtana Singing God's names.

Nāt mandir A hall adjoining a temple.

Nistārīṇī vrata Penance performed to propitiate Goddess Durga as 'one who accords salvation' (*nistārīṇī*).

Pāda Pīṭha Altar for holy feet.

Pakhāvaj A kind of drum.

Pālā kīrtana Ballad singing about the glories of God.

Panchavaṭī A group of five sacred trees, namely pipal, banyan, ashoka, bel, amlaki with a platform in the middle. A *panchavaṭī* is considered a congenial place for meditation.

Pāṇḍā A learned man.

Paṇḍit A scholar.

Parabrahman Supreme Reality.

Paramātma The *Ātma* of the entire universe, of the individual as well as of the Cosmos.

Piṣimā Father's sister (in Bengali).

Pīṭhosthāna A holy place ; any of the fifty-one holy places in which pieces of the body of Sati (consort of Siva) fell, when cut into pieces by Viṣṇu's disk.

Prahara A measure of time equal to three hours.

Praṇāma Obeisance. An act of surrender indicating the sense of one's own smallness in the presence of One to whom obeisance is offered. There are various ways of doing *praṇāma* ; the most common is to kneel down and touch the ground with one's head.

Praṇava The sacred syllable 'aum' is known as *praṇava* and is the primordial sound.

Prāṇāyāma Rhythmic breath control. This control is over all the functions of breathing namely,

- (1) inhalation or inspiration which is termed *pūraka* (filling up) ;
- (2) exhalation or expiration, which is called *recaka* (emptying the lungs) ;

(3) retention or holding the breath within the body or keeping it out of the body which is termed *kumbhaka*.

Prasāda Food offered to a deity or saint becomes *prasāda* when it has been accepted and thereby blessed. It is then partaken of by the devotees.

Pūjā Ceremonial worship of the Hindus. Offering to the object of adoration various articles representing all aspects of oneself.

Pūrī A thin flat cake of wheat flour fried in clarified butter or oil.

Pūrṇimā Full moon day.

Rasa The taste of the flavour of supernatural joy in a state of ecstatic union.

Rṣi Seer The *Rṣis* are said to form a class of beings by themselves, distinct from gods, men, *asuras* (demons) etc. They are those to whom *mantras* are revealed.

Rotī Same as *chapati*.

Sādhana Spiritual practice performed for the purpose of preparing oneself for Self-realisation. Interpreted by Ma as 'sva' (one's own) 'dhana' (wealth).

Sādhu One who has dedicated his life to spiritual endeavour and is free from family and business entanglements.

Sadhvā A married woman whose husband is alive.

Sahana Tolerance.

Śākta Worshipper of *Śakti*, Divine Energy.

Samādhān Completion, termination.

Samādhi A state in which the mind is either completely concentrated on its object of contemplation (*savikalpa samadhi*)

or ceases to function and only Pure Consciousness remains, revealing Itself to Itself (*nirvikalpa samadhi*).

Samnyāsa Renunciation. According to the ancient Hindu system it is the last stage of human life, in which a man has to renounce his family, possessions, caste, social position etc.—in fact everything to which he is attached—and surrender himself to the Divine. Technically it is of two kinds, namely, *vividisa samnyāsa* preceded by a sense of detachment from the world, and *vidvat samnyāsa*, which is *samnyāsa* par excellence, preceded by the dawn of *Brahmajñāna* (Realisation of the Brahman). The former is called *linga samnyāsa* in which certain rules of discipline have to be observed. The other is absolute freedom.

Samnyāsi One who has taken *samnyāsa* (*vividisa samnyāsi*) or one who has spontaneously become a *samnyāsi* (*vidvat samnyāsi*).

Samsāra Cycle of life in the world through a continued series of births and deaths. It is consequent on the ignorance of the true nature of the Self and of the karma which originates from the self in its ignorance functioning as an active agent. Interpreted by Ma as “*sang-sara*”. A play upon words : *samsāra*, world ; *sang* clown ; *sāra* essence. The clown (*sang*) mistakes his role for the Real, yet is only dressed up for the play. *Samsāra* is “*sangsāra*” in Bengali.

Samskāra Literally purification, consecration.

1. Rite performed with the help of mantras and intended for the purpose of restoring a thing to its original pure state. The mantras employed are meant to destroy

the powers of impurity that make obscure the object concerned. When this impurity is removed, the true nature of the thing is revealed. The word *samskāra* is also used in the sense of repairing or restoring a temple or image, etc.

2. Purification rites in connection with man's life in brahminical society, such as sacred thread ceremony, marriage, funeral rites, etc. This corresponds to the Christian idea of sacrament.
3. Impressions, dispositions, psychic traces left in the mind after any experience. These *samskāras* are often brought over from former births. *Samskāra* in this sense means very much the same as *vāsanā*.

Sandhyā vandana Specific spiritual practice performed daily as a duty at sunrise and sunset.

Śāstras The sacred Hindu scriptures.

Siddhi Realisation, fulfilment. Also an occult power gained by *yoga*.

Siddha pitha A holy place where at least ten million immolations, one crore burnt offerings and innumerable religious practices have taken place.

Simhāsana Throne.

Sindūr Vermillion, minium, applied to the parting of the hair as a symbol of the married state of a woman.

Śiva linga A phallic symbol of Śiva.

Śiva rātri Thirteenth day of the dark half of the month of Phalgun (usually occurs in February). A festival when Śiva is worshipped all night after a whole day's complete fast.

Soḍaṣopacāra Pūjā Worship with sixteen kinds of offerings.

Śrāddha Rites performed for a departed soul.

Śrīkṣetra Puri in Orissa.

Stithaprajña One who is established in the Knowledge of Reality.

Stotra A verse of praise, especially for a deity.

Tāpa Heat, suffering.

Tapasyā Hardships undergone with the definite object of attaining to the Spiritual.

Tilak A mark made on the forehead either as an emblem of sect or for ornament.

Tithi A lunar day.

Tui The pronoun 'thou' in Bengali, used in familiar and affectionate address.

Tulasī A plant with very fragrant leaves. Considered holy by Hindus ; a variety of basil.

Ulu dhvani A sound made by Bengali women by moving tongues with their mouths on any festive occasion.

Vaidya Kula A mixed caste formed by the offsprings of a *Brāhmaṇa* by a *Vaiśya* woman ; a medical caste.

Vaiśya A man of the third caste amongst Hindus, his business being trade and agriculture.

Vānaprastha The third stage of life according to the Vedas when a man advanced in years should leave his home and hearth and go to the forest to pass the remaining days of his life in spiritual meditation.

Vāsanā Mental dispositions which act like seeds and have a tendency to germinate into action. They are burnt up when the Light of Knowledge (*Jñāna*) shines forth.

Vrata Religious act of devotion or austerity, vowed observation.

Vyāsa gaddī A seat reserved for one who expounds the scriptures.

Yajña Sacrificial fire.

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INDEX OF NAMES

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Amulya Babu

Ananda Bhai (of Adyapeeth)

Anukul Thakur

Arun Kumar

Ashu (son of Bholanath's brother, Revati Mohan Chakravarti)

Ashwini Babu

Atal Bihari Bhattacharya (Professor at Rajsahi)

Atul Babu

Atul Chandra Ghosh (son of Rai Bahadur Yogesh Chandra Ghosh)

Atul Datta's wife (Tunu's mother)

Atul Thakur of Sadhan Samar Ashram

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Avani Datta's wife

Avani Sharma

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Bacchu (Nirmal Babu's son)

Bacchu's mother (Nirmal Babu's wife, who was Didi's sister)

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 Bhagvandas Mahasaya
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Chandra Ghosh)

Prakash Tankha of Dehradun

Prakash Tankha's wife named 'Kausalya' by Ma

Pramatha Babu (lawyer of Dhaka)

Pran Kumar Babu (former sub judge at Dhaka who was living
at Bhabanipur)

Pratap Babu

Pyaribanu (daughter of the Nawab of Dhaka)

Radhika Babu

Rai Bahadur Yogesh Chandra Ghosh

Raja Durga Singh of Solan

Rajmata (mother of the Raja of Solan)

Rajendra Kushari's wife (Belu's mother)

Rajmohan Ganguli

Rajmohan Babu's wife

Ramanand (Bhaiji's son)

Ramesh Babu

Ram Murti (famous strong man)

Ram Thakur

Rani (wife of the Raja of Solan)

Sachindra Babu

Sadhana (one of the Dhaka sisters)

Sanjna Devi (wife of Surendra Thakur)

Satya Babu's wife

Shachikant Ghosh (Asst. Comm. of Income Tax, Calcutta)

Shankarananda Swami (Ma's devotee from Kashi)

Shanti (wife of Prakash Tankha)

Sharada Devi (wife of Ramakrishna Paramahansa Dev)

Sharada Sharma (a lady doctor of Dehradun, Ma named her 'Seva')

Shashanka Mohan Mukhopadhyaya (Didi's father, retired Civil Surgeon of Dhaka)

Shashi Babu

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Shraddhanand Swami

Shyamala Devi (wife of a lawyer called 'Pandit Sahib' in Dhaka)

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Sitaram

Subodh

Sucharu Babu

Sudhir Sarkar

Sudhir Sen (Secretary of Kalibari at Simla)

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Surendra Babu (Nayeb of Bajitpur)

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- Triguna Babu
 Triloki Babu
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 Uma (daughter of Vinay Babu)
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