



VOLUME IV

Gurupriya Devi



Sri Sri Ma Anandamayi

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GURUPRIYA ANANDA GIRI
(Sri Gurupriya Devi)

Translated by Tara Kini



SHREE SHREE ANANDAMAYEE CHARITABLE SOCIETY
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By Ma's grace, yet another volume of Didi's diary has been translated into English. The work continues to be more than rewarding -- Ma's life and activities being the most enjoyable satsang that one could ever desire.

I would like to thank Sri G. N. Roy Mishra for his patient encouragement and advice. I am also very grateful to my husband for his regular and flawless typing of the manuscript.

Jai Ma.

U. Tara Kini

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page No.
Chapter I	1
Chapter II	20
Chapter III	35
Chapter IV	42
Chapter V	48
Chapter VI	73
Chapter VII	108
Chapter VIII	115
Chapter IX	129
Chapter X	136
Chapter XI	157
Chapter XII	175
Chapter XIII	181
Chapter XIV	196
Chapter XV	220
Chapter XVI	228
Chapter XVII	235
Chapter XVIII	247
Chapter XIX	259

SRI SRI MA ANANDAMAYI

Volume IV

CHAPTER I

Thursday, January 24, 1937. In the morning today, Sashi Babu took Ma to be photographed. Then she was taken to the Kali Bari. Jyotish Dada missed his train yesterday and could not reach here today. It had been decided earlier that we would leave for Adinath today after Jyotish Dada's arrival. Ma wanted to leave as scheduled and when Bholanath and the devotees tried to postpone her departure, she said, "When I have had the kheyal to leave today, let us go to Sitakunda today." Accordingly we left for Sitakunda by the eleven a.m. train. Sashi Babu accompanied Ma and arranged for her stay at the Shankarmath. As soon as the sannyasis at Shankarmath saw Ma they welcomed her with great regard. We were given accommodation in a beautiful house on the hill top. The place was very quiet, desolate and extremely lovely.

Friday, January 25. Early in the morning Ma went for a walk in the mountains. Then she sat in her room and conversed. I said,

"Ma, the other day you had said that on reading that one book, nothing remains unknown." Ma confirmed, "Yes, so it is. On reading that one book, not only all languages, but no subject also remains unknown. For example, take the rishi who is the seer of mantras ; an example cannot illustrate every aspect ; understand it."

Many devotees from Chittagong have arrived today and Jyotish Dada has also reached. As soon as he arrived he heard that his one and only daughter had passed away. But by Ma's grace he did not get upset even slightly, so that it seemed as if nothing had happened ; externally this was the manner in which he appeared to us.

Today Ma is to eat and the Swamiji of the math has sent curry and chapati for her. A surprising matter, towards which I never paid any attention till now, but which Ma has particularly pointed out to me today is the following - I made many blouses for Ma and found that on some days the blouses fitted perfectly, but within a couple of days the same blouses would be just too tight and would not fit. Ma would laugh and say, "I have become fat !" It was the same situation with the underwear. Now this began happening so often that one day I exclaimed to Ma, "Ma, what is happening ? Within a couple of days you become fat and the blouses don't fit. Then two days later the same blouses fit perfectly. Are such drastic and swift changes in the body possible ?"

To this Ma laughed and replied, "Alright, you are the one who puts them on. You see that sometimes they fit and sometimes they are tight. No blouse or underwear remains a proper fit always ; what is the reason for this ?" This statement from Ma and her smile attracted my attention towards the reason behind this occurrence, for though this had been happening many times earlier I had never observed it consciously.

A brahmachari from Bholagiri ashram came and requested Ma to visit his ashram. In the evening many devotees gathered and Ma conversed on a variety of topics. In the course of conversation Ma said, "Those who have real faith in and reverence for the Guru cannot hate anyone. If they hate anybody, it is tantamount to hating the Guru, because it is imperative to have the faith that the Guru is the greatest and that he is present in everyone. And courage is an important part of sadhana."

The brahmachari of Bholagiri ashram raised a point from the Bhagavadgita, "Well Ma, in the stanza from the Gita which says, '*sarva dharman parityajya ...* ', are we being told to take refuge in Krishna - the Krishna who was Devaki's son ?" Ma replied, "Baba, from an external point of view, you have never taught this girl the Gita. But whenever anyone reads this stanza he reckons, 'Pray to me' - who does this 'me' imply ? Paramatma. Then the question arises - who was Krishna ?

Paramatma, wasn't he ?"

Then the conversation proceeded, "Svadharmā Nidhanam Shreyah parādharmō Bhayavaha." Ma commented, "What is the meaning of dharma ? That which upholds. The thief is upheld by his knowledge of thievery, but then the thief turns into a sadhu. In that case thievery was not his svadharmā because one's true dharma never undergoes any change. That which changes is not dharma, it is adharma. Your svabhava is dharma, anything else is para dharma (adharma) and it is always bad for you to take on para dharma. But in the world just as fire and water have their own dharmas, according to samskaras each one expresses his own svabhava and with Guru sakti that is again turned towards God."

Somehow, the local people seemed to have received news of Ma's arrival and gradually they began streaming in. Brahmacharis questioned Ma, "Well Mā, what is the meaning of the saying, 'Brahma is true, the universe is false' ?" Ma replied smilingly, "Long ago when I was walking back from the Kali temple at Ramna, I met three ladies clad in saffron clothes. One of them abruptly confronted me and while talking on various matters stated, 'Look, Brahma is true, the universe is false'. In reply to that I said, 'How shall I say that the universe is false ? For, every one is born into this universe and you have taken birth and are now seeing the universe ; only when

true knowledge dawns can the universe be called false.' On hearing this the three sannyasins began protesting. 'What discussion can you have with a woman who wears white clothes and a veil ! What can she say ?' and so on." Ma narrated this and began laughing.

Then the brahmachari continued, "Ma, some people opine that the Brahman has itself changed and become the universe ; therefore the universe is also true and so am I." Ma replied, "From one point of view this is also true. The creation and dissolution of this universe is without beginning or end and in that sense one must accept the universe as true. But what is the use of hearing such talk ? You will hear with one ear and let it out with the other ear. Listening is worthwhile only if the ideas are put into practice. Otherwise, even the listening is not true listening." Such discussions went on till eleven p.m. after which Ma slept. The ladies who had come from Chittagong were keen to sleep in Ma's room and managed to do so in spite of enduring some inconvenience.

Saturday, January 26. Ma got up very early and went to the hills accompanied by Jyotish Dada and Akhandananda Giri. Later when some others followed and joined Ma, she spread a blanket under a tree in an open field and sat down. Local residents who had heard of the arrival of Mataji gathered for Ma's darshan one by one. Since Ma would not eat today,

I went near her and made her drink some milk. It was ten o'clock and Ma kept sitting under the tree. Around noon she descended from the hill top and I fed her some fruit. In the evening all gathered to sing kirtan in her presence. In Ma's proximity even that deserted hill spot was milling with people. People were coming and going from Chittagong all the time. During conversation Ma said, "The knowledge gained from books is akin to travelling with the aid of a time table. In addition to the places mentioned in a time table, there are so many other places and items of interest. Only some outstanding places and whatever the compiler of the time table is able to express are mentioned in a time table. Using this as we go along the path we realise the existence of so many other features worthy of note and understanding. But can this all be described in a time table ? Similarly, is it possible to delineate every point in the scriptures ? Only those who tread the path realise that what is mentioned in scriptures is true, but that beyond that many features exist. How much then can be written in scriptures ? Those who witness for themselves see many other things and understand them. Just as you refer to a time table and travel by train, so must you, at first, move ahead according to scriptural injunctions. But scriptural statements also have infinite meaning hidden within them."

Tonight the moon shone brightly and for a long time Ma remained seated outdoors. Devotees and other visitors sat surrounding Ma, listening to her sweet talk till eleven p.m.

Sunday, January 27. This morning again Ma went to the hills accompanied by a couple of people. She spent quite some time there before coming down after which I washed her face and hands and made her drink some water. She covered her face and slept. At one p.m. Ma was offered bhoga. Many people had gathered for Ma's darshan and since the room had become overcrowded Ma sat outdoors. The brahmachari who was the mahant of the math revered Ma greatly. Every day he sent Ma samples of each item prepared in their kitchen. Late in the afternoon he came and conversed with Ma and many others also gathered. As soon as she saw him Ma told him, "Baba, you have come ; please say something to these people. I am your daughter and I know nothing." The brahmachari replied, "You say you are a child but I understand better, Ma. You know nothing ; but look at this congregation of people who are gazing intently at you, waiting for your lovely speech ! I have been sitting here for the past sixteen or seventeen years but never have I been able to collect such a crowd. The real reason for this is that these people see in you the kind of bliss that they have not been able to achieve, and therefore they come to you. And in order to hear your

sweet words they are gazing at your face." Ma smiled and replied, "Baba, if you want to put it that way then we have to admit that these people have tasted that sweetness. Therefore I say that everything lies within one's self. Man searches for unbroken bliss because he is not satisfied with partial happiness. Everybody longs for peace and bliss. But they are not satisfied with worldly peace and happiness and pursue complete peace and bliss, so we have to accept that they do have an experience of this complete bliss ; and therefore they do not remain satisfied with discontinuous happiness. Hence, sadhana is imperative. Imagine that all want to go to the sea, but there are many routes leading to the sea. All of you please grant a request made by this girl - give a little time to progress towards that direction. At home you grant so many requests made by your sons and daughters. Please do oblige and grant this one request made by this girl."

One person asked, "Ma, when we view events we observe that even when man tries hard he is unable to achieve his desire. The doctor attempts desperately to save his patient, but the patient dies. The lawyer is so keen to win the case and makes every effort, yet he is unsuccessful. The farmer labours endlessly, hoping that he will get a good yield, but his desire remains unfulfilled. When man has no power, then everything happens according to

His will. Therefore if he takes us, only then can we go in that direction. Our efforts will not achieve anything."

Ma replied, "Look, we do not have the right to say such a thing. Because, this 'He' that you speak about is only at the talking level. Actually we have no acquaintance with Him at all. By really practising sadhana such a state is attained when the sadhaka realises that he has no ability of his own and that he is only doing what He makes him do. Now I am asking you to apply only as much effort as you are able to, that is to engage whatever energy you have in practising sadhana. After that whatever He wills will happen - this is an eternal truth. But where is that experience at this stage ? When that is actually experienced, sorrow and troubles no longer exist. Just as you carry on writing, studying and doing all other work with the conviction that you are doing it, similarly put some effort in going in that direction. You believe that you can do everything, but when it comes to spiritual work you say, 'If He does not make us do it how will we do it ?' This is unacceptable."

Another person proposed, "Ma, it is written in the Gita." Ma countered, "It is only to establish that state that you are being told to work at least a little in that direction. I never say anything. Whatever you all make me say is being uttered by me."

The station master arrived and Ma told him, "You should have all round mastery." Evening drew on as the conversation continued. The people did pranam and took leave of Ma. After dusk a couple of gentlemen arrived again. A poet asked Ma, "Well Ma, one can see such wonderful powers in ordinary people. For example, exorcists learn mantras to drive away spirits and actually do so. In order to cross this ocean of samsara so many people engage in japa and such other practices. But I can see no power of mantras emanating from them." Ma answered, "What happens when you learn a mantra, Baba ? The fact is that it is easy to learn all these worldly mantras and if you could learn the mantras on that path you would definitely see the power of those mantras - but the mantra towards 'That' has not been properly imbibed. But you incur a resulting gain from whatever you learn. The kriya of Guru sakti also surely exists."

The same man said, "But japa and other practices are performed by many." Ma replied, "If that were so easy, it could not be labelled, 'hard to get'. So many rishis and munis have performed intense sadhana and gone - this fact is not even recorded." After conversing with Ma all did pranam and left.

Monday, January 28. On waking up this morning Ma did not go to the hills. Surendra and Dwijendra Ghoshal arrived with their

families ; Upendra Palaji's wife also came. Yashoda Ghoshal and Chandranath Ghoshal's wife had already arrived and had gone for Chandranath darshan. Around ten or eleven Ma slept. The pilgrims from Chandranath arrived at one thirty p.m. and after Ma woke up they enjoyed her satsang. During conversation Ma praised Manorama Didi (sister of Sachi Dada) for her devotion towards her husband and her attitude of service towards all. She said, "Such nature is rarely seen. One day I played with her long tresses and another day I wrapped her hair round my neck and announced, 'This is my muffler. If she dies my muffler will also go. You people cut some of it and keep it'. I have heard that when she was widowed her mother did not allow her hair to be cut. I also heard that her husband took great care of her hair and that she spread her hair and made her husband sleep on it. I had never heard all this from her earlier. Once Manorama called me aside and asked me, 'Ma, why did you play around so much with my hair ?' And I replied, 'Look, it is possible that as a memento of the memory of your husband and the intense desire of your love I had asked that your hair should be preserved. Actually I say nothing, you make me say whatever I do. Many others have beautiful hair, but why did all this happen in connection with your hair ?"

Sachl Babu actually had a tuft of his sister's hair cut and preserved in accordance with Ma's comment, and Manorama Didi also made a pair of shoes for Ma's feet and a muffler with her hair. Ma laughingly narrated all this about Manorama Didi.

Ma then asked, "Alright, who is a man ?" Many men who were seated near Ma began laughing. Ma also laughed and told the ladies, "Look, just as you all gaze at your husbands' faces and ask for something, men turn towards someone and pray for the fulfilment of their desires ; therefore they are also women ! The real man is one who has no desires, no longings and no shortcomings. He remains unmoved and calm. Thus, all long for that Supreme Lord and therefore all are women." So saying Ma began laughing.

In the evening many of the devotees from Chittagong left and those who stayed back sat with Ma on the verandah. When darkness fell they went into the room with Ma. A gentleman had purchased three pairs of kartal for his grand children and Ma took one pair and began playing with it saying, 'Hari bol' with her sweet voice. Everyone joined in saying 'Hari bol'. I had never seen Ma playing the kartal before - this was the first time. I saw her holding it, but surprisingly she played it so beautifully it seemed as if she had practised playing it. She then spoke on various matters and delighted the people around her. Suddenly

she exclaimed, "Gopalji remembers." I had heard from Jyotish Dada that Mira (Gopalji's wife) had passed away. Around eleven p.m. everyone retired for the night.

The presence of Jatu, Iliru,³ Ganesh, Ramesh, Sheetal Thakur (the priest of the Rajarajeshwari temple in Chittagong), Danu and other boys lent much help in the daily chores. They happily and briskly performed jobs like fetching water up the hill and washing vessels. Even people who were in poor health commented that though they were living with so many inconveniences they did not suffer any illness. Today a lady who came with Surendra Ghoshal disclosed the following anecdote : Her legs had become totally useless and she was unable to walk. One night she dreamt that she had been to Anandamayi Ma and that she had regained her health. Her father was in Dhaka and after prolonged treatment her condition had improved slightly. Meanwhile Ma went to Dhaka for a week and as soon as her father received information he took her to Ma's ashram. Ma was seated under a peepul tree in the compound. Later when Ma got up and went inside the ashram this lady found she could also accompany Ma. After that she gradually gained full recovery.

Tuesday, January 29. Today Ma woke up at seven a.m. After a wash she drank milk and then strolled about. At eleven she slept and was fed at two p.m. Today again she played

"Jaya Radhe Radhe, Krishna Krishna, Hare
Rama Hare Hare
Eyi nama bolo bodone, sunao kane bilao
jiber dvare dvare."

In the evening Jyotish Dada sang the name "Ma, Ma" and everyone joined in. Kirtan went on for a long time. At eleven p.m. all retired for rest and Ma also lay down but her mood changed visibly ; she became very quiet and still, and during the night she tossed and turned constantly. I know not what will happen.

Wednesday, January 30. Today again Ma went to the hills as soon as she woke up.

Around seven when she descended from the hills and washed her face, she said, "Come, let us all go for a walk." And she went downstairs accompanied by Jyotish Dada, Swami Akhandananda and myself. Ma went to Bholanath and said, "Come, let us all go to the Sambhunath temple." Immediately we set out and Ma announced, "We shall eat there." Hearing this, Jatu and the other boys packed all the necessary items and got ready with great enthusiasm. Ma started at once. Today Ma had named Chandranath Babu's wife 'Samaveda', Binod Babu's wife 'Yajurveda', Yashoda Babu's wife 'Rigveda' and Yashoda Babu's sister 'Atharva veda'. These four ladies had been staying with Ma since the past few days. One of them questioned Ma as she walked alongside, "In which land is your home ?" Ma replied, "In No - land." "In which district ?" "Brahma district." Everyone enjoyed such conversation as they walked along. Then again some other person questioned, "Where is your home ?" Pat came the reply, "Brahma nagar," "Who do you have there ?" In reply Ma said, "Atmananda." The person accepted this literally.

Just then Ma reached the Sambhunath temple. It was decided that bhoga would be offered to Sambhunath and everyone would receive prasad. Ma was not to eat that day. I cooked rice with my own hands because I was forbidden from eating anything cooked by others. Ma's orders were so strict that

according to the regulation she had asked me to follow, I was absolutely forbidden to eat even her prasad or any sweet-meat which had been touched by anyone else. Ma always stresses that all work has to be done properly.

The entire day was spent on the mountain. The pandas there requested Ma, "We shall be very happy if you stay with your devotees till the evening and watch the arati." Ma complied. The pandas performed the arati of Sambhunath and they also did arati to Ma. In the evening they arranged for a second session of various kinds of prasad for the devotees. At dusk Ma asked everyone to sit still and started singing nama kirtan, "*Jai Siva Sankara Bom Bom Hara Hara.*"

Everyone sat steadily and joined in the kirtan. As Ma sang kirtan steadily in the deserted mountain region, surrounded by her devotees who sang in unison, a strange quietitude enveloped our hearts. At nine p.m. the pandas served refreshments generously to the devotees and Ma also had some. Around ten p.m. we left with Ma for the math. It was a moonlit night and the devotees sang, "Ma, Ma" as they walked with her. Ma encouraged them, clapping her hands - what wonderful bliss there was ! It cannot be described in words ! As soon as we returned to the math, Ma became extremely quiet again. She lay down and did not speak after that. Noticing this mood all of us slept quietly.

Thursday, January 31. Today again Ma went to the hills but sat quietly. Her bhava was such that it caused awe in us - what a strange bhava it was ! She did not seem to notice anything. Only when she mingles with us as a peer do we have the courage to mix with her freely. But this condition frightens us, I know not why and I do not dare break her quietitude. I went up the hill and made Ma drink some milk. She drank very little and then refused any more. Nor did I have the courage to press her. In the afternoon again she almost ate nothing. Her excretion also became strange, she said, "Whatever I eat, changes colour slightly and comes out as it was." Even after eating she kept lying down.

The brahmachari of Bhologiri ashram (named Dasharatha) had been pressingly requesting Ma to visit their ashram ; Ma was to go there this afternoon. At three p.m. he came and took Ma down the hill, singing kirtan all the way. Ma went to the mahant of the math, brahmachari Swarupananda and called him to accompany them saying, "Baba will walk ahead and the girl will follow." Such is Ma's sense of decor that there is never a flaw anywhere. Because of this, even people holding antagonistic views revere Ma greatly.

On reaching the ashram all sat down. A raised asana had been specially erected for Ma, but Ma sat down amongst the rest. Kirtan was sung for some time and then Dasharatha

brahmachari stood up and spoke starting with, "The residents of Sitakunda are blessed. Today it is seven days since Ma came here and blessed everyone." Later an argument ensued as to whether Siva or Krishna was greater. Ma laughed and said, "Everything is alright. Each person speaks correctly from his own point of view." After varied conversation the brahmachari performed arati to their guru and then to Ma. Then Dasharatha brahmachari fed Ma with his own hands and then served all the devotees with great affection. Again it was ten p.m. when we returned to Shankar math.

Before retiring for the night I made Ma eat some little refreshment. After eating Ma sat up and talked, but her bhava remained as before. At one point, in some context, Bhola-nath questioned, "Why did this happen ?" and Ma replied at once, "Whatever has to happen will surely happen. Whatever is ordained will certainly appear." So saying she laughed.

Then the point was raised that during kirtan in Shahbagh the perfume of incense was scented though no incense had been lit. Commenting on this Ma said, "Beings in subtle bodies also help you all in your work. They come to help in the kind of work that is in tune with their nature - they always do so. Only you people are unable to see them." Ma lay down only very late in the night, but tonight again her mood was similar - she did not become still even for a moment. I was hesitant even to

Speak to her, for her mood was so strange. She said, "One hand is clasped tightly over the other - they cannot be separated." I unclasped her hands hastily, but Ma turned her face away and said, "Nothing is achieved by this. That day is no longer here. How long will the body go on in this fashion, almost forty years have elapsed already." My heart sank when I heard these words. But nothing could be done ; Ma went and lay down as she was.

CHAPTER II

Friday, February 1, 1937. Talk of returning to Chittagong was afloat ; we were to leave by the three o'clock afternoon train. Ma told us to finish meals early and everyone cooperated by completing their chores quickly. The residents of Sitakunda including the mahant of the ashram, brahmachari Swarupananda expressed sorrow at the thought of Ma's departure. Around two p.m. Ma left. The road was lined with people who had gathered for Ma's darshan. Some did pranam and some wept as Ma took leave.

I heard that while I was cooking downstairs, a sadhu from the Mehar Kali temple and Dr. Atul Babu came to meet Ma. Ma had met Atul Babu at Bholagiri ashram. Atul Babu had shown Ma around Darjeeling, and finding Ma here, he became overjoyed and exclaimed, "Ma, you had flooded Darjeeling with your grace - and now again I have your darshan here !" This morning he came to the math and found that Ma had gone up to the hills ! He sat down and began crying and repeating, "Ma, Ma". Ma suddenly descended from the hills and on seeing her Atul Babu caught hold of her feet in ecstasy. He then sat with Ma

for a long time and chatted with her before leaving.

Ma proceeded slowly and reached the station which was packed with devotees, including the station master. The train had not arrived and the station master spoke to Ma, "Ma, nothing is happening." Ma replied, "You must take the Name. In order to create a taste for the Name, one's routine and diet must also be regulated accordingly. A controlled diet is necessary along with medication, without which the disease is not cured. You become a chronic patient and lay down all your responsibilities on that doctor. Then be like the patient who not only eats medicines according to the doctor's prescriptions, but also moves about, sits and stands as per the doctor's instructions - only then will you obtain the fruit."

The train arrived. Swarupananda brahmachari had also come to the station. He had been staying in this place for the last eighteen years, yet today he was feeling totally restless because Ma was leaving. Ma laughed and said, "It will be so - the father's heart will surely yearn for the daughter." In addition, Ma was calling him, "Baba, Baba", because of which Baba's plight became worse ! Most of those who were standing along the route and doing pranam to Ma were the wives of poor householders. Ma smiled at each one and said, "Ma, shall I go ?" folding her hands and gazing

at them, increasing their longing for her and their misery at her departure. Some of them caught hold of Ma and wept aloud. All the residents of Sitakunda were wondering, "When will we see Ma again?" Ma told them, "You all go every evening to the math. Henceforth, take the Name that you like best and do japa at that time. If I have the kheyal I shall also remember you." Ma took leave of everybody in this fashion and boarded the train. As soon as she got into the train she lay down.

At five p.m. we reached Chittagong. Ghoshal Babu and many others were present at the station. Ma was taken to the Kali temple in Upendra Pal's car. During Ma's previous visit the mahant of the Kali temple had made a special request to this effect and today again he came to the station and escorted Ma to the temple. Sashi Babu and many others were present at the station. On being requested by Dwijendra Babu and Surendra Babu, Ma visited their houses on the way. In the evening Ma had some light refreshments at the residence of Yashoda Babu.

Many people had thronged for Ma's darshan. Suren Babu of Radha Madhav Kutir and others arrived and started kirtan. Their kirtan had been greatly appreciated the previous time also. Ladies and gentlemen sat surrounding Ma. Hema Babu of Pantiya ashram came and did pranam to Ma. He often visited Ma at Shah-

bagh, but had not met her for many years since then. The moment Ma saw him she asked, "How are you ?" and laughingly she confirmed, "I have recognised you correctly have I not ?" He replied, "Ma you have placed me correctly." Kirtan began.

I have forgotten to write one thing. A gentleman had questioned Ma in Giri Maharaj's ashram in Sitakunda, "Ma, if I repeat 'Hari, Hari', it is quite enough. Then where is the necessity of taking diksha ? And if this is so, then if I have been taking the Name 'Hari' all my life and then my kula guru comes along and gives me the Sakti mantra at the age of fifty, then what will the consequence be ?" Ma replied, "You do not know which Name will cause your welfare. But the guru who knows you from within understands your aptitude and gives the mantra accordingly. After practising sadhana for some time you will realise that the Name was necessary for you, but you did not know that earlier. Look, actually if you long for God, nothing can go wrong with you. Then if you decide for yourself thinking, 'I am saying Hari Hari and that is enough for my welfare and it is not necessary for me to take diksha, then how will that help accomplish your job ? Do you know, it is just as if I were to call you by your pet name, because I did not know your official name - you would respond and come near me anyway. Then you would say,

'This is my official name.' Now look, children are called by names like Tunu, Minu, but at the time of schooling or while joining for work you write their official names in the registry file - this is exactly the same, what else ?" So saying Ma laughed.

The gentleman then asked, "Well, one does not know what guidance the kula guru can give when he himself does not know the path. But if I were to go to some sadhu or sannyasi for diksha instead of the kula guru, then the town folk will start criticising loudly saying, 'Look, he has abandoned his kula guru.' Ma replied, "See, the first point is that diksha should be taken only from one for whom there is devotion in the heart. For if you are annoyed in the heart of hearts and you take diksha only to fulfil a formality then nothing is achieved. The second point is this - if you harbour even the slightest guilt that you have abandoned the kula guru then for that contingency I say - suppose a little child were to give you some seed about which neither you nor the child knows anything ; but if you plant it in the soil, water it and guard it, after some time the seed will surely grow into a tree and yield fruit. Then you will come to know which seed it was that you planted. The fact that neither you nor the child knows which seed it was does not cause any obstruction to the growth of the seed into the tree and the tree yielding the fruits.

The main point is sadhana. If you practise sadhana spend time, and really long for God, you will see that everything will happen appropriately. Because He is Self-illuminating."

Many people said, "We shall long for Him only if we receive His Grace." Ma replied, "The very fact that you are saying 'He' or 'Him' shows that you are not yet acquainted with Him. Your statement of 'His will' is but lip talk. You all study for and pass examinations, run households, do so many kinds of work and think that all this is done with your own power. Similarly, just call God with the same reckoning. If, only for this job, you say, 'His will' and sit back how can anything be achieved ? It is absolutely true that nothing happens without His will ; but actually we have no right to say such a thing."

Ma lay down to rest at two a.m. in the morning.

Saturday, February 2. At noon we were to visit Jyotish Dada's house in Paraikoda and preparations were on. Ma awoke early. Many members of the Ghoshal family had come. The daughter of Raja Srinath of Bhagyakul - the wife of Upendra Pal - had brought lunch for Ma. Today Ma was to eat a meal Ma's face was washed and she was made to drink some water. Ma was also taken to bless a couple of other homes after being pressingly requested. Around one p.m. Ma started for Paraikoda along with all her

devotees. Teen Veda and many others were with her. The house of the photographer, Sashi Bhushan Dasgupta, is also in this city and he is a long standing devotee of Ma. This time again he took many photographs of Ma. Sashi Babu also came and he persuaded Jyotish Dada to narrate two or three incidents illustrating Ma's grace. Last night Ma was talking about Jyotish Dada's daughter, "At the time of this girl's wedding an astrologer had predicted future widowhood. One night Jyotish kept an amriti in a small bowl made of gold and fed it to me. He then had all the jewellery for her wedding made from that gold. The girl died a sadhva - that was fortunate." Saying this she laughed.

Between three and four p.m. we reached Paraikoda ghat. Jyotish Dada's nephew along with a group of kirtan singers and a palanquin, received Ma. Sashi Babu had organised all this. Ma sat for a while in the palanquin to fulfil the desires of the devotees, and then got down. The Compassionate One then walked, surrounded by the kirtan singers and a large group of devotees and reached Jyotish Dada's house. The kirtan continued for a long time. Then Ma took us to the middle room of the Madhav and Manasa temple where Durga puja is performed.

Many people took Ma to their homes in Paraikoda. Everyone believes that the dust of Ma's feet brings welfare to his house. Suren

Babu took Ma to the house of his brother Gangacharan. A panchavati has been planted at the entrance of the puja room in his house. Suren Babu pointed to a certain spot and told Ma, "Our father sat here and performed sadhana." Ma in turn instructed him, "Keep this spot clean and neat for me to sit." And she went to that very spot and touched the trees.

When Ma was taken to the house of the Sens of Paraikoda a very old and ill man was supported and brought for Ma's darshan. Later we heard that till the day before receiving Ma's darshan the old man had been expressing a desire to live longer and was trying different means for getting better. But after the darshan he began saying, "I can go now." Ma alone knows how that sick man underwent such a transformation. Ma alone can say whether reasons such as these make her move hither and thither. In many places we find that people who have never seen Ma have a strong desire for her darshan and Ma appears there of her own accord. In some cases people see her in their dreams or in shadow form and then Ma actually appears to them in person.

Sunday, February 3. Today Ma awoke at seven a.m. Ma's face was smeared with sindur and I cleaned it. Zamindar Yogesh Babu's sons and some others had come for Ma's darshan. Yogesh Babu's son asked Ma, "What is the form of 'Om' ? How is sadhana to be

performed ?" Ma replied, "Everything cannot be revealed all the time ; Guru tells you and this is a matter of experience, etc.." Today I made Ma drink a little milk. Bholanath was offered bhoga with twenty five items. Yogesh Babu's son had met Ma to specially request her to bless their home with the dust of her feet. At three p.m. after lunch, one of Yogesh Babu's grandsons came to escort Ma. Around four p.m. Ma went to Yogesh Babu's house accompanied by us all and sat in the Dashabhuja temple. Later the ladies took Ma to the courtyard inside. Ma spent an hour there.

Meanwhile, a group of kirtan singers arrived to take Ma around the town. Many people from that house accompanied Ma and singing kirtans, they went all around the town and returned to Jyotish Dada's house. Ma also visited Abani Sharma's house on the way. Abani Babu had wired to his brother that Ma should be taken to visit his house as he himself could not be present due to some work. Another panditji had also explicitly requested Ma to visit his house. But since everyone did not agree to take that route Ma was brought back by a different way. Panditji walked beside Ma and expressed his disappointment, "If only Ma walked on the road near my house, I could place the women and grandchild of my household at Ma's feet." Surprisingly enough, on going a little further, we spotted Panditji's grand son and the ladies of Panditji's

house standing along the road that Ma was walking on. They had come for Ma's darshan. On seeing them Panditji was overjoyed. He made his grandson prostrate at Ma's feet and said, "Ma, I wanted to take you past my house only for the sake of this grandson. By your grace my desire has been fulfilled !"

As we walked past Kshirod Babu (zamindar) did pranam to Ma. He had just come to town. After dusk Kshirod Babu took Ma to the Karunamayi temple in his house. Devotees accompanied Ma singing kirtan all along and also sang for a long time in the temple. Bholanath got very inspired and four or five men fell down in an ecstatic state as they sang kirtan. Ma spent some time there and came away.

Professor Girija Babu arrived today with his children as they had holidays for a couple of days. All joined together and sang, "Hare Krishna Hare Krishna Krishna Krishna Hare Hare, Hare Rama Hare Rama Rama Rama Hare Hare." I made Ma sit to have some refreshments but her attention was elsewhere and she began clapping her hands. "Jaya Radhe Radhe Krishna Krishna Hare Rama Hare Rama, O Nama Bolo Bodone Sunao Kane Bilao Jeeber Dvare Dvare." Hearing Ma sing this all took up the refrain. The big compound was full of humanity, they all walked around as they sang. Here again a couple of people fell down in ecstasy. Around midnight Ma and all the rest went to rest.

Monday, February 4. Today Jyotish Dada was to offer Ma bhoga with one hundred items. Sashi Dada was busy making all the preparations. He had been slogging day and night and serving everybody. Nearly one hundred and fifty food stuffs had been procured. Early in the morning Girija Babu spoke to Ma as she sat on her bedstead. The kirtan singer Jyotish Rudra was with Girija Babu. While chatting with them Ma started singing the following songs :-

1. *Ma amar doya koro,*
2. *Uthlo re rovo modhu makha,*
3. *E sob debota tetris koti,*
4. *Kiba dhol dhol rupa,*
5. *Ki jati ki nama,*
6. *Ke re nuton jogi.*

After singing all these songs Ma started the refrain of this nama kirtan - "*Jai Radhe Radhe Krishna Krishna.*" Everyone joined in, the pakhavaj and kartal were brought and kirtan went on for a long time. Ma sat swaying from side to side and lifted her hands, singing kirtan and making others sing - her eyes were full of tears - everyone gazed enthralled at her wonderful form.

Just then some food was brought in. Ma distributed it to all present with her own hands. Then Jyotish Dada took Ma to the courtyard in the centre of the house. There the kirtan gathered tempo as everyone walked around and sang. Then Ma stood by quietly but

Bholanath got very inspired. Along with him the group of men also got enthused - kirtan went on in full swing.

A panditji asked Ma whether he could start recitation of the Bhagavad Gita. The eleventh chapter was recited. The panditji then told Ma, "Ma, because of the darshan that you have given us so graciously, our town has become pure and we have also been purified. This is our good fortune." Ma replied with joined hands, "Baba, do not say this to your daughter. I am, after all, your daughter." He replied, "Ma, you are the mother and daughter all in one. What are you not ? But we see you only as our mother."

After this conversation, a gentleman of the Kali temple arrived and requested that Ma should be taken to the temple and Bholanath agreed. Till eleven a.m. Ma had not even had a face wash. After the Gita chanting Ma's face was washed and she was made to drink some milk before going to the Kali temple. Ma sat there for some time and remarked, "This is a very good spot for sadhana." The surroundings of the ghat were not very clean. Ma took notice of the fact and asked, "What droppings are these ?" They replied, "The droppings of mice." Ma instructed, "This place should be cleaned everyday. Ma desires your service regularly."

Ma was then taken to other houses. On returning she lay down on her bedstead. When-

ever the topic of sadhana arises, Ma says, "You all must devote as much time as you can to God. The Indivisible cannot be attained without unbroken meditation." Last night Girija Babu had raised the issue of the wonderful experience of some Power of Ma that they had felt in 1924. His house being in Ashtagram, the topic of Ashtagram also came up. Ma's bhava during kirtan had first been revealed in Ashtagram. Bholanath opened the subject and Girija Babu reminisced, "I have heard about these incidents in my place." Bholanath narrated, "Once, on being requested by our neighbours we had arranged for kirtan at our residence. In the evening all gathered in the room and started kirtan. The ladies and Ma were seated on a bedstead in the courtyard. Some time after the kirtan started Ma fell on the bedstead, with half her body off the bedstead. Much later, when I came to know about this, I took her indoors and made her lie down. Kirtan went on throughout the night. In the morning all had a wash and restarted the kirtan because Ma was still lying in bhava. Ma got up around four o'clock and began moving around normally. This was the first occasion.

"The second time I had called people and arranged for kirtan when a group of kirtan singers from the village arrived singing and joined us. They were carrying incense pots in their hands. Ma fell down in bhava in her

room - a little later she came out of the bhava. After this Ma's bhava during kirtan was kept secret and people were unaware of it."

Continuing his narration Bholanath said, "We went to Dhaka from Bajitpur and there in Thatheri Bazar, near my brother Suren's house, there was an akhada. I sometimes took Ma there. One day when Ma entered the temple, a person of the akhada followed her with the intention of asking her to leave ; Ma was seated in the doorway and as soon as that man went there she glanced at him. Immediately the man exclaimed, 'O God ! I can never ask her to leave !' and moved back terrified. Ma kept sitting as she was."

Ma returned from the Kali temple and sat on her bedstead, sometimes conversing and sometimes lying down. A little later she covered her face with a cloth and slept. At two p.m. she got up and started speaking to the people who had gathered. Lunch was ready, Ma and Bholanath sat down to eat in the middle of the courtyard. Ma began asking many people, "Which dish do you like best ?" On receiving an answer Ma asked each person to place a morsel of that dish on her plate and asked the dish to be given with the vessel to that person. When everyone began eating, Ma also had bhoga. Sashi Babu took photographs and all enjoyed themselves greatly.

But I observed that Ma had practically stopped eating. Her mood was strange and I was awed by it. I could not explain how even her external behaviour was so detached. When she was made to eat, her attention was elsewhere. I did not know what would happen.

After meals the devotees sat surrounding Ma. Ma was satiating everyone with her sweet speech. Many ladies confessed, "What could we do Ma ? We could not stay at home, so we have come running to you !" Some of the gentlemen declared, "We have never seen such a personality ! So many sadhus distribute medicines - and therefore people flock to sadhus ; but she gives nothing, yet her words and laughter are so sweet that one cannot tear oneself away." Groups of people arrived and sang kirtan. Bliss flowed in a steady stream. Around midnight Ma turned in to rest.

CHAPTER III

Tuesday, February 5. Ma awoke early. In the afternoon some school masters arrived with their students and were to be given prasad. Ma was seated on the stairs. A master stood up and said, "It is our extreme good fortune that Ma has been gracious enough to give us her darshan. Now we want Ma's prasad from Ma's own hands." Since a large number of people were present, Ma touched the prasad and brahmins began serving it. The boys (numbering about 150) and their masters were all seated in the compound. Ma was photographed in their company. Khichdi and curry were served on all the leaf plates. The Gracious Mother stood up and declared, "These are all Bala Gopalas sitting here !" and she went to each leaf plate and began feeding each child with her own hands. All considered themselves very fortunate. Ma walked around feeding all the boys and masters. After performing this lila Ma went to the place where the masters were seated and sat on the ground near them. Laughingly she told them, "You are the masters of these school boys. For once try to master your own minds !" One master replied, "Ma, that is even more difficult

than conquering the earth." Ma rejoined, "Yet it is possible through practice ; just as these children, who are now ignorant and naive, become knowledgable with regular studies. This proves that with effort the ignorance of a restless mind can also be removed. Just as there exists, within, the veil of ignorance, so also exists the door of knowledge." One person said, "But Ma, it refuses to work however we try." Ma replied, "Even if the mind is not willing you must give some time to Him regularly. For example, initially boys have to be forced to sit down to study. But gradually as they acquire more knowledge they develop greater attraction towards their studies, so that finally they reach a stage when they themselves do not want to leave their studies and get up. They put their heart and soul in their effort to pass examinations and then no one need coax them to study. From this you can infer that though you are now lying in ignorance, with regular, sustained effort you can become enlightened one day." After conversing thus Ma sat in the verandah of the puja room. The masters instructed each boy to touch Ma's feet and do pranam. They also paid obeisance to Ma as Devi Herself. Some of them even recited invocations to Devi as they did pranam. One by one they bade farewell to Ma. She told the boys, "You must take the Name of God at least for some time."

The same morning the ladies of the Sen neighbourhood took Ma to their homes. Ma visited seven to ten houses where all were extremely happy to have Ma's darshan. They would run to see Ma at every possible opportunity. They were all seated surrounding Ma. This morning after their return from the Sen neighbourhood, Jyotish Dada introduced a gentleman from that house to Ma and said, "He has been to England and is very proficient in astrology." All the people began requesting him to read their palms. The gentleman did pranam to Ma and with her permission began reading her palm. He exclaimed, "I have never seen such a palm in my life before. I must have written out ten or twelve thousand horoscopes - and I have read a countless number of palms, but this *chatuh sagari yoga* that is present in this palm is capable of almost anything at all. I know nothing but I say a little because of my Guru's will. I understand that Ma has the beneficence of four planets and so far only the effect of one planet has begun to manifest. Work worth only a quarter of a rupee has been achieved ; what has been done will be nothing compared to what is going to be done in the coming years. The waters will drown everything and rise still higher."

Jyotish Dada questioned, "How do you see Ma's sadhana ? Will it be of any help to the world or not ?" The astrologer replied, "What

shall I say of *sadhana* ? She is beyond it !" Jyotish Dada said, "People say she is a worshipper of Kali." The astrologer, Abinash Babu laughed and declared, "Kali will come and worship her ! And about being helpful to the world, I can only say that even Chaitanya Dev and others had to put some effort to help the world, but in Ma's case, as I see it, even those deeds do not have to be performed. Everything will occur of its own accord which is called 'falling from above'. In my life I have seen another hand which appears to match this one. It is the hand of a person who lives near Manasarovar and, as he himself told me, his age is 350 years. But he is a yogi and had to perform yoga to attain his present state. I see that Ma did not have to do even that. I have read about certain markings in books, but I have never seen them on any human hands. Today I have sighted them on Ma's hand. My Guru has said, 'Whosoever has such markings on his hand is beyond the control of the invisible'."

After making various such comments and after reading the palms of some others, the astrologer spoke about the invisible. He was not like other astrologers and seemed to be enveloped by a strange mood. His readings were quite correct and he mainly disclosed the natures of people. He is one who performs intense spiritual practices. We heard that he took his image of Siva with him when he

went to England and worshipped the image everyday.

Later he took me aside and said, "Listen, I have never seen Ma before. Yesterday when I sat down to do puja I saw Ma. I have never seen such a phenomenon before. I have also never seen earlier what I saw on Ma's palm. From the lines that I see on her hand I am convinced that she is Brahma Vidya Herself. I have absolutely no doubts on this score. I am only afraid that she may not retain her body for long. I can see the marking of this disaster looming over your heads but I am also anxious about the preservation of Ma's body, therefore I shall also ask Ma about it."

In fact he did speak privately to Ma about all this and prayed to her to preserve her body. Ma replied, "Whatever has to happen will happen ; if you can protect this body then do so. To me everything is fine."

Abinash Babu said, "A disharmony is destroying this body and without changing that it will be difficult to look after this body." On our asking him for a solution he replied, "I shall also go to Ma and say whatever occurs to me at that time. I shall certainly aspire for the protection of Ma's body, but what powers do we have anyway ? To speak thus to Ma is blasphemy. Yet I dared to read her hand only with her permission." And so on.

Day by day people have begun to come from distant places for Ma's darshan. The

evening's kirtan gathered tempo and went on till about eleven p.m. Today Jatu performed Ma's arati with ten or twelve incense pots. The arati was really worth watching. As he performed it Jatu's demeanour underwent a strange transformation. He seemed to be playing with fire, strangling himself with his dhòti, - binding his hands and sometimes casting a curtain before himself - finally removing everything and covering his head with cloth and dancing. I was seated near Ma and she spoke softly, "This game that is in progress has a meaning - look, at first the incense pot was taken and arati was performed with the entire body ; then when this brought about stillness, the light of knowledge was lit and arati was performed with this light. Then becoming like a flower, fragrance was wafted around and arati was performed with a flower. Still the play of prarabdha continued - take the example of the jivan mukta. He takes the veil of ignorance and plays around with it as he wills. The veil is drawn, yet the light is visible. Finally he takes the veil and sometimes strangles himself with it and at other times he binds his hands with it or ties it around his waist. Finally he takes off the veil, puts it on his head and dances. He is liberated." Ma continued, "All this is one way of describing it simply."

I wanted to explain this deeply significant meaning of the arati to Jatu because he enjoyed

doing arati so much. Many people would request him to perform arati and take him with them. He has also won medals for this. Yet today also I could not speak to him about this. Later in Chittagong in Yashoda Babu's house when the topic came up in Jatu's presence, Ma spoke thus about the arati to all those assembled.

Ma rested only at one a.m. and the devotees also retired to rest.

CHAPTER IV

Wednesday, February 6. Today there was talk of returning to Chittagong. Niranjan Babu's brother Kaushiki Babu had come from Patiya and he requested Ma to visit Patiya on her way to Chittagong. The programme was finalised accordingly. We all finished our meals by two p.m. and set out for Patiya with Ma by boat. Many people at Paraikoda were sobbing and pleading with Ma to give darshan again. All the people of the place gathered to bid goodbye to Ma, whose departure from Paraikoda left them sinking in an ocean of sorrow. Within an hour and a half we reached Patiya.

A car which was waiting at the ghat took Ma to Kaushiki Babu's house. Arrangements had been made in the compound to seat Ma and her devotees. A Muslim munsif began conversing with Ma. He said, "The way to attain God is by nama kirtan alright, but if some one does not relish doing nama kirtan what is he to do ?" Ma replied, "You must practise like a child. Just as an ignorant child can become a knowledgeable pandit by dint of practice, so can you raise the curtain to reveal knowledge by practice alone. But, Baba, at first you need blind faith - faith has no

eyes." The Munsif Sahib said, "But what about the person who has neither faith nor devotion - who has no interest in nama kirtan - who has nothing at all - what is the solution for his crossing over ?" Ma laughed and answered, "Baba, you will have to agree that when the question, 'What is the solution ?' arises in a person's mind, he must have something within him !" Saying this Ma laughed and the munsif sahib also accepted Ma's argument.

The conversation continued, he said, "Ma, I can do nothing, only if He makes me do this work can I do it." Ma rejoined, "Look, try to take His Name with the same limited power that you use to do all other work. What shall I say Baba -" and Ma then joined her palms and continued, "I can say nothing, I only speak what you all make me speak. Consider the intellect to be the mother and let the ego be the father - with the help of these parents you engage in all worldly activities. As long as these two function within you, you must take their assistance to do God's nama kirtan also. You must also try to progress a little in that direction. See, my words are topsy turvy like those of a crazy person. I say that even if you don't feel like it, you must take God's name and perform actions which help you to progress towards Him. This constitutes a kind of suffering and the tolerance of this suffering is called penance (tapasya). Tapa + saha = tapasya. The meaning of sadhana

is sva + dhana ; that wealth (dhana) which is indestructible - the effort to attain God." So saying, Ma laughed.

Munsif Babu was extremely delighted to hear Ma's words. He asked, "Alright, does everything happen by His grace or as a result of the fruit of our action" Ma replied, holding a flower in her hand as an illustration, "Do you know what grace and action are like ? Just like my wanting to give you this flower and your advancing your hand to accept it. So do grace and action mingle to perform a job. It is like this, what more ?"

Then the topic of the mind came up. Ma said, "If the mind is restless, so is the sadhaka. Can't you see, the mind wants only bliss and runs hither and thither only because it cannot find bliss. The proof that it has tasted unbroken Bliss lies in the fact that it wants only unbroken Bliss. It obtains so many kinds of impermanent joys but they are unable to bind it down and it refuses to be satiated. It wants only a permanent Bliss, so it is verily a maha sadhaka." Hearing these words, the Munsif Sahib expressed great happiness.

Dr. Niraj Babu had arranged for Bhagavad path at the Kali temple and a man arrived from there to fetch Ma. Feeling that no one would be able to hear Ma's soft speech, she was not allowed to go. But the Gracious Mother never lets anyone's desires go unfulfilled. So a little later when she was taken to have some

refreshments, she asked, "At what time does our train leave ?" Kaushiki Babu replied, "At seven p.m." Ma said, "Then, if there is time to spare, come, let us go to the Kali temple." Immediately, Ma, Bholanath, Jyotish Dada, Kaushiki Babu and I were taken by car to the Kali temple leaving all the others behind. Ma went and sat where the Bhagavad path was in progress. Sri Krishnanandaji, who was giving the discourse, was saying, "Bliss lies only in living face to face with God. See now, an example is Anandamayi Ma. Ask and find out - there is no shortcoming in her - therefore she is Anandamayi (Bliss incarnate). The thousands who go to her also obtain bliss because she has become verily a personification of bliss. She has taken refuge in 'One' and therefore has become 'One'. Defeciency and trouble occur only in duality - the 'One' has nothing lacking, ..." After spending five or ten minutes there we all returned to Kaushiki Babu's house.

As Ma sat down, two girls came running and did pranam. One of them threw herself on Ma's lap, clung to her sobbing and said, "Ma will you make me your daughter ?" The girl embraced Ma as if she had known Ma for years. The girl must have been about fifteen years old. On getting to know her I found out that she was the Postmaster's daughter and that she performed spiritual practices regularly. Her parents had not come to see

Ma but the girl had run away on her own. She was crying her heart out. On being asked her name she said, it was Niru. Ma said, "Will you come with me ? Come !" The girl replied, "My parents won't let me go." Ma told Kaushiki Babu, "Tell her father that if he wishes he can bring her once to Cox Bazar." Later Ma said to us, "If these people only allow such girls, they would develop excellent bhava. This girl's attitude is very good. It can also be seen that those who are highly evolved display a special bhava right from childhood. Once you enter samsara it is difficult to get out of it. Moreover, it is a mistake to expect peace from samsara ; only momentary happiness can be had."

It was time for Ma to leave. On the way to the station the Munsif Babu again came to meet Ma. He told Ma, "Give me some advice which I can always remember. Say something." Ma said, "You think - 'Good will befall me'." He was very happy with this. Having touched the dust of Ma's feet he bade her farewell.

Ma reached the station by car. A little later I saw that the Munsif Babu had come to the station to meet Ma again as he felt that he had not said goodbye to Ma ! The train arrived and Ma boarded it. Just then, Ma's longstanding devotee, the daughter of Chintaharan Samaddar, arrived, panting. She had got news of Ma's arrival and had come

running for Ma's darshan. Moments later the whistle blew and the train set off. Within an hour we reached Chittagong. Many people had gathered there on getting the news of Ma's arrival from Surendra Babu (brother of Gangacharan Babu of Paraikoda). It was decided that we would leave the very next morning at eight a.m. by steamer for Cox Bazar. Again, it was past midnight when Ma lay down to rest and we all went to sleep.

CHAPTER V

Thursday, February 7. This morning Ma was taken to a house. When she returned all the devotees were seated for meals and a large crowd had gathered for her darshan. About eight a.m. Ma left for Cox Bazar by Upendra-nath's car. Many people accompanied her till she boarded the steamer. Ganesh, Ramesh, Hira and the other boys who had accompanied Ma to Sitakunda, could not accompany her now. Hiru requested, "Ma, please remember us." Someone remarked, "Ma can never forget her boys." Ramesh objected, "At times she does forget, otherwise why would we need to call out to her ?" Ma laughed and explained, "That is also to exhaust your actions (karma kshaya). Further, you can observe - if this weeping did not occur how would this tearful bhava exist ? The tearful state also has to be manifested, for it is part of human nature. The mind is sometimes in such a mood that tears do not arise - but the moment some tears are shed, the heart becomes lighter. Unless the heart is lightened, tears are not shed. Therefore everything is necessary. However, you know about me - I have no kheyal towards the condition of the body." Saying this Ma laughed.

At five p.m. we reached Cox Bazar. We had to go a short distance by boat after alighting from the steamer. In the boat Ma asked, "What is the tithi today?" We replied, "Ashtami." Ma laughed and said, "The word 'Ashtami ashtami' was being uttered for the last few days - we have arrived here on that very ashtami day." Only then did we remember that when the date of our trip to Cox Bazar was indefinite, and we were travelling from place to place, the word 'ashtami' had, in fact, emerged from Ma's lips, every now and then. But we did not pay any particular attention to this utterance for there are so many such phrases that we hear Ma saying, of which we can make no sense. Now we understood what Ma had meant by saying 'ashtami'.

A little later Ma looked at us and said, "Fifteen days". We could not understand what this 'fifteen days' signified. At the ghat Bankim Babu, leading a group of kirtan singers and two elephants, was waiting to receive Ma. Dinabandhu Babu (lawyer), Munsif Babu and many others were in the group. The mahouts on the elephants made them lift their trunks to salute Ma. Ma began walking behind the kirtan singers, followed by her devotees. The elephants led the procession. Ma first had darshan of Kali in Dinabandhu Babu's house and then proceeded to the sea shore to Indu Datta's house which was vacant. Bankim Babu had put up a tent for Ma and she sat in it.

Kirtan went on for a long time. Then Ma had some refreshments while all the rest had dinner. Bankim Babu, Nazir Babu and others extended warm hospitality to all the people. After eating, Ma and her devotees slept in the tent. Jatu and some other boys were also present.

Friday, February 8. Ma woke up very early and went for a walk by the sea shore. All around were open spaces as far as the eye could see. Jyotish Dada, Akhandananda, Rana (who has been with Jyotish Dada for some months) and some others went with Ma. On returning, Ma's hands and face were washed and she lay down. She conversed on a variety of topics. Then she covered her face with her bed cover and lay down till the afternoon. She got up when many ladies arrived for her darshan. Ma laughed and chatted with them. Sometimes she teased them and sometimes she joked with them enthralling all present.

Lawyer Yogendra Babu's wife was distraught about her eldest son who was in prison. She said, "When I set out from home I plan to tell Ma all about my sorrow but the moment I see Ma's tent I feel my heart growing lighter and I am unable to say anything to Ma. As I return home my mind again gets agitated over my son's problems - I cannot understand why it is so." In the evening Ma again took us to the sea shore for a stroll and returned at dusk. Kirtan was started and around eleven p.m. everyone left.

Saturday, February 9. Today again there is nothing particular to write about. Like yesterday today also passed by - Ma slept around eleven p.m. There was kirtan during the day. Many Muslim gentlemen came to Ma, prayed to her and took her blessings.

Sunday, February 10. Early in the morning Ma went for a walk by the seaside, returned, had a wash and drank some milk. Then she went with Jyotish Dada to Dinabandhu Babu's house. From there she went to Ram Babu's and Bankim Babu's houses and finally to the Saraswati temple on her way back. It was decided that in the evening Ma would be taken to attend the kirtan at the Forest Officer Ram Babu's house. His wife had been coming to see Ma almost every evening. Ma lay down for awhile during the daytime. In the evening the devotees took her to Ram Babu's house where a pandal had been put up. Ma sat in it and the kirtan was started. At ten thirty p.m. the kirtan was stopped and Ma was brought back to the tent by the sea. She slept around midnight.

A distinct change in Ma's bhava is perceptible. When I asked her, "What shall I cook for today's lunch?" she replied, "I shall not eat, food intake will decrease, everything will become topsy-turvy." She said this so suddenly that I became afraid. Again she said, "The time for a change has come." I cannot guess what will happen. In fact I have observed

that Ma's diet has reduced gradually and that her mood has become very reserved. Sometimes she stays very quiet and even if she does utter a couple of words they appear very superficial, as if she were in a totally different world. Though this mood is natural to her, it is more obvious here. It is, however, madness to describe her bhava in ordinary language !

Monday, February 11. This morning again, Ma went for a walk on the sea shore with Jyotish Dada and returned very late. Yogen Babu was waiting and Ma came only at nine a.m. She had drunk some milk in the morning - now she declared, "I shall not eat anything." She spoke to Yogen Babu on various matters. Shankaranand Swami and Jyotish Dada were seated near her. Abinash Sen of Paraikoda had also come and he professed, "I have known Ma only for a couple of days, yet I just could not stay at home - and so I have come." I heard that he occupied a top official post, but had given it up and spent most of his time in religious pursuits. He had taken his image of Shiva even to England and had performed puja everyday. He was married to the daughter of Rakhal Das, who belonged to the family of C. R. Das. However, all those who met Abinash Babu began enquiring about their future because he was an expert in astrology.

Yogen Babu is a Brahmo Samaji. He asked, "What is the solution for us ?" etc. After many discussions, Ma declared, "Everything lies within you. Look, you are not satisfied with limited pleasures and are searching hither and thither for uninterrupted bliss." Yogen Babu argued, "But why ? Sometimes we get happiness in worldly transactions also." Ma replied, "That is limited joy - but there is joy even in limitations. By looking at the shade of a tree one can conclude that the tree exists. See, bliss also exists in such a beautiful form - one can never be separated from bliss. Sometimes it exists in the form of a memory and sometimes as bliss itself. Even when unhappiness is being experienced, happiness still continues in one's memory. Therefore there exists the longing to acquire bliss. So see, you can never live abandoning bliss - whether it exists in shadow form or in reality. Again, the infinite ocean has an infinite number of waves ; within the ocean lie steadiness and stability - without that steady and stable base the waves cannot play about on the surface."

Lawyer Babu now asked, "Well, what is the means of crossing over for us lawyers ? We always cover truth with falsehood." Ma laughed and replied, "It is not absolute falsehood. Suppose a man wins a case through falsehood and walks off with another man's house. This should make us understand that

the other man too must have harmed this one sometime and that this must have happened as a result. Alternatively, whatever he has done now will bear fruit in the future - so that even in falsehood truth is inherent. The difficulty lies in the fact that we think that falsehood, sin etc., exist. By the discrimination of truth from falsehood, sins and meritorious deeds are distinguishable. But actually when this discrimination goes, truth and falsehood can do nothing. This shore and that shore all cease to exist." Saying this Ma laughed and continued, "Baba, all these days you have fought so many cases, now once and for all why don't you make some arrangements for this big case ? Your black hair has greyed and your teeth have given way to toothlessness (bedanta)."* Saying this Ma burst into rippling laughter. Further she said, "Money and wealth have been earned in plenty - wealth also implies poverty. That which can never be lost is svadhana. Sadhana means svadhana." Lawyer Babu commented, "I feel I have lost that wealth." Ma replied, "The bhava that you have when you say, 'I have lost it' - that bhava proves that you have not lost it. Unbroken (akhanda) bhava can never be lost and therefore I do not find permanent joy in limitedness - I long for the akhanda.

* Pun on the word vedanta which is pronounced as bedanta in Bengali and means toothless. Translator's note.

'Svadharme nidhanam sreyaḥ para-dharmo bhaya-vahaḥ - that is the point. That dharma which causes an increase in the deficiency is para-dharma - relinquish that ; then the meaning of the phrase that even death in svadharma is preferable, is that once you come to this path, even death is good. Entrust your burden to whosoever you want to - there is not much time left."

Lawyer Babu said, "It is the ego which stops me. I cannot figure out whom to entrust the burden with, nor can I let go of it." Ma replied, "If one person is everything, then to whosoever you entrust it would be equivalent to entrusting it to Him (God)." He said, "The time has gone past, the accounts can no longer be cleared." Ma spoke up, "Why ever not ? Why do you lose hope ? Who knows what will happen to anyone at any moment ? Why do you not declare right now - 'I have got hold !' Do not say you have let go - catch hold of any one thing then you will see - in this way the bondage will be torn apart." So saying Ma tore the jumper off her body and began laughing. Lawyer Babu immediately took a piece of the torn jumper and declared, "Today I had asked for something - I got this !" Many took pieces of the jumper. Ma laughed and said, "Khukuni, look, I have torn the jumper." Addressing all the rest she said, "She keeps everything so carefully, only I indulge in such madness." Further she said, "The day that

has gone past never returns, grain by grain it is being finished."

After such conversation Yogendra Babu left. Ma went to the toilet. Today was not the day for her meal. I said, "Ma, Harimohan (the servant) knows to make roti very well." Ma responded, "Oh ! is that so ? Then I shall eat roti today and not eat anything else right now." After about two and a half or three years Ma broke the regulation of eating only every alternate day and ate some roti today. While eating she smiled and said, "After a gap of two years I ate from the hands of the Raja and broke the regulation of eating only every alternate day, but I had only fruit and milk. Today I have broken even that and eaten roti after years from the hand of the servant."

The quantity of food Ma is eating is decreasing day by day. After eating she lay down for awhile. Many ladies came at three p.m. Ma uncovered her face by removing the sheet she had wrapped over herself and asked, "Where is Khukuni ?" When I went near her she said, "This body feels strange" and as she said this she looked towards Father and acted as if she were sick and said, "Just check the pulse." Father checked her pulse and said, "It is quite alright." Ma asked, "Really ?" Father laughed and said, "Does a doctor ever speak the truth ?" A little later he said, "It is beating very weakly." As we watched, Ma's condition

became very strange and her body became limp. My eyes filled with tears and all the people moved closer. Ma lay passively. Today we were to go to Viraj Babu's house for kirtan and also to the Brahmo Samaj. Seeing Ma's condition they came with the group of kirtan singers to the pandal. At night Ma sat up for awhile and kirtan was started. Ma sat steadily while all tried to make her speak. In broken language she said, "The body went into a stupor, that is all, it was nothing more." Jyotish Dada and others sang nama kirtan for some time. Ma did not even drink water at night. She lay down and spent the night in that strange state.

Tuesday, February 12. Ma kept lying down till ten a.m. this morning. Then she did get up, but refused to eat anything - her food intake has nearly ceased and she is being fed a little somehow or the other. Yesterday, after a span of two and a half years, she broke the regulation of eating every alternate day, and now her food intake has become even less than before. She ate nothing the whole day through and ate very little after dusk. She spoke very slowly and softly. In the afternoon the ladies came and asked, "What had happened to Ma yesterday?" Ma laughed and replied, "Nothing - the body was a little sleepy. The limbs became limp - nothing more. I did not say anything but Khukuni called everyone and created such a pandemonium."

So saying she laughed but everyone remained serious and quiet. While lying down last night she said, "See how the body becomes during Girija's kirtan. He says, 'It is nothing, it goes above the skin. Similarly if the body gets hurt let that also go over the skin.'" Ma lay down to rest at eleven p.m.

Wednesday, February 13. Today Ma again rose very late and declared that she would not eat anything. As soon as she was made to sit to eat she said, "It just does not go in." She turned away, spread her legs like a child and began playing with something. In this way she had almost stopped eating completely. Today she ate no rice or roti. She drank a little milk and ate some vegetables boiled in water. Often Ma has only boiled vegetables. When she wandered alone fruit was not available at times and she probably did not eat roti either, so she would tell Viraj Didi, "Boil some vegetable in water and feed it to me." Even now I sometimes feed this to Ma.

Ladies came in the afternoon and Ma told them, "It is not right to sit with idle tongues. Do nama kirtan." She began playing her small kartal and sang, "Hari bol, Hari bol." Ma told me, "You also sing." I obeyed and nama kirtan went on for a long time.

Today is Ratanti Kali puja day. Abinash Babu was fasting. He took Dasu and Satyendra to the sea shore and performed puja. I heard

something about what he did to them there - that they fell trembling and that Dasu had a vision of lying in the lap of Ma's golden image etc. At night again Abinash Babu sat in his room and performed puja. After the kirtan Ma went outdoors for a stroll and Abinash Babu went there to do Ma's puja. When Ma sat on the steps he worshipped her. Ma smiled and said, "Baba, what did you do at the sea shore ? Won't you do some of it here ?" Many people were present. Abinash Babu replied, "Ma, what do I know ? It is all your will." Ma said, "Do whatever you did at the sea shore." Then he made four or five men sit near him and pressed the foreheads of Rana and another local boy with his fingers. Then he sat with his eyes shut - but nothing happened to anyone. Abinash Babu caught hold of Ma's feet and pleaded, "Ma, you are sitting with everything that I have, that is why nothing is happening. Ma, I am unable to do it." Ma said, "So many people are sitting here. At least one or two must have some experience." She made fun of the matter in this manner. A little later Ma told the boy who lived in Cox Bazar, "Just gaze at me." He did accordingly. Within a minute he became unconscious and fell down. Ma began laughing. After some time the boy was made to rise and do pranam to Ma. I smilingly asked, "Shall Rana sit ?" Ma agreed eagerly, "Let him sit." Rana sat near Ma's feet and Ma

told him, "Gaze at my eyes." He did so. Within some minutes his breathing became heavy and he seemed fearful but he sat steadily, gazing at Ma's face. Ma said, "His breathing has become very fast there is no need now, his heart is not very strong. If he stays any longer he will fall. I reasoned that these two were young boys who were simple and naive and therefore this had happened to them. I suggested, "Let Sashi Babu sit and let us see what happens." Ma laughed like a child and agreed, "Alright." Sashi Babu came and sat cautiously. He stared at Ma's eyes and Ma looked at him naturally. A little later Sashi Babu raised his hands and rubbed his eyes and then stared again. Minutes later he shook and burst in into tears, but his eyes remained unwinking, staring at Ma and then he fell. Two or three people caught him. After some time he became normal and did pranam to Ma.

Another gentleman said, "I shall not sit, for I have seen." He did not reveal what he had seen. Ma said, "This is a game that is going on, but this game is not usually played. Today Baba (Abinash Babu) has initiated it." Then she laughed and said, "But what do you call this ? This is not hypnotism, this is a different phenomenon. Alright, you don't sit, but before you lie down on your bed, sit for some time, then you will understand." Pointing to the gentleman who had just spoken Ma

said, "You are going away tomorrow ; alright, wherever you go, sit for some time - then you will understand." He agreed. After sporting in this fashion when Ma went to rest it was almost midnight.

Thursday, February 14. Ma did not go for a walk this morning. In the afternoon many ladies arrived. Ma told them, "All of you shut your eyes and sit quietly." They did so. Nowadays Ma often tells the people present to sit absolutely still in this manner. Then when they open their eyes she asks, "What did each of you see ? Where did your minds wander ?" And so on. Today it was similar. Then some of the ladies sang.

Pushpita Mukherjee was to take Ma for kirtan to the Munsif Babu's house. In the evening Ma went for a stroll by the sea. Munsif Babu's wife arrived to take Ma and we all got ready to go there. Abinash Babu said, "I do not wish to go there - I want to sit in solitude for awhile." Ma said, "Very well, you stay ; and Budho Ma (Surendra Ghoshal's mother who had accompanied Ma from Chittagong) can also stay back. Stay in solitude with the *eka + kanta* (One Lord) - that is very good."

As soon as Ma reached Munsif Babu's house, he washed her feet and made her sit on an asana. First his twenty year old son sang a song, "*Shankhe Shankhe mangala gaao Janani esheche dvare*" and so on. Then kirtan was sung after which Munsif Babu's wife made Ma

partake of some refreshments. Everyone did pranam to Ma and she returned to her tent around midnight. She lay down to rest at two a.m.

Friday, February 15. Today Ma rose late. Nowadays her eating habits follow no fixed rule whatever ; she eats something at some time or the other - whether she will eat fruit or roti, is not fixed. She hardly eats roti. She only eats fruit, milk and boiled vegetables most of the time. Today she ate a little food quite late in the day. In the afternoon again she made everyone sit quietly. Then when the ladies arrived nama kirtan was sung.

Ma was to be taken to Debendra Choudhury's house for kirtan. This gentleman had lost seven or eight children and his wife had lost her sanity through grief. She came to Ma, poured out her sorrow and wept. Ma told her, "O Ma, do not weep. I am your son and daughter." Hearing this the lady embraced Ma and was placated to some extent. She then began showering her affection on Ma in many ways. She said, "Alright, you are my son and my daughter. I shall go with you." And with this declaration she assumed the role of Ma's mother whole heartedly and began conversing with Ma in that strain. Today she took Ma to her house for kirtan.

In the afternoon Ma went to the sea shore and asked all those with her to sit still. She then asked, "What did each of you perceive ?"

After dusk Ma returned to her tent and around seven p.m. she was taken to Debendra Babu's house.

After kirtan Debendra Babu's wife took Ma to the inner courtyard of the house where the wives of Rai Bahadur Bipin Babu, Yogendra Babu, Mohini Babu and Munsif Babu were present. By the traditions prevalent in this part of the country Debendra Babu's wife anointed Ma with sandal paste and performed other rituals of Ma's naming ceremony. She named Ma with the names of her dead sons and daughters. She fed Ma with a wide variety of dishes. Then she showed Ma the letters she had received from her brothers who were abroad. Ma responded by calling out to her like a small child, saying, "Ma, Ma !" and pacified her. But she would not let go of Ma. At times when she remembered her dead children and gave vent to tears, Ma immediately declared, "Then I shall go away. I am telling you that I have come again. I am your daughter and your son too." At this the mad lady was appeased at once and promised, "I shall not cry now. You must not leave me and go." After sporting in this fashion Ma returned to her tent around midnight and again retired to rest only at two a.m.

Saturday, February 16. Many people arrived for Ma's darshan even before she awoke and she began conversing with them as soon as she rose. A little later Ma's newly acquired

parents (Debendra Babu and his wife) arrived with a basketful of fruit. Ma sported with them for a long time and finally fed them something in the afternoon and bade them farewell. They refused to leave though the afternoon sun was blazing high and Ma had to cajole them into leaving. Bholanath had left early in the morning with the boys to go to Adinath and he returned in the afternoon. Jatu had left for Dhaka and Sashi Babu for Chittagong. Sashi Babu's brother, Janaki Babu, (he is the son-in-law of zamindar Prasanna Babu of Paraikoda) had been staying with Ma for some days. Sashi had been asked, "The other day why did you react in the way you did when Ma gazed at you." He replied, "At first when I saw a blue light emanating from Ma's eyes and entering into me I was very happy. Suspecting that it was an illusion I rubbed my eyes with my fingers but the light did not let go of me. Finally I saw such a bright light that I was unable to move my gaze away nor could I bear to look at it - I found myself in a strange state and was speechless."

Around five p.m. Ma went for a walk to the sea shore accompanied by many ladies. Ma remarked, "I told Dasu to go to Chittagong today but he did not go and said, 'Baba has asked me to go to Adinath' - therefore I said nothing further ; but it is not proper to let these youngsters wander about in this way."

I wondered why Ma mentioned Dasu specifically. When they returned we learnt that Dasu had fallen thrice, but he had not been hurt badly. I told Dasu, "See, Ma keeps an eye on you."

On returning from the sea shore Ma sat with her devotees. Some of them sang a couple of songs. At eleven p.m. Ma lay down to rest.

Sunday, February 17. Ma did not go for a walk this morning. Around ten a.m. she went to Dinabandhu Babu's house and then proceeded to the sea shore followed by a procession of devotees. A long sea bath ensued. Ma ran towards the sea fastening the cloth around her waist, like a child. Many little girls entered the water with her and when viewed from a distance she appeared to be one of their gang. She splashed water on everybody and drenched even those who had no idea of bathing. Ma sported in the water for a long time and then emerged. I changed her clothes. I had been sitting by the edge of the water and had not bathed. As we were returning to the tent Ma suddenly said, "Everyone had a bath, but you have not bathed - I did not notice." So saying she sprinkled some water on me and said, "Go and bathe." I went off to obey Ma's command while she returned to the tent with the rest.

At two p.m. Ma was offered bhoga, then the ladies arrived. Ma made them sing nama kirtan for some time. At five p.m. she took everyone to the sea-shore for a walk and

returned after an hour. She conversed with all present till eleven p.m. and then retired for the night. This afternoon a snake was found in Shankarananda Swami's bedding. Ma remarked, "I was feeling that a snake was near this body for the past few days."

Monday, February 18. Ma awoke and conversed till eleven a.m. with those who had come for her darshan. Then she went to the sea shore and returned at two p.m. She had lunch and rest. When she awoke the ladies had arrived. Munsif Babu had also come. It was decided that Abinash Dada would lecture to the ladies.

At five p.m. the lecture commenced. Munsif Babu's wife presided over the function. Abinash Babu attempted to explain the essence of Ma's nature and the audience was very happy with this topic. Bipin Babu's wife and Munsif Babu's wife spoke about how they all felt blessed by Ma's visit and how Ma had bestowed her grace on them generously. Then the meeting came to an end.

Yogesh Babu took Ma to the Brahmo Samaj. Ma was followed by a large crowd and the room in the Samaj was filled with people. Yogesh Babu commented, "Ma, my room has never been so full." Viraj Babu sang and Yogesh Babu offered a prayer. We returned after dusk.

Jyotish Dada reminisced about the time that he had fallen into the Ganga river in

Kashi. While the incident was being discussed, Ma said, "I could perceive clearly that you were going for a bath and that you would fall into the river." Jyotish Dada asked Ma, "If you had perceived that why did you not tell me so ? You only told me to go carefully." Ma replied, "I perceive everything vividly, but the kheyal to speak out does not arise at all times, for that which has to happen will have to happen anyway."

At night while Ma was conversing with Abinash Babu she said, "The reading and studying of scriptures is necessary only so long as proper karma is not started. Once karma progresses in the right way the study is no longer needed. Just as I refer to the timetable once and ascertain correctly that this train goes to Dehradun and I purchase the ticket and sit in the train - then I no longer need to read or refer any more. The train will any way take me to Dehradun. Therefore get involved in the right work."

During this conversation, Binay Sen (Munsif of Brahmanabadiya) arrived. He had availed of one day's leave for Saraswati puja and come for Ma's darshan. Around eleven p.m. Ma retired for rest.

Tuesday, February 19. Ma rose very early and sat on her bedding. Munsif Babu's children came to do pranam to Ma and the eldest son sang for her -

"Wake me not - if my dreams be sweet they

will be but false illusions" and so on. Around eight a.m. Ma came out of her room. I washed her face and hands and made her drink some milk. Then Ma went to the sea shore accompanied by some devotees. Today the gang of young boys was to stage a play for Ma. They had been directed by Viraj Babu. After dusk the play was enacted and the boys were given fruits and sweets.

In the afternoon Ma had been taken to Raibahadur Bipin Babu's house. There Dinabandhu Babu told Ma, "Ma, Yogen Babu made you a Brahmika yesterday, because he took you to the Brahmo Samaj." Ma laughed, and said, "What will they make me again ? I always was." Everyone was delighted with this remark. Many had gathered there, songs were sung and Ma was fed. After spending a couple of hours there Ma returned to the tent. Then the play "Dhruba" was enacted. At midnight Ma lay down to rest.

Wednesday, February 20. Yogen Babu and Bipin Babu arrived early in the morning. Ma conversed with them till twelve. She also went for a morning stroll by the sea shore where she hunted for sea shells like a little girl and presented each one a shell. She spent an hour in this sport and then returned to the tent. At nine a.m. she was taken to Bankim Babu's house along with all of us. Refreshments were served. Ma was conversing with Yogen Babu, Bipin Babu, Abinash Babu and others.

The topic under debate was, 'Predictions made by many astrologers come true'. Ma remarked, "There are many points to be considered in this matter. Astrologers are of many kinds. Some speak out spontaneously whereas some others speak hesitantly. In some the lotus of power is ready to bloom but has not yet bloomed, they cannot understand the matter properly and so they attach their own will power to it and make some prediction. They are the ones who err often. Those who perceive the future as vividly as daylight never commit mistakes. So many such states exist ; on thinking over it carefully you will be able to discern which category a person belongs to."

Ma returned to the tent and lay down for a very long time. When she got up at four p.m. the ladies had arrived and some of them had brought food for her. Ma accepted a little food from each lady to please her and distributed the remainder. Kirtan was to be held at Sri Nanda Kumar Bhattacharya's house. At five p.m. a man from the house arrived to escort Ma there. Ma along with us all went to the kirtan. We all returned around nine p.m.

Abinash Babu conversed with Ma, but as I was not present throughout I am unable to record the proceedings of their dialogue. Bankim Babu asked, "Ma, when God created us, what did he decide we should do ?" Ma laughed and pat came the reply, "He decided you should

do whatever you are doing now." Shankarananda Swami laughed and remarked, "Ma you are perfectly right." Many other topics were discussed - it seemed as if gold pieces were being distributed. Unfortunately I was unable to be present all through because of lack of time and I was unable to enjoy the gold pieces. Whosoever is fortunate enough ties these gold pieces at the end of his garment and takes them home. Around one thirty a.m. Ma lay down to rest.

Thursday, February 21. Ma did not get up till nine a.m. I entered the tent and found that Ma had gone out for the morning's ablutions. Jyotish Dada and Bholanath were conversing inside the tent. I entered and tidied Ma's bedding, but Ma still did not return. I wondered why and went out in search of Ma. She was nowhere to be found. Jyotish Dada and I searched in many places and finally found her far away, walking alone by the sea shore. We both ran and caught hold of her. Ma spoke to us seriously, "You both return. I shall walk alone." One look at her countenance and we did not have the guts to say anymore. We returned. Bholanath again sent Jyotish Dada while I began preparing Ma's lunch.

Around eleven a.m. Ma returned crying, "Where is Khukuni ? It is so late. Will she not feed me ?" She sounded like a five-year-old child. I ran, washed her face and made her drink some milk. I tried to feed her some

roti but she refused to eat saying, "As soon as I sit down to eat the body feels strange. To forget this feeling I begin sporting." As soon as I sat down to feed Ma I had to get up due to some urgent need. Meanwhile Bankim Dada's wife and two other ladies came and sat near Ma. Suddenly Ma showed her palms to them and said, "Look, look what kind of scent there is !" Bankim Dada's wife had been suffering from a severe headache. She smelt Ma's hand and inhaled a divine fragrance. Ma said, "I also felt that this was not the scent of any flower, it was some other kind of scent." Bankim Dada's wife revealed that she was relieved of the headache as soon as she inhaled the fragrance.

Ma did not eat anything throughout the day saying she would eat at night. When I sat down to feed her some dinner, Yogen Babu mentioned in the course of conversation that he never ate anything after ten p.m. Seated on her asana Ma said, "Baba (Yogen Babu) does not eat after ten p.m. ; call him I shall make him eat something." As soon as Yogen Babu was told this he said, "Ma, when you say so I shall have to eat." Ma did not let any food be put into her mouth - instead she made Yogen Babu eat first and then ate some food. This is Ma's method of giving prasad. In the early stages of her life she never gave prasad at all ; in response to very strong pleas she does give prasad now,

but in the manner indicated above, showing that Ma is not in favour of distributing left-overs. Ma rested around midnight.

CHAPTER VI

Friday, February 22. At eight a.m. Ma went to the sea shore and returned within a short while. She did not appear to be feeling so well. Around eleven Ma left for Ramkuta with us all. Before the journey Ma visited Dinabandhu Babu. Bankim Dada and Nanda Kaviraj accompanied us. After a five or six hour journey by boat, we got on to another small boat. We had to travel for another hour and it was quite dark. We were sailing across a narrow river. On both banks we saw poor housewives washing rice and carrying pots of water to their homes. They were mostly Muslim women. Ma called out to them and struck up a conversation as we passed by saying, "Ma, will you give me food ? Please cook some rice for me," and so on. She spoke in the Chittagong dialect which sounded very sweet. Even the ordinary speech of mahapurushas is so soothing to the ear. This is a fact that we have realized thoroughly. It is actually like someone pouring honey into our ears. The women on the banks gazed at Ma in profound astonishment. It seemed to me that they were feeling, "This person perceives no difference between her own people and

strangers ! O, from which golden country do you hail ? Play the flute of your voice again, oh do ! We shall listen and listen."

At one juncture Ma suddenly broke into such rippling laughter that men and women ran towards her from all directions until quite a crowd had gathered. The doors of their hearts appeared to have been thrown open by the contact of the tempestuous waves of her laughter ; they also laughed and joyfully conversed with Ma as they walked along the shore. Anandamayi Ma is here to spread bliss amongst us. Bholanath was rowing the boat with a pole. Ma began singing, "*Kheya Ghatar Patni Eseche*" i.e. "The boatsman who takes us across the river has arrived." The place, the time and the voice were matched exquisitely and rendered these few lines unforgettably beautiful. By dusk we climbed the Ramkuta hill.

The postmaster of Cox Bazar had rung up the postmaster of Ramkut and informed him of Ma's arrival ; but no one in Ramkut knew Ma. Sri Nagendra Pal, the son of the late zamindar Ishan Pal, received Ma and made all arrangements for our stay. Temples of Buddha, Shiva and Rama-Sita were situated in Ramkut in addition to many other buildings. The place was nice and had been set up by a sadhu of the Puri order. The sadhu was ill and Ma visited him at his hut. We had planned to return the same day but no one wanted to leave. The sadhu said, "What, is it nice to

leave today ?" Ma laughed and countered, "Is coming and going a nice thing ?" I do not know if the sadhu understood this.

A little later Ma came out of the hut and began walking around. The open spaces were charming and we strolled along with Ma. She walked all around the 'Kyan' (the temple of Buddha is called 'Kyan' here). We heard that tigers and elephants frequent this place.

A little after night fall a big group of kirtan singers arrived. I heard that the news of Ma's forthcoming arrival had reached this place only at three p.m., but I could not understand how so many people had got the information and gathered within such a short time. These people had probably gone to the river side to welcome Ma, but Ma had already come in before they reached. Kirtan went on till midnight. Dinner was ready and those who felt like it, ate. Well after midnight the kirtan singers escorted Ma from the hill to the river-side and saw her board the boat. The sky was overcast with clouds and it was drizzling, but not a single countenance seemed to be perturbed by the weather and they all sang kirtan as they walked. A big boat was not available, nor could any one find a smaller one even after walking a distance of five miles. It was raining and yet no one agreed to go home. Finally it was decided that Ma would wait in Nagendra Babu's Vishnu temple while

the villagers went in search of a boat.

The villagers set out to look for a boat. When Ma found that no one wanted to return, she also set out, followed by the kirtan singers, who sang,

*"Prana Gouranga Nityananda bole dako
Nitai saman dayal ar' naye re."*

Everyone danced and sang, enlivening the village as they walked along. The sleeping village rose to the sweet strains of the kirtan.

I have not mentioned a noteworthy incident that occurred on the way. Ma had been sporting with the Muslim women on the way, saying, "Ma, give me food, Ma, give me food." As we alighted from the boat, two Muslim women were washing rice at the ghat. Ma went to them and said, "Ma, I am very hungry ; will you give me rice ?" They replied, "Come". Ma immediately got off the boat and followed them. We went with her. Some sugar cane was purchased from the sugar cane fields. When Ma reached the Muslim woman's house the woman was astonished. "What, will you eat food cooked by us ?", she asked. Ma replied, "Why not ? Both you and I are like humans to look at. Your body bleeds when injured and so does mine. Then why shall I not eat ?" The poor woman was bewildered and she said, "No, you go." At this juncture her companion said, "Why are you afraid ? Just say 'come' - she will not eat, she is just saying so." Ma immediately spoke up emphatically, "Why shall I

not eat ? I shall surely eat if you give me." The second woman said, "I shall give rice with beef." Ma replied, "I shall eat whatever you give me, be it beef or mutton." Then the woman did not wait to argue any further and retreated into the house. Ma ordered me, "Give a sugar cane to my Ma." I ran into the house and placed a sugar cane into that woman's hand and came away.

The personification of divine sport proceeded playfully in this fashion. The kirtan singers were singing, '*Hare Krishna Hare Rama Nitai Gaura Radhe Shyam.*' It was about three a.m. We were still wandering in the fields with Ma and the group of kirtan singers. Now and then some householders emerged from their houses and Ma held the hands of those woman, smiled and proceeded on her way. This was the first time that we walked with Ma in the middle of the night (twelve midnight to three a.m.), singing kirtan, across fields and ghats. Neither the rain nor the footsteps of the devotees ceased. Forgetting ourselves in some wonderful bhava, we walked along. Ma was clapping rhythmically, raising her left hand in dance-like poses and swaying to the beat of the kirtan. Watching this the devotees experienced a surge of feeling from within and the joy made them forget the comforts of sleep ; no one seemed to notice how far the night had gone. Walking along the path in darkness in this manner we reached

Sri Nagendra Pal's Vishnu temple.

The building was vast and its owner was a good and humble person. He extended hospitality unstintingly. A couple of villagers went in search of the boat. Our blankets and other things were in the boat and we had with us only the sheet wrapped around each of us. Ma forbade us to go in search of the boat saying, "You are all tired out by the night long exertion. Now you must rest. In the morning we shall all set out together."

No one paid any attention to this instruction and some said, "What trouble have we gone through ? Today we have obtained so much bliss." May be they did not want Ma and her devotees to be inconvenienced and therefore they never got a chance to rest. They set out in search of the boat in the rain. We do not use beddings and quilts used by others and so we wrapped the sheet we had and lay down. The householders, however, had done their best and provided beddings for all.

Saturday, February 23. At the crack of dawn we received the news that the boat had been located. The hospitable villagers were waiting in the Vishnu temple ; they now sang kirtan and escorted Ma to the boat. We were charmed by the heartfelt service rendered in this land of strangers. We marvelled at the way in which they had accepted Ma. The children and women of the village had

lined up on the pathway to touch Ma's feet and some had brought offerings of fruit and flowers. The scene was wonderful.

Nagendra Babu's elder brother brought a wicker basket full of biscuits and told Ma, "Ma, distribute these." Ma did so. On proceeding a little further, another person brought a basket of puffed rice which Ma began scattering followed by the crowd which also scattered the puffed rice. So the traditional shower of parched rice was replaced by this shower of puffed rice and this auspicious puffed rice ceremony was performed. Thus did all accompany Ma to the boat, immersed in bliss. The boat set sail amidst the uproar of farewell. Groups of people stood on either side of the fields, watching Ma longingly, though this was just their first meeting with Ma ! Jyotish Dada made Ma sit on the deck of the boat. Nagendra Babu, Sri Chakravarty and quite a few others accompanied Ma. After some time Ma told them, "You have all come a long way, now you must all return." When they left, Ma entered the cabin of the boat and lay down. By ten a.m. the boat reached Cox Bazar. We went to Dinabandhu Babu's house where I washed Ma's face and made her drink some milk. Then we returned to the tent. Ma conversed with Shankaranand Swami and others on various matters.

While Ma lay down in the boat she had asked, "Did I not say 'fifteen days' to you on

the day that we reached Cox Bazar ? How many days is it today ?" When we calculated we found that we had spent fourteen days in Cox Bazar and left on the fifteenth day to Ramkut. Ma declared, "That was what I had said." Again Ma mentioned on the way, "I can see a snake." I realized that we would soon see a snake.

In the course of conversation the topic that arose was about how strange Ma's body had become on Sunday. Ma explained, "That was not samadhi. There are many kinds of samadhi and many such have occurred in this body. That day, what was manifested before you all was the characteristic of death. The great breath had started. Had you watched carefully you would not have taken long to understand that the lower limbs had been given up ; if attention is paid to the movement of breath and its kriya, everything can be understood." Pointing to Shankaranand Swami she asked, "You say that the prana travels by the path of susumna or the brahmarandhra, don't you ? That day, my prana ascended from the heart to this spot" (indicating the point between her eyebrows)" and seemed to have stopped - then it returned slowly in the opposite direction. That day the condition was of an altogether different kind. Samadhi is also of many kinds. Khukuni said to me, 'Look Ma, earlier whenever I found you in samadhi and you arose from it, your countenance

blossomed with bliss and looked incomparably beautiful with tender beauty and sweetness. You had a calm, steady and very peaceful bhava. But now I feel that you have returned from the house of death. Your face appears thus ! Truly, the matter is somewhat like that. At first there was the bhava of bliss and then something beyond bliss and sorrow. After that yet another state exists in which it takes twelve to fourteen hours for normal blood circulation to resume. This causes the face to appear corpse like. The pulse comes to a halt ; what else happens - Babaji (Shankaranand Swami) has himself examined the pulse and seen." I felt scared to hear all this, but what could I do ?

Further Ma said, "I cannot even walk at times ; what a strange state it is ! I feel as if I will fall down." I said, "That is the reason why I always remain right behind you - I am so afraid that you might fall down." Walking in this ecstatic state Ma has often stumbled. "I cannot imagine what may happen." To this Ma replied, "Why do you worry ? Whatever has to happen will surely happen."

At two p.m. I fed Ma some food. Ma rested for just a little while after lunch and then sat up. Many ladies had gathered. In the evening Ma started nama kirtan which we also joined -

"Jai Ma Jai Ma Ma Ma Ma Ma Ma -"

"Hari Bol Hari Bol Hari Bol -"

"Jai Radhe Radhe Krishna Krishna Hare

Rama Hare Hare

*O nama bolo bodone sunao kane bilav
jiber dvare dvare."*

Some gentlemen arrived while the kirtan was in progress. The nama kirtan was stopped and Ma began conversing. Sometimes she laughed and her laughter was most infectious; it felt as if there were fountains of laughter in the hearts of others around her. Waves of bliss flooded our beings. A Muslim doctor was amongst those present. In the course of conversation the topic of Ma's recitation of the namaz in Shahbagh came up. Ma told the Muslim doctor, "Baba, I am also a Muslim."

Abinash Babu started a discussion on hatha yoga. He narrated, "Ramakrishna Dev learnt hatha yoga from Totapuri but what took Puriji forty years to acquire, Paramahansa Dev achieved in three days. But in the case of our Anandamayi Ma, everything is unique. The kriyas of hatha yoga occurred spontaneously in Ma's case and Bholanath was overawed to witness it. I have heard of many a thing but never have I seen, heard of or read about the like of this." Ma pondered over these remarks in her childlike, naive fashion, "In all that happened, there was not the slightest trace of will power. It happened and I watched - that was all. Again it was not as if the body went out of control during kirtan only. Sometimes it happened during ordinary kirtan singing and at other times nothing happened during even intense kirtan singing. Sometimes when I

sat down to cook and while lifting the firewood the hand would collapse, and then the body too - that's all." So saying she clapped her hands like a child and began laughing.

One day Yogendra Babu expressed his desire to spend the night in the tent. Shankaranand Swami acquiesced, "That's all right - let him sleep here." Yogendra Babu said, "But we are not Ma's close followers (gana), we are worldly people (samsaris)." Ma smilingly rejoined, "It appears you are different from the gana. Who is not worldly (a samsari), tell me ? As long as this body lives this svang remains with us." Smilingly she turned to me and asked, "What do you say ?"

After varied conversation, when the Muslim gentleman was leaving he told Ma, "I troubled you." Ma's rejoinder came pat, accompanied by a smile that lit up all around her with the brightness of moonlight, "What, does the daughter feel troubled when her father visits her ? Do trouble me like this whenever you feel like it." The gentleman was overjoyed and took leave saying, "Adab." Ma returned the salute saying, "Adab". She always responds with this form of salutation whenever she is wished by a Muslim. Every form of Ma's behaviour is perfect and exquisite. Each petal of the fullblown, thousand petalled lotus is replete with beauty, essence, fragrance and softness.

A little later Ma asked, "Since when have you all been sitting here and what is the time now ?" We replied, "We have been here since three p.m. and now it is eight p.m." Ma laughed and said, "Now I want to go out for awhile - what do you say ?" She got up from her small bedding and walked about outside for some time. When she returned I tried to make her drink some milk and have some refreshment ; she ate nothing and lay down to sleep.

Sunday, February 24. This is about an earlier incident which occurred while Ma was at Dehradun. Lakshmi Rani and some other ladies were joking about the strong attachment that Gopalji had towards his wife Mira. Mira was not keeping too well and Gopalji, who was extremely worried was telling Ma about her. Ma jokingly questioned him, "What, should you get ensnared in bondage like this ? Look, this is the way bondage is broken." So saying Ma tore off a piece of the cloth she was wearing. Gopalji reasoned that in this manner Mira would be lost ; so he ran and retrieved the torn cloth and kept it securely. Everyone laughed at him for doing this. However, some time after this incident, Mira was actually ridden with incurable cancer which did not respond even to intensive treatment. Her plight was pitiable. Ma was then at Navadwip. Gopalji wired twice or thrice begging for Ma's blessings for Mira. Meanwhile Hariram told Gopalji (we heard of this later), "Offer that piece of cloth

belonging to Ma in the sacrificial fire - otherwise Mira will continue to suffer in this manner, without release from life." Seeing no alternative, Gopalji offered that cloth in the sacrificial fire. Within a few days Mira was released from all bodily suffering. I wonder how many such gems of truth are distributed by Ma through the medium of sport ! Who has the capacity to discern the extent of divine sport being manifested by this Maha Sakti, which lies beyond our ken ?

Whatever that may be, today after daybreak Ma went for a stroll on the beach. On returning she had some refreshment and lay down. In the afternoon when some ladies arrived Ma sang nama kirtan with them. Nowadays I have been practising singing with the harmonium. Ma said, "Today you lead the nama kirtan and we will all follow." I did accordingly. After singing for some time, Ma went with us all to the sea side. Being a Sunday, the school boys in the locality gathered in the tent. Whenever they get some time they run to Ma. On the way to the sea shore they told Ma, "Ma, you lead the nama-kirtan and we will follow." Ma wafted the blissful waves of the nectar-like name, '*Hari Bol Hari Bol*'. This was followed by a tempestuous upsurge of the sound "Ma, Ma, Ma !" It was a brightly moonlit night with a clear sky ; the ocean seemed to dance through the incessant waves that mingled in its bosom. Perhaps it was

on such a lovely night by the sea that the beautiful Gaurang had soaked the soil of our country with the stream of perfect bliss tested with every step ! And that has rendered such a wonderful auspiciousness to the evening hours in our country. Our Ma, who is an image of Sacchidananda is again scattering the seed of the Name on the sea shore. Who can say how deep would be the consequence or how far reaching, when the seed falls on fertile soil ? With Ma in the centre the group of boys moved around and sang nama kirtan, while Ma clapped her hands and sang,

"Ma, Ma, Ma, Ma, Ma, Ma, Ma,

Kaho Ma, Bhajo Ma ..." and so on.

Indescribable bliss filled the atmosphere. After some time Ma turned towards the tent. The boys continued to dance and sing untiringly. Ma ordered for fruits to be distributed amongst them. They chorused, "Anandamayi Ma ki jai !" They were aged between seven and twenty odd years. The scene as they danced in numerous ways and sang kirtan, was wonderful. Ma affectionately called them, "Gopal" and entertained them. They sang kirtan till late in the night, did sashtanga pranam to Ma and left.

Monday, February 25. This morning again Ma went out for a walk. The Post-master's mother was to speak to Ma privately and so she went with Ma. A couple of others also went along. When Ma returned after an hour I made her have some refreshments. Today Ram

Babu was to offer bhoga to Ma and the cooking was done quite late. Around three p.m. bhoga was offered and all received prasad. At five p.m. Yogendra Babu's wife took Ma to her house as had been decided earlier. Many people went with Ma. The house was decorated beautifully and Ma was welcomed with great reverence and affection. Ma's photograph had been placed on an altar and decorated beautifully. The boys were still following Ma and had sung kirtan all along the way. The District Judge was on his way for Ma's darshan accompanied by his family, Munsif Babu and Bipin Babu. He met Ma on the way to the house. The English lady (the wife of the judge) touched Ma's feet and expressed great joy on meeting Ma. She asked when Ma was going to Chittagong. The judge was in town on an inspection tour.

The boys continued singing kirtan zestfully in Yogendra Babu's house. They were dancing with raised hands singing only the Name and seemed to be drunk with the nectar of the Name. Grouping themselves in twos and holding hands, they assumed a variety of dance postures as they spread reverberations of the Name. The older boys were trying to restrain the younger ones. Just then a group of kirtan singers from Ramkut arrived at Yogendra Babu's house for Ma's darshan. Bholanath joined the kirtan and the singing gathered tempo. The atmosphere was overflowing with bliss as

the sound of the kartal and khol accompanying the singing resounded all around - the bliss was limitless. Ma let forth a fountain of laughter and said, "Ma (Yogendra Babu's wife) had declared that she would not let men enter the house and that some children would accompany me and sing kirtan. Why, Ma, are there only ladies present here today ? But of course even men are but women when they long for the Parama Purusha !" So saying she began laughing.

It was very late and Ma was about to return to the tent. Yogendra Babu's wife was feeding Ma. She put a little khir into Ma's mouth and reflected, "Ma, my son who is now a political prisoner is very fond of khir. I am feeding the same khir to you because you are my son and my daughter." And she spoke her voice choked with tears. Ma declared, "Ma, I am your son and your daughter ; if you cry I shall throw out the khir from my mouth." Yogen Babu's wife clasped Ma to her bosom and wiped away her tears saying, "No, Ma. Do not throw away the khir. You are everything to me. I shall not cry anymore." So saying she cheered up and began conversing happily. The group of boys accompanied Ma back to the tent, singing kirtan all along. They continued singing kirtan in the tent for some time and then did pranam to Ma one by one before leaving.

Ma sat on her little bedding and conversed with the devotees who were seated around her. After some time Ma lay down and the others also got ready to sleep. Suddenly Ma rose and went outside. Jyotish Dada and I followed her. A little later what did I see but a group of devotees from Ramkut who had arrived with khol and kartal. Seeing the sleeping forms in the tent their resolve to sing kirtan was dampened. Ma was the first to raise the topic. She asked, "Have you all come walking?"

"Yes, Ma, we have covered a seven-mile stretch on foot." After talking about other matters, Ma smilingly asked, "Why have you come with the khol and kartal?" They were silent. Jyotish Dada volunteered, "Now that you have come, do sing a couple of songs." Chakravarti Babu started singing and the others joined in. It was past midnight when they finished singing and took leave of Ma. They said they were returning to Ramkut at day-break.

In connection with this incident Ma smilingly narrated the following, "I was sleeping and suddenly woke up and went outdoors. This doesn't happen on other nights. But last night also I was lying down and when I suddenly got up and walked towards the sea shore I saw a puppy caught by a fox. Had I reached a little later the puppy would have been killed. Jyotish was with me. He brought the puppy to Bankim's house. Don't people say - 'Rakhe

Hari Mare Ke ? Mare Hari Rakhe Ke ? (Whom Hari protects who can kill ? Whom Hari kills who can protect ?)."

Tuesday, February 26. At eight a.m. this morning, the postmaster again took Ma to the sea shore to speak to her privately. Ma went away without washing her face and returned only at noon. The postmaster had stayed with Ma for an hour and then left. Ma had then been seated alone by the sea. Jyotish Dada had gone and fetched her. I said, "Ma, you ate last afternoon and have had nothing since ; today again it is so late and you haven't eaten a single morsel - what do you think you are doing ? Do tell me." Ma replied, "What shall I do ? I have no kheyal to eat at all." After much remonstrations and pleading I managed to make her eat some food. She lay down soon after.

The kirtan singers from Ramkut had not yet left and had arranged to sing for Ma in the afternoon. Before two o'clock, a group of women and children assembled. The crowd could not be accommodated though the tent was very spacious. As per Ma's instructions I sang nama-kirtan in the afternoon. The Ramkut group then started their kirtan which went on late into the night. After the kirtan I tried to make Ma eat a little food but she refused. Ma is thus trying to give up her food intake gradually. She alone knows what she will do.

At midnight we all retired for the night.

Wednesday, February 27. Today again, Ma got up very late. Sometimes she is extremely restless during the night and seems to have to forcibly cover her face with a bedsheet and lie down till late in the morning. Almost the whole night through she was tossing and turning. At times she says, "Last night I did not sleep a wink." Her body also does not remain still. In the morning she had wrapped on her bedsheet as if she was hiding. She is in this condition almost all the time nowadays. She says, "The bhava of sleep is just not there." Sometimes she sits up and sometimes she says, "Last night the bhava of sleep was not present ; how long is it possible to lie down forcibly ?" I had the kheyal to go to the sea shore but thinking that you all would follow me into the cold night, I did not go. But if a strong desire arises, all these restrictions cannot stop me, probably there was no strong desire !" So saying Ma would laugh.

This morning she strolled up and down inside the tent and then sat on her small bedding. A couple of people had come for her darshan and Ma talked to them. Around ten o'clock after much pleading Ma ate a little food. Then she walked about and again lay down on her bedding with her bedsheet wrapped around her.

Today Ma was to be offered bhoga at Sri Laxmikant Chakravarty's house. At one p.m. a man from the house came to escort Ma. Ma sat up and all of us went with her for prasad.

When we returned to the tent at four p.m. a large crowd had gathered for Ma's darshan. School boys, especially, had come in great numbers - they had holidays for three or four days and were constantly enjoying Ma's company. As soon as Ma reached she told the boys, "Come, let us play a game. It is called the Sacchidananda game." She sat down amidst the boys and began the game with cowrie shells collected on the beach. Ma herself had coined the name and rules of this game. Ma played with fifteen or twenty boys who were split into two teams. Shankaranand was in one team. Ma said, "I shall sit in the middle and watch." The game began. Half way through the S.D.O. and the English Judge's wife came to see Ma. The game was stopped.

They spent half an hour with Ma. When they left the game was resumed. Ma had made the rule that whoever lost had to chant God's Name 108 times. Ofcourse, the Name was each one's personal choice. After the game, nama kirtan was sung. The losers were not upset about losing and told the winners, "See how fortunate we are, we got a chance to sing God's Name."

For some time now, whenever we go into Ma's presence, we are made to sing kirtan. This has resulted in young children developing a keen liking for kirtan. They keep humming, 'Hari Bol Hari Bol' or 'Ma, Ma, Ma' as they walk along.

In the evening Ma was taken to a house near the tent. A large crowd gathered there. After the kirtan Ma and the devotees present were served refreshments. Then some Muslim boys requested Ma to visit their theatre. Ma was willing to go but kirtan had already been arranged at Sarat Babu's (lawyer) house so she could not go with the boys. We returned around midnight and Ma retired to bed.

Thursday, February 28. Ma got up in the morning. A couple of gentlemen were waiting to converse with her privately. Ma sat on her bedding and spoke to them. Around nine a.m. Ma went out of the tent, had a wash and drank some milk. Sashi Dada had prepared some sweet with papaya and Ma had some of it. Four or five boys were standing near Ma and she asked us to give them some sweets, after which she ate some herself. She told the boys, "Now you eat and I am also eating. After all I am also a child !" She laughed.

The wife of the sub-deputy officer had come. She combed Ma's hair saying, "Ma is my daughter - I shall comb her hair. Ma is my mother and also my daughter." Ma laughed and replied, "No, I am the little child of you

all." She showered bliss while speaking in this manner. A little later Ma got up and went into the tent. Two or three gentlemen had come and conversation ensued. About twelve Ma was offered bhoga. For the past few days Ma has been eating vegetables cooked with semolina. Today she again ate it and lay down after the meal. The ladies had not yet arrived and Ma kept lying down for an hour and a half.

During this time the ladies gathered outside and when Ma got up they all came inside the tent and sat near Ma. Gradually the crowd of children also collected. Ma was seated on her bedding. Before evening a group of shopkeepers arrived singing kirtan. Many people arrived and kirtan went on in full swing while Ma kept sitting at the same spot. After the kirtan people took leave of Ma. A couple of gentlemen sat and spoke to Ma. When I entered the tent I heard Ma speaking about the six chakras. A gentleman asked, "How many chakras are there?" Ma replied, "Imagine you are aboard a train and reach a station. Though that station is just one, when you reach there you see a number of things. Similarly your books and scriptures speak of six chakras ; but those who have actually broken them and gone past know how many more chakras there are and what they consist of." The gentleman asked, "What is the means of breaking

through these chakras ?" Ma replied, "To take the Name of God with a one-pointed mind and try to perform a number of actions to keep the goal in view which keep one's attention towards God constantly, such as japa, dhyāna, satsang, reading of scriptures, kirtan etc."

The gentleman questioned, "Why is our goal not achieved by the Guru mantra ?" Ma answered, "Why is it not achieved ? Do you not know ? We swallow medicines but do not regulate our diet nor take necessary precautions. Therefore the medicines are ineffective and the disease persists. When the medicine given by the Guru is available, we must also observe the necessary regulations. That is to say, our diet and exercise should also be congenial. After all, everything is within you - oneness, many-ness, infinity, the unmanifest and the manifest."

The gentleman said, "Ma, the mind is very restless." Ma said, "Just as restlessness is its nature, so also is stability. The mind wants its mother - that is Complete Bliss. Therefore, do you not observe that though the worldly person offers its innumerable enjoyments, it is not satiated and runs hither and thither. Restlessness will never cease, it is restless for God. Until it gets God, it cannot find peace. As soon as the mind finds Him, it becomes calm." The gentleman remarked, "I have never heard such a view point before."

Today I have learnt a great lesson." Ma joined her palms and said, "You have given the lesson." The gentleman did pranam to Ma and took leave. We tried to feed Ma. She ate a tiny morsel and then said, "I have not walked about at all today - I have been sitting since then without a break." We calculated and realized that Ma had been sitting at the same spot for the last ten or twelve hours ! Ma joked about the matter and went for a stroll. We followed her. Around one a.m. Ma lay down to rest.

Friday, March 1, 1937. As soon as Ma awoke, Sashi Babu took her to the sea shore to take photographs. A couple of gentlemen arrived and went to the sea shore to meet her. Ma returned with them and went into the tent. A little later we called her out and fed her. She then returned to the tent. The rules of the 'Sacchidananda Game' had not been finalised and were constantly changing. Now Ma decided to define them precisely and made Jyotish Dada note them down on paper. Then Ma sat with Bholanath, Jyotish Dada, Sashi Dada, Shankaranand and the boys and began playing the game. The game went on till one p.m. Ma was to take us all for lunch to Dinabandhu Babu's house. The ladies of the house had come to escort us.

I enquired, "Have the rules of the Sacchidananda Game been finalised ?" Ma replied, "Yes, today they have been defined and will

not be changed henceforth. Today is a full moon Friday and the Sacchidananda Game is thus aptly inaugurated." So saying, Ma laughed. Thus does Ma, the personification of lila perform divine sport by way of playing games.

Ma proceeded to Dinabandhu Babu's house, accompanied by us all. The members of Dinabandhu Babu's house were convinced that in some past birth, Ma belonged to their family and treated her accordingly. Dinabandhu Babu's nephew Bijan Babu (a lawyer), declared, "We are not devotees of Anandamayi, we are her relatives. She is our Didi." They prided themselves thus.

That day an incident occurred. Bijan Babu was very ill. He had a big boil and was running temperature. Some time ago, another boil had been operated upon. The doctor had said that the second boil was to be operated upon the very next day. On the day before we went to Ramkut, Ma had been to Dinabandhu Babu's house. Bijan Babu, who was unable to get out of bed, had been gazing at Ma through the window. He told Ma, "I cannot bear another operation - if only this boil would burst, I would be so relieved." Ma normally hardly eats anything, but that day she drank some milk and the rest of it was given to Bijan Babu. Bijan Babu drank the prasad of milk immediately. The next day, when we returned from Ramkut, I heard that the boil had burst

the same night. Ma heard this and smiled. Bijan Babu and others believed that it was Ma's grace.

On her return from Dinabandhu Babu's house, Ma sat down to play the Sacchidananda Game. Many boys had gathered and the game proceeded amidst great joy. Nama kirtan was sung just before twilight. Ma was taken to Panna Babu's house and kirtan was sung till twelve midnight. Bholanath was greatly inspired during kirtan and all derived joy from this. Panna Babu had made good dinner arrangements for Ma and her devotees. On her return to the tent, Ma conversed with her devotees till two a.m. after which we all slept.

Sunday, March 2. Ma went to the sea shore as soon as she woke up. When she returned, I washed her face and made her drink some milk. Lunch was served at twelve and then the Sacchidananda Game was resumed. Just then a big group of schoolboys arrived and joined the game. The rules of the game were that whichever team lost, they would do the japa of any Name they liked one hundred and eight times. The team that won would dance and sing kirtan for joy. In this way Ma made everyone do Nama-japa. The boys were thoroughly involved in the game. While playing, each player had to think only of whether Sat, Chit, Ananda forms were possible. This was followed by nama-japa. The boys had to return to school after lunch break.

Now the ladies arrived and sat down to play the game. Before sunset, Viraj Babu arrived and as per Ma's instructions, he led kirtan.

Ma then went to the shore and sat on the sand. The ladies sang songs. We had a lovely time listening to the songs in the moonlight in Ma's presence. Later in the night the devotees departed. Sick children had come but they hardly thought of their illness once they were here. Ma ate some food and sat down to play again. Around midnight we retired to bed.

Sunday, March 3. Ma got up and sat on her bedding. Many people had arrived. The Sacchidananda Game was begun. Ma was to lunch at Dinabandhu Babu's place. After playing for some time Ma lay down and others continued to play. Ma got up at two p.m. and went to Dinabandhu Babu's house. She returned at four and the Sacchidananda Game was continued. The aim of the game is to make everyone do nama-japa. Ma says, "Men and women come here and fritter away their time in useless chatter, they do not do nama-japa even when they are told to do so. Now on the pretext of playing this game, they will sing nama kirtan." That was exactly how it was. Whenever a team won they sang with so much gusto, raising both hands, that even neighbours knew that the victorious team was singing kirtan.

Before sunset, Ma took us all to the sea shore. The sky had been overcast by clouds, so it had not been sunny and we set out quite

early. The game was played for some time after which Ma got the ladies to sing kirtan as they walked with her. As she turned towards the tent the sun had already set. Ma was singing a line, the crowd was repeating it after her. First Ma sang, 'Hari Bol, Hari Bol' followed by 'Jaya Radhe Radhe, Krishna, Krishna, Hare Rama, Hare Hare.' Then it was 'Jaya Shiva Shankara Bom Bom Hara Hara.' Finally everyone picked up the refrain, 'Ma, Ma, Ma, Ma' and returned to the tent.

A group of boys singing 'Hari Bol' was advancing towards the tent ; they were led by Viraj Babu. The boys had decided to sing kirtan near Ma's tent every Saturday in Ma's memory. Therefore they had come singing all the way from the sea shore. The kind of pleasure that is obtained by singing kirtan on the sea shore in Ma's presence can be envisaged only by those who have actually experienced it. After the kirtan, Munsif Babu and his wife came and participated in the new game and the game caught on. Ma lay down at eleven p.m. Yesterday in the course of conversation, Ma told Shankarananda, "Until one becomes worthy of divine grace, one does not even know what that grace is."

Monday, March 4. The people here had decided to sing kirtan from morning till night in Ma's presence. Early in the morning, Viraj Babu and others started nama-kirtan, taking Ma out with them for nagar-kirtan. Bhqianath

enjoyed kirtan greatly. Ma went out of the tent and kirtan was started.

"Jaya Radhe Radhe Krishna Krishna

Hare Rama Hare Hare,

Eyi Naam Bolo Bodone Sunao Kane

Bilao Jiber Dvare Dvare."

The group of singers reached the Kali temple at Dinabandhu Babu's place and sang for some time. Prasad was distributed. Ma made me circumambulate with the incense pot. Ma remained there while Bholanath and the singers went out for nagar kirtan. The group went to Munsif Babu's, Yogendra Babu's and Ram-babu's houses and then returned to the Kali temple. With Ma they proceeded towards the tent. Munsif Babu's wife, Mohini Babu's wife and some others were also singing kirtan. The group now went to Indu Babu's verandah near the tent and sang kirtan. On being joined by the gang of boys, the kirtan, led by Viraj Babu, gained tempo. Sarat Babu (the lawyer Sarat Pal) arranged for bhoga. Around four p.m. Ma was taken to Kali Pal's house (this visit had been finalised earlier). Men and women were singing kirtan together, walking on the streets - such a sight had probably been never seen before. Ma walked ahead surrounded by the group of women followed by Bholanath and his group of men. People who watched exclaimed, "We never knew so many ladies lived in Cox Bazar ! The fun of the matter is that so many ladies have gathered as if from

nowhere !" All started discussing this. We learnt that every home in Cox Bazar was empty. A group of sweepers (men and women) joined the kirtan singers. Kirtan went on full throatedly :-

"E nama bilao jiber dvare dvare,

Hare Krishna Hare Hare."

Probably no one will ever forget the bliss of that day. By whose power were the wives of the Munsif Babu, Deputy Babu and Officer of the Forest Department, singing and clapping thus on the streets - at that moment no one even stopped to think about it. Later every one was amazed.

In this manner the kirtan singers reached the home of Kali Pal. Young boys danced and kirtan went on for some time. Youngsters, old people and ladies - all seemed intoxicated. Ma remained calm, steady and smiling. Sometimes she clapped delightedly, or watched the dancing children with enjoyment ; at times she remained calm, steady and grave. After spending an hour there the group returned to the tent with Ma. They did not go into the tent but turned towards the sea shore and went to the place where land had been acquired for Ma's ashram. They sat there and continued the kirtan till the sun set. Then prasad was distributed and everyone sat on the sand and partook of it. They returned to the tent with Ma and took leave of Ma at eleven p.m. after enjoying this bliss. Ma then lay down.

Tuesday, March 5. This morning Ma went to the sea shore and returned around eleven. The Sacchidanand Game was begun with the people who had come. Ma had lunch around twelve thirty and today again she ate very little. She lay down after lunch. In a short while ladies and children arrived and the game was started with a number of teams. Japa and kirtan went on as Ma sat and watched, participating in the game now and then. People normally came and chatted - now there was very little of that. Nama kirtan goes on, on the pretext of the game.

Last night, the wife of the Muslim Deputy Babu came and sat with Ma for a very long time. Today she took Ma to her house. On her return Ma made everyone sing nama kirtan. Before sunset Ma went to the beach. The boys requested her, "Ma, just as nama kirtan was sung yesterday, you lead today and we shall follow." Ma agreed and sang. That kirtan on the sandy shore by the sea, at sunset, sounded very beautiful. Ma told the children, "Now go home and study. Be regular in your daily studies, for if you neglect them and get scolded, it would be a scolding for me don't have me scolded." The children returned to their homes.

A little later Ma led the ladies and returned to the tent, singing kirtan. Another group had gathered to sing kirtan, with Viraj Babu at the helm. Ma sat gravely and listened.

Some one had sent many litres of milk and fruit. It was mixed with puffed rice and distributed. Around midnight the people left. Ma slept after two a.m.

Wednesday, March 6. Today Ma was not keeping well. She lay down and talked. Around nine a.m. she went to the beach and returned at eleven. "I shall not eat anything," she declared, "if necessary I shall tell you." She only drank some hot milk. In the afternoon the group of ladies and children crowded in the tent. Ma played a small kartal and sang kirtan. As sunset drew on, Ma was taken to the house of the second officer for kirtan. Bholanath was greatly inspired during kirtan. Ma was made to eat some refreshments and all of us were given prasad. We returned to the tent around midnight. "Now I shall not eat anything," said Ma and lay down.

Thursday, March 7. For the past two days Ma has eaten practically nothing. Today I quickly fed her something. Ma sat for a long time and then lay down. In the afternoon the ladies arrived as usual followed by the gang of boys. They all commented, "We just do not feel like leaving Ma." Some ladies were pouring out their domestic troubles to Ma. Ma remarked, "You all become the mistresses of the house - therefore you face sorrow. Do not become the mistress, remain the servant - there will be no sorrow then."

Ma sat in the tent and did not go to the sea shore. People were coming and going till ten p.m. Someone asked Ma to tell a story. Ma narrated, "A sadhu was sitting in the forest, doing tapasya. A man conceived great regard for the sadhu and took refuge at his feet. The sadhu ate only one small measure of rice everyday which he collected by begging for bhiksha, spending the rest of his time doing penance. When the man took refuge at the sadhu's feet the latter was worried that he would have to share his rice with the man. But the man never broached the topic of eating. When the sadhu washed the rice, the man collected the water in the palm of his hand and drank it. He remained content to live on that. The sadhu was amazed but said nothing.

Some days later another man arrived at the ashram. The sadhu thought, "One man is subsisting on water, but this one will surely take a part of my rice." But the second man also did not ask for a share. Whenever the sadhu poured off the starch water in which the rice was cooked, the man retained it and subsisted on it. Observing this the sadhu's ignorance was removed and he suddenly realized that it is God who makes all the necessary arrangements. Whenever He dispatches an individual to achieve a particular task, He gives him the necessary intelligence and powers - no human ever helps or aids another. Then the

sadhu took both his disciples deeper into the forest to do penance and began praying to God with all his heart."

When all the visitors had departed, Ma sat down to play the Sacchidanand Game with those who stayed behind.

Friday, March 8. Ma did not go for a stroll this morning either. The usual routine was followed during the day. After dusk Ma was taken for kirtan at Mohini Babu's house. Bholanath's enjoyment of kirtan was infectious and all participated enthusiastically. The kirtan gathered tempo as ladies blew conch shells and made auspicious sounds. Around midnight we returned to the tent with Ma.

As Ma walked along the sandy shores she commented, "I observe a snake yet again." I said, "Perhaps you will see it once again." Ma replied, "I may not see it explicitly always, I often see it in the subtle form. Or it may be a picture of a snake or someone narrating a story about a snake." After talking in this fashion and spending some time outdoors, we entered the tent. There I found Bholanath reading a book and the page he had open had the picture of a big snake. Ma smiled and pointed at the picture. She lay down at one a.m.

Saturday, March 9. Ma went to the sea shore for a stroll this morning. Yogendra Babu and two school masters had come. In the course of conversation the topic of the Sacchidanand Game was raised and Jyotish Dada began

playing it with them while Ma watched. The masters said, "It is no loss to be defeated in this game, for we have only to sing nama kirtan." In truth, those who had probably never sung nama kirtan and those who did not know how to do japa wrote down the rules of performing japa and practised them.

Around ten Ma was offered bhoga after which she sat on the bedding in the tent. Shankaranand, Bholanath, Ma and Jyotish Dada played the Sacchidanand Game.

In the evening Ma went to the kirtan at the Saraswati temple on the invitation of Manindra Babu. The crowd there was enormous. Manindra Babu had made all the arrangements. Bholanath was greatly inspired by the kirtan and all the men joined him in the singing. There was great joy - we returned to the tent around midnight.

Sunday, March 10. Some gentlemen arrived soon after Ma rose. I cooked raw papaya in milk and fed it to Ma early in the morning. She did not eat anything else. We were to go to Rajani Babu's house for kirtan and thence to Ramu from where messengers had been coming daily to take Ma. Ma was lying down in the afternoon when the messengers arrived. In the evening we went to Rajani Babu's (Mukhtar) house for kirtan. At midnight there was high tide ; Ma, accompanied by a big group set sail in a boat for Ramu. Yogendra Babu's wife also went with Ma.

CHAPTER VII

Monday, March 11. We reached Ramu around nine a.m. A group of kirtan singers came to give Ma an affectionate welcome. All proceeded singing kirtan joyfully and Ma clapped, increasing their enthusiasm. The kirtan singers followed Ma, who turned around every now and then, raising her left hand and swinging to the rhythm of the kirtan. This inspired the singers doubly and they sang nama kirtan with greater fervour. It seemed as if the residents of Ramu knew Ma intimately.

As we walked along, I heard from Yogendra Babu's wife about an incident that occurred during the kirtan at the Saraswati temple. The wife of the late lawyer Pyare Babu was very keen to attend Ma's kirtan but her sons disapproved and she therefore did not go but stood in her doorway, listening to the kirtan. Suddenly she had a vision of Kali with a red sash around the waist like the one worn by Krishna and a crown shining on the head. She saw this clearly and then she called her daughter-in-law and daughter and asked them to see what she was observing. They also observed something amazing but only for a moment. Pyare Babu's wife, however, continued to see the vision until

the kirtan ended with the 'Jai' called out after the distribution of prasad.

Later she went for kirtan at Rajani Babu's house and sat near Ma. Ma began conversing with her. Ma asked someone and came to know that she was Pyare Babu's wife. Ma remarked, "It seems she stays with her sons," and she talked to the lady for some time.

At Ramu we first went to the hills at Ramkut where everyone experienced great joy. The swami sadhu there was ill and at his request Ma was offered bhoga. Around four p.m. we reached Nagendra Pal's house where bhoga and kirtan were arranged. As Ma reached the house, they welcomed her with arati of five lamps. The puja room had been specially decorated for Ma's visit. Nagendra Babu was childless and he expressed his sorrow on this account to Ma who replied, "I am your child," and began addressing him as 'father'. Nagendra Pal's wife fed Ma. Once before she had told Ma, "Ma, you are my daughter. I shall eat with you." Ma now fulfilled that desire expressed by her and ate some fruits and sweets with her. As she left Ma wept and said, "I shall go to Cox Bazar again." After kirtan and bhoga we left by boat around midnight and returned to Cox Bazar.

The people of Ramu seemed to have become infatuated with Ma in such a short time. While bidding her goodbye they sang a song with folded hands and melancholy melody, the gist

of which was - 'Ma, when you leave us and go away, we become motherless. Ma, you are compassionate, therefore do not take away your feet from us - we are your children,' and so on. Ma indicated a spot to them and said, "If this place were fit to have a Panchavati, it would be very good." The spot she indicated was in Ramkut.

When Jyotish Dada went to Ramkut and asked where the Panchavati should be situated, a local resident replied, "Some time ago we found a place in the jungle which was probably Ramkut earlier ; now idols and other things have been taken there ; let the Panchavati be installed at that spot." At that very moment Ma was taken to that place. We had to cut our way through dense forest to reach that spot and found a platform there which was broken in a few places. Someone said that a Buddhist temple was there. Ma replied, "Whatever it may have been, it was a place of worship, wasn't it ? It is an ancient spot - let the Panchavati be installed here." After instructing the local people thus, Ma came away.

Singing kirtan all the way, the people escorted Ma to the boat. They were singing.

*"Call out to Pran Gaur Nityananda,
There is none so merciful as Nitai.
Namaha Rama Narayana Sri Krishna Hare,
Janardana Madhusudana Re.
Say 'Jaya Guru Jaya Guru' ceaselessly*

*Taraka Brahma Sanatan will fulfill your
desire surely."*

The simple faith, devotion and hospitality of the village folk charmed us all greatly.

Tuesday, March 12. We reached the ghat at Cox Bazar early this morning. Viraj Babu and others sang the morning kirtans and escorted Ma to the tent. The song was :-

*Pray to Govinda, say Govinda, take
Govinda's name,
Those who pray to Govinda are as dear
as life to us.*

*O listen and understand, you foolish mind,
Know and sing the praises of Hari.*

*At dawn all the birds gather on every
branch
And joyfully chirp the praises of Hari."*

The sleeping folk of Cox Bazar heard the strains of the kirtan and realized that Ma had returned. Many people came out on the road and before Ma reached the tent some people were awaiting her there. Ma talked to them for a while and then lay down wrapping herself in her bedsheet. At Ramu also Ma had been surrounded by big crowds

Around ten a.m. Ma woke up and was offered bhoga. In the afternoon the Sacchidananda Game was begun. A big crowd gathered in the evening for Ma's darshan. Ma was taken to the Dhobi's house for kirtan, in which Bhola-nath participated with great joy. The affectionate hospitality at the Dhobi's (washerman's)

home was not lacking in the smallest detail. At the end of the kirtan, we cut fruit and distributed it. The housewife had welcomed Ma with arati and had sprinkled auspicious water. The doorway had been decorated with creepers and leaves. She washed Ma's and Bholanath's feet with water and then wiped their feet with her hair. Everyone enjoyed the kirtan. It was decided that Ma would sing kirtan with the ladies the next afternoon. Around one thirty a.m. everyone retired to bed.

Wednesday, March 13. As soon as Ma awoke she went to the sea shore for a stroll and then went to the city on her way back to the tent. After a short rest, Ma went with us all to the sweepers' colony where she sang kirtan with everyone present. She then went to the boys' school where the students welcomed her. From there she proceeded to the hospital and returned to the tent at twelve noon. After lunch the ladies sang kirtan which went on till evening. A gentleman then sang some songs for Ma.

Thursday, March 14. Ma got up very late. Bankim Babu and others offered bhoga and by the time we all finished lunch it was four in the evening. Right after lunch Ma went out. Even before lunch the devotees had started prostrating before her as they had heard that she was leaving the next day. Declaring that they would not let her go they lay face

downward at her feet and in spite of Ma's explanatory persuasions they refused to get up ; Ma finally went for her lunch leaving them thus. At eight p.m. the boys were still lying prostrated. In spite of everyone's entreaty, Ma's departure was not postponed. Ma went to Dinabandhu Babu's house and sang kirtan with the ladies ; she was then taken to some other houses as well. She also went to Mahendra Babu's house for kirtan and returned around one a.m., lying down only at two thirty a.m.

Friday, March 15. Today again Ma awoke late. Devotees arrived and conversed with her on various topics. Today being Shivaratri, Ma did not eat anything. A group of sweepers and washermen (dhobis) arrived and sang kirtan. In the evening Bankim Dada led the kirtan and many people arrived to perform Ma's puja. Ma made all the ladies whose husbands were present, worship their husbands. Many ladies also performed Siva puja. Around one a.m. all the people left.

Ma's departure from Cox Bazar the next day was confirmed much to everyone's sorrow. The people of Cox Bazar seemed to have become crazy about Ma. Realising that this carnival of bliss was about to end, they wept and some declared that they had been unable to sleep for the last few nights. In every home kirtan was being sung and in the tent it had been going on almost ceaselessly. Many people were gathering for kirtan and Bholanath would

get immersed in it inspiring the others who would dance for joy. The very atmosphere seemed to be soaked with the Name. People in their homes heard the strains of kirtan till the small hours of the morning. Such a powerful game of joy was to end the next day and all eyes were filled with tears. We slept around two a.m. that night.

CHAPTER VIII

Saturday, March 16. Right from the early morning hours, people started flocking to Ma for Ma was to leave between seven and eight a.m. Ma went to the sea shore and returned almost immediately. She was made to sit on a chair and all the people stood surrounding her. Ladies were offering sindur, puffed rice, durva and other things. The men were ready with pakhavaj, kartal and harmonium. Ma was seated in the palanquin to the strains of kirtan. Ma set out at the appointed hour followed by the devotees singing, "Ma, Ma". The ladies wept, "How will we live on ? It is Vijaya Dasami for us today." The kirtan, 'Ma, Ma' seemed to echo the sorrow in their hearts. On the way Ma went to Dinabandhu Babu's house. The inmates of that house regarded Ma as a daughter of their family. Dinabandhu Babu's wife made Ma eat some refreshments. All entreated, "Ma, return quickly," and approached her with offerings of flowers and sweets, feeling that they would be greatly blessed if she ate even a little of their offerings. From the house Ma was taken towards the sea. Ma was surrounded by enormous crowds and kirtan was in progress. With tears in their eyes,

all were bowing down at Ma's feet and begging for her blessings. Ma stood with joined palms and delighted them all with her sweet words. Completing the farewell festival in this manner, Ma sat in the palanquin. She had to go some way in the palanquin before boarding the steamer. The people watched the palanquin till it went out of sight. After going quite some distance, we saw the crowd returning.

In the steamer Ma lay down and awoke around two. A gentleman had come for her darshan. He questioned, "Ma, everyone talks of dharma, but what, in fact is dharma ?" Ma replied, "All the actions that are performed in order to attain That which everyone seeks, is dharma. Those are the actions pertaining to one's own nature (svabhava). Those actions that cause restlessness pertain to shortcomings (abhava) and they are non-dharma (adharma)." He said, "Some desire wealth and some seek fame." Ma replied, "It is true that some seek wealth, but wealth increases want and thus causes restlessness. Since peace is not attained, doesn't that action lead to shortcoming (abhava) ? We want peace and happiness. Worldly things can only yield intermittent joy, but that does not satisfy us. We want unbroken bliss, unbroken peace. We should perform only those actions which aid the attainment of peace and bliss."

After the conversation Ma went to the deck. Jyotish Dada pointed to a mountain and said, "Ma, some say that when Hanuman was

carrying the Gandhamadan mountain, some of the medicinal herbs fell on this mountain and therefore many medicinal plants can still be obtained here." Ma laughed and said, "Very good, Hanuman has showered His grace. So long as there are actions, there is grace. When actions cease and duality ceases, to whom shall we address a prayer for grace? Where there is no duality, there are no actions either."

We reached Chittagong about five o'clock and stayed at the Rajeshwar temple. Ma's image has also been installed in this temple. The temple priest, Sheetal Thakur, is a great devotee of Ma. On the day prior to her departure from Cox Bazar, Ma had bathed in the sea with the ladies. That joy is indescribable. Holding hands, Ma sang "*Jaya Shiva Sankar, Bom Bom Hara Hara*" and danced and swirled in the sea. Everyone enjoyed the water sport immensely. Many ladies had descended into the water and some distance away, the men had also entered the sea. Taking four ladies Ma walked deeper into the waves. All held on to each other and began dipping in the water. Ma went in and out with the waves. This game lasted for an hour. Then to the kirtan of "*Jaya Shiva Shankar Bom Bom Hara Hara*", Ma returned with the devotees to the tent.

As soon as we reached Chittagong a crowd surrounded Ma. In the night Ma sat in the compound of Yashoda Babu's house. She had a

little milk and fruit and then returned to the Rajeshwar temple. Ma's asana was spread in the verandah. Around midnight Ma lay down to sleep.

Sunday, March 17. Soon after Ma rose, many people arrived including the wives of Upendra Babu and Chandranath Ghoshal who were the disciples of Ram Thakur. They took Ma to Thakur's ashram at the base of the hill. The inmates of the ashram wanted Ma to stay for lunch, but due to lack of time it could not be done, especially because bhoga had already been prepared at Yashoda Babu's house. The residents of the ashram offered fruit and sweets to Ma and took her all over the premises. After spending an hour there Ma returned. Yielding to the pressing requests of Sashi Babu and others, it was decided that Ma would go to Paraikoda again today. By three p.m. we finished lunch and left for Paraikoda in palanquins. We reached by evening and the people there were overjoyed to find Ma in their midst once more soon.

Monday, March 18. The residents of Paraikoda had received the news of Ma's arrival and had come for her darshan. Ma spoke to them. Around three p.m. Ma was offered bhoga. Seating Ma and Bholanath in the courtyard outside, all the people sat surrounding them and the bhoga ceremony was concluded in great joy. Ma only ate very little and distributed the rest to others declaring, "See, I have

finished eating everything." Someone remarked, "But you have not eaten anything." To this Ma replied, "All these mouths are but His, I am eating through that mouth." So saying Ma laughed.

In the afternoon the Sacchidananda game was played in great delight. At dusk the kirtan singers arrived and kirtan was sung with great zest. They concluded the singing at ten p.m. and Ma picked up the refrain. Bholanath danced while singing. Ma took the ladies into the room, bolted the door and sang kirtan. Late in the night, the devotees did pranam to Ma one by one and left. It was decided that Ma would leave for Chittagong at four a.m. the next morning. She was to have left this afternoon but agreed to stay till the next morning because of the earnest requests of the devotees. This blissful din continued till two a.m. and by four a.m. we started for Chittagong, going some distance by car and then by boat.

Tuesday, March 19. We reached Chittagong by six a.m. The residence of the Income-tax Officer Bhupendra Bandopadhyaya was at the ghat. He took Ma to his house for some time and then drove her to the Rajeshwar temple in his car. Around eleven a.m. he took her to Jitendra Ghoshal's residence for bhoga. Ma returned to the temple by four p.m. In the evening she was taken to Girija Babu's house from where she returned at eleven p.m. to find a batch of kirtan singers engaged in kirtan.

Seeing Ma their kirtan gathered tempo and they remained there till one a.m.

Wednesday, March 20. Ma awoke in the morning and went to Ananta Babu's house. Ananta Babu had had small pox and his wife had vowed to bathe Ma in tender coconut water and milk. Now that he had recovered she took Ma to her house to fulfil the vow. The bath was performed and they played the gramophone for some time. At eleven a.m. Ma was taken to Girija Babu's home for bhoga. Many people received prasad.

At five p.m. Upendra Pal's wife took Ma to her house and fed her with some refreshments. From there Ma was taken to Surendra Ghoshal's house for kirtan. A professional singer (Pran Haridas) sang kirtan. Nirmala Ma was present. When nama kirtan started, Ma made Nirmala Ma and the other ladies stand in one corner of the room and began singing kirtan with them. Nirmala Ma went into an ecstatic trance. Many people received prasad. Nirmala Ma was made to lie down. We returned at one a.m. and Nirmala Ma was also brought with us. Conversation continued till one thirty a.m.

Thursday, March 21. Early in the morning Ananta Babu arrived and played his gramophone. Ma was lying down. She was to be taken to Chandranath Babu's house for bhoga. It was decided that the Judge Sahib would take Ma to his bungalow at four thirty p.m. and that she would leave for Chandpur by the night train,

though she had not yet divulged the fact. It had been raining for some time. A lady known to Yashoda Babu, named Muktakeshi Ma had arrived. All of a sudden, Ma went out of the Rajeshwar temple into the rain, and clapping her hands and singing '*Jaya Radhe Radhe Krishna Krishna*' she reached Yashoda Babu's house. Many people followed her in the rain, singing kirtan. Yashoda Babu's wife had been regretting the fact that Ma was leaving so soon leaving no time for kirtan at their house. Ma now fulfilled her desire. The end of Ma's sari was tied up to the ends of the saris of Nirmala Ma and Muktakeshi Ma. Kirtan progressed joyfully and slowly Ma returned to the temple. As they reached the temple, Muktakeshi Ma went into trance and fell to the ground, while Nirmala Ma was overcome by bhava and began dancing to the beat. All were filled with joy. Ma untied the saris and stood aside, watching all this. After some time Muktakeshi Ma rose and began singing kirtan. To prevent Nirmala Ma from catching a chill, she was held and brought into the room where she was made to lie down after her clothes were changed. She rose a little later, had a bath and some refreshments and then lay down.

Ma was taken to Jatu Bhai's house where the devotees enjoyed her company. Around noon she was taken to Chandra Madhav Babu's house for bhoga. The sky was overcast. Chandra

Madhav Babu's wife requested Ma, "Ma, let there not be rain right now, if it rains it will be disastrous." Ma was to sit for lunch outdoors and fearing that it would rain, arrangements were being made to seat the people on the verandah. A little later, the sun peeped out from behind the clouds. Ma, Bholanath and Hema Bhai sat in the middle of the verandah while the devotees sat on the parapet around and received prasad, yet it did not rain. Ma had prasad and lay down while kirtan was started. In between she lifted her face and looked up and after an hour she sat up. Since Ma was leaving this day, no one wanted her to lie down. Nirmala Ma had also left.

At four p.m. Sashi Babu took Ma from Chandra Madhav Babu's house to his studio where she was photographed. I was with Ma and we returned to the Rajeshwar temple. At five p.m. Ma set out to the Judge Sahib's bungalow. Meanwhile the kirtan singers arrived. Ma told them, "You start singing, I'll come soon." At nine p.m. Ma was to leave for the station to go to Chandpur. Therefore she asked the kirtan singers to start so that they could complete the kirtan within the time left and she would not have to leave while the kirtan was unfinished. Accordingly the kirtan was started. A large crowd had gathered but no one seemed to get really involved in the kirtan. Just as they got into the mood of the kirtan, the realization that Ma was leaving burst

forth. Many eyes were tearful. The wife of the priest of the Rajeshwar temple was weeping continuously.

Ma returned from the Judge Sahib's house and sat for the kirtan. It was nearly time to leave. One gentleman had requested that he be given diksha and therefore Bholanath was staying back to give diksha the next morning. Ma told Bholanath, "As I have said I shall leave today I shall do so ; you can come tomorrow. I shall stay at Girija's house in Chandpur." Bholanath agreed and Shankaranand stayed with him. Ma was accompanied by Swami Akhandanand, Jyotish Dada and myself. Ma left amidst tears - it was a wonderful sight. People were shoving and pushing each other to offer their pranam, but some just stood calmly and watched Ma's face intently with tear filled eyes.

Ma went by Surendra Ghoshal's car to the station where many others had also gathered. Girija Babu and family had also arrived. All watched Ma eagerly. New acquaintances spoke to Ma and felt blessed by her sweet advice. Sheetal Thakur stood at some distance and wept profusely. No one noticed him in the crowd but he did not escape Ma's vision and she asked smilingly, "Where is Sheetal Babu ?" Then looking towards a distant tree she called out, "Sheetal Babu, Sheetal Babu" and laughed and everyone's gaze was turned towards him. He was brought near Ma and seated at her

feet. Ma laughed and remarked, "What kind of people did you give shelter to in your temple who make you weep as they go !" Again she said, "Alright, look I am laughing. Do you cry for those who laugh ? People do not weep for those who laugh." She explained, "But this laughter that is being manifested, you could call it weeping. Something is being manifested, is it not ? By that measure you could say I am weeping."

Ma then requested all the people to grant her the bhiksha that they would take God's Name. It was time for the train to leave.

Hiru, who had lived with Ma at Sitakund, and who was studying medicine, was present - he could no longer hold back his tears and he burst out crying. Ma was consoling him and the others as the train left. No one in the world waits because of the agonised grief of another - neither did the train wait. Some boys ran alongside the train while others stood like statues, gazing at Ma. When Ma had gone to Cox Bazar, these people were confident that she would return via Chittagong and that they would surely have her darshan. But now they were all wondering when they would have Ma's darshan again. Thus completing her lila at Chittagong Ma went to Chandpur. As soon as the train left, Ma lay down - this is a fact I have noticed each time. Who knows whether the heart-aches of the devotees affect Ma or not ?

We reached Chandpur at four a.m. so it was not possible to inform Girija Babu (Bholanath's sister's son) of our arrival right then. The station master took Ma to the waiting room - these people had all become acquainted with Ma during her previous visit when she had come to the station with Girija Babu and family. He is a doctor in the railways and therefore many railway employees had come for Ma's darshan. Girija Babu was informed about our arrival.

Friday, March 22. By six a.m. Girija Babu arrived, took us all to his residence and got a room in the hospital cleared for Ma to stay. We settled down there and as people heard of Ma's arrival they began coming for her darshan. Ma lay down for some time in the afternoon. Then she rose and began conversing with the devotees. Kirtan was also performed. Hearing of Ma's arrival, Purna Babu (who was at Krishnanagar) came from across the river. He said he would return at dusk to take Ma to his residence. Ladies kept dropping in till sunset, after which Ma went out for a stroll. I also set out with Girija Dada for a walk.

We talked of many things. Ma had once told Kall Prasanna Kushari to renounce his householderhood - but he was unable to do so. He lost his son. Ma gives instructions according to her bhava and we are sometimes unable to follow them when they do not appeal to us.

That was how it was in this case. When Kali Prasanna Babu's second son returned from the jaws of death by recovering from a serious illness, Kali Prasanna Babu and family went to Tarapeeth to meet Ma. Ma then advised him, "Give up your home. If you do not wish to go very far stay with your wife at Siddheswari ashram." But he replied, "I cannot go until my third son, Haridas, is married," to which Ma said, "Alright then, go after the wedding. Till then take up the worship of Shiva and perform Shiva puja regularly." When Ma went to Srirampur, Kali Prasanna's eldest son (Girija Babu) and the second son went to Ma and prayed, "Please let father go." Ma suggested that he could stay in a room on the terrace, but they objected saying that that was also inconvenient. Ma then gave an alternative instruction. Referring to that she said, "It was not another instruction - if I said nothing you would misunderstand it as my being angry therefore as per your feeling something was said." Soon after this conversation, Kali Prasanna Babu's second son died - then everyone realized that if Ma's instructions had been followed it would have been for their own good. But invariably, the inevitable happens.

Purna Babu was to have come in the evening but it was eight p.m. and he had still not turned up. Ma returned from her walk on the road and went to the toilet. As she entered

the toilet she stood on the steps and said, "May be Baba (Purna Babu) will come and say 'Ma, let us go'." The next minute Purna Babu arrived with family. When Ma joined them no one was in a mood to cross the river by boat so late, but being unable to refuse the earnest entreaties of Purna Babu and his wife, Ma set out for their residence. Jyotish Babu was not well enough to go. Akhandananda Swami, Girija Babu and I accompanied Ma. We went to the ghat and got into the Deputy Babu's boat. The moonlit night was very pleasant and Purna Babu's daughter sang -

"O hibiscus tell us do,

By what penance you have attained Ma's feet."

We got off at Purna Babu's residence. The youngsters performed kirtan. With pressing requests that we should visit them again the next day, they bade Ma farewell. Purna Babu escorted Ma back. At eleven p.m. we all returned and sat under a tree. Jyotish Dada conversed with Ma. At two a.m. Ma slept.

Saturday, March 23. Early this morning Bholanath, Shankaranand and Jatu arrived. Ma awoke at seven a.m. and spoke to all present. I took Ma for a wash. Bangla Desh has made Ma a Suvachani goddess with sindur. Ma's nose, mouth and eyes were all covered with sindur ; her sari and blouse were also coloured. Soap cannot wash it off - such is Ma's state all the time. I washed her face and made her drink some water. Today again Purna

Babu and his children arrived. Many others had also come. Purna Babu's son sang many songs. About one p.m. when they all left, Ma covered herself with a cloth and lay down. When lunch was ready we fed her and then she lay down again. Tonight she is to go to Calcutta and there is talk of her going to Delhi from there. The devotees in Delhi are eagerly awaiting her arrival there. They had put up a pandal for a month, hoping she would go there and had just taken it down - they had sent many telegrams asking when Ma would come. In the afternoon the ladies arrived and Ma conversed with them. In the evening Purna Babu took Ma to his house again. Kirtan was performed for a long time in the moonlit night. We returned from there leaving Purna Babu's wife in tears and visited one more house before returning to the hospital. At one a.m. we boarded the steamer.

CHAPTER IX

Sunday, March 24. The steamer set out at five a.m. Incidentally, Binay Babu, who was bound for Calcutta, boarded the same steamer. Some food was purchased at a station and by Ma's orders it was distributed amongst the passengers of the steamer. At eight thirty p.m. we reached Calcutta. As per Ma's behest, no one in Calcutta had been informed of her arrival. Binay Babu escorted us to the Shiva temple in Birla Park on his way home and said he would bring food for us.

Ma set out to have some fun. She first went to Sachi Babu's house. Leaving us all on the road outside, our mischievous Ma wound her shawl around her head like a turban and standing in the darkness outside Sachi Babu's door she softly began singing -

"Jaya Radhe Radhe Krishna Krishna,

Hare Rama Hare Hare."

Hearing the song the inmates of the house started. Later Sachi Babu said, "My heart leapt but I did not recognize Ma's voice." Ma said, "I thought you people would not recognize my voice." However, a boy named Bhupesh ran outdoors and Ma slipped into the shadows. But can anyone forget the countenance ? Tie

as many turbans as you like ! Bhupesh took only a second to recognize Ma and burst into a delighted cry of 'Ma !' causing the people of the house to come rushing out. We heard loud laughter and Sachi Babu came to the gate to take us indoors. Bholanath, Jyotish Dada, Akhandananda and I were with Ma. We spent some time at Sachi Babu's and then proceeded to Yatish Guha's place.

Ma played the same prank at Yatish Guha's house. Sachi Babu went upstairs first and found a number of people asleep. Seeing Sachi Babu at eleven p.m. they all guessed that he had surely brought some news of Ma ; but Sachi Babu said nothing. Ma left the others and taking only me with her crept into the lane behind Yatish Guha's house in the same garb as she had donned earlier and began singing -

"Jaya Radhe Radhe Krishna Krishna

Hare Rama Hare Hare

Se Nama Bolo Bodone

Shunao kane bilao jiber dvare dvare."

All were astonished to hear this sweet voice so late at night. As the people were on the second floor Ma asked me to join her so our voices could be heard. The truth sometimes dawns in someone's mind - it struck Nitish's wife. She said, "It sounds like Ma's voice. This sentence made the people run downstairs. On seeing Ma in the midst of this act they ran and embraced her ; their joy was unbounded

Ma stood there for some time and then went to the houses of Pran Kumar Babu and Binay Babu and returned to the Shiva temple. There she found Binay Babu and his wife ready with meals. We all ate and then Ma set out again in a car. She went to Bhramar's house and then to Navataru's on her way to Upendra Babu's at Grey Street. She returned around two a.m. and resumed her frolic - "Khukuni has learnt to sing nama kirtan - we shall all hear her now, hurry up." I said, "You also sing." We sang nama kirtan and Ma finally slept at three a.m. Sachi Babu, Navataru, Yatish Guha and Nitish spread their blankets and lay down around Ma.

Monday, March 25. By the time Ma awoke, many people had gathered ; Ma sat up and began conversing with them. Around noon she went to Kushari Babu's house at Dhakuria for lunch. On her way back she visited Suren Thakur's house on the pressing request of Sanja Devi. She returned to the Birla temple at five p.m. and was surrounded by a huge crowd of people. Rai Bahadur Suren Babu had filmed Ma's kirtan in the company of Calcutta devotees during her last visit. This evening he showed us the film - there was also a shot of our sacred thread ceremony. Ma was ready to leave. Some people did pranam and departed. Many followed Ma to the station and gazed at Ma intently till the train left. Ma was going to Kashi in

response to the special request by Bacchu's mother. Kirtan was to be performed throughout the night at Kashi. The train was to leave at ten p.m. Railway officials were rebuking the devotees for crowding into the train but no one was willing to budge from Ma's proximity. As they were being scolded, some got down only to climb in again and cluster around Ma - it was a joke. Finally, the train left and many ran alongside until it picked up speed and they watched it leave helplessly. This parting scene was pathetic.

Tuesday, March 26. We reached Kashi at ten a.m. the next morning. Bimala Ma and Anand Bhai were going to Hardwar and we met them at Kashi. Seeing Ma they ran to meet her. Bacchu's mother and others had come to the station for they had been informed of Ma's arrival by telegram. Kirtan had been started from morning. Ma was taken to Bacchu's house and arrangements had been made for her stay in a hut in the garden. Ma sat in the hut. I changed her clothes and made her drink water. The kirtan was on -

"Hare Krishna Hare Krishna,

Krishna Krishna Hare Hare

Hare Rama Hare Rama,

Rama Rama Hare Hare."

Having received news of Ma's arrival people had begun gathering for her darshan ; Ma was speaking to them in her naturally sweet way. Around noon Ma ate lunch. The wife

of Baijnath Pandey of the Theosophical Society, had come. This couple had become ardent devotees of Ma since her last visit. In the evening Ma went to the hall where kirtan was being sung and sat for some time. Yatish Guha had come with us from Calcutta. All participated in the kirtan. Ma, Bholanath and all others who were with them sat up throughout the night for the kirtan, Ma sat absolutely still.

Wednesday, March 27. The kirtan was stopped at six thirty a.m. As per the prevailing tradition at Kashi, a mixture of lime water and turmeric was poured on the ground and the people rolled on it. Then they all went with Ma for a bath in the Ganga. Kanai Dada of Harasundari dharmasala joined us and took Ma to his dharmashala on the way back. The owner of the dharmashala, Mahesh Babu, was ill. Ma had asked him to follow certain regulations for a year and the year had elapsed in March. Mahesh Babu had carried out Ma's instructions. Ma remarked, "Baba's health has been indifferent for so long - the regulations that had to be followed have been observed and he has lived through the year for their accomplishment." Mahesh Babu told Ma, "Ma, I am suffering greatly - I cannot bear any more suffering nor am I able to leave." Ma replied, "Do not worry - just call out to God. Change occurs all the time. Why do you worry?"

Ma returned to Bacchu's hut and big crowds began arriving. Ma's face was washed, she

drank some milk. The people left and she lay down for awhile. We were to leave for Delhi the next day by the noon train. Ma awoke at one p.m. and spoke to all those present. Many who had learnt of Ma's arrival today had come for her darshan. In the evening kirtan was sung again. Everyone enjoyed participating in the kirtan in Bholanath's company. Ma sat on a stool in the verandah and Bacchu's mother talked to her on confidential matters. Around one thirty a.m. Ma lay down on a platform in the open courtyard where kirtan had been performed. We spread our blankets and lay down around Ma.

Thursday, March 28. Since morning people kept coming ; Ma was to leave by the noon train for Delhi. Our Krishna Ma (Manorama) was to arrive. An acquaintance from Nainital (he was an engineer) and his wife had come yesterday and pleaded with Ma to visit their house but she was unable to comply for lack of time. They arrived early today. Ma had to travel through Allahabad so the people who had been longing for Ma's darshan had been informed by telegram. Around five p.m. we reached Allahabad. The Kashmiri devotees who had received the news had all arrived. Kashiram of Dehradun was also there. When she saw Ma after such a long time she burst into tears. When the Kashmiri ladies boarded the train with floral garlands, the compartment seemed to be aglow. They decorated Ma with

flowers and heaped fruits at her feet. They embraced Ma with such fervour it seemed they had acquired a long sought treasure. Since I had wired to them they began expressing their gratitude saying, "Gurupriya Didi, we had Ma's darshan only because of you." Seeing their eagerness for darshan and their love, all those present were charmed. A big crowd gathered. I began distributing the fruit that had piled up at Ma's feet. Ma got down on to the platform and big groups of men came to touch Ma's feet. The sight was wonderful. But no one's longing for Ma could stop the train and it departed at the appointed hour. The Kashmiri ladies showered flowers all over Ma.

CHAPTER X

Friday, March 29. At six thirty a.m. we reached Delhi ; many people had come to the station. A tent had been put up at Panchu Babu's and Ma was taken there. Gradually all the devotees were informed. Ma went into the tent and lay down. Many people had gathered for darshan. Suren Babu's wife, who had started kirtan in Simla, had come and could hardly wait to see Ma. She declared, "I am going to see my Gopal !" Understanding her eagerness I could not stop her. She embraced Ma. Ma removed the sheet with which she had covered her face and sat up smiling. Suren Babu's wife began showering her affection on Ma in various ways and finally decided to have kirtan sung by ladies. She is the eldest among the ladies here and is therefore greatly respected by all. She also spends much time in organising satsangs for ladies.

Many more people arrived. Ma had her lunch - she ate very little and then sat on a small bedding. The tent was small and the crowd could not be accommodated so the curtains on all four sides of the tent were raised. Yet all could not get near Ma and touch her feet. Ma told the ladies, "Do not sit silently,

sing kirtan." The ladies sang nama kirtan for some time and Ma also sang with them. Haran Babu's wife sang for a long time.

In the evening Ma was taken to the Hari Sabha. Durga Das Babu, Panchu Babu, Haran Babu, Charu Babu, Pankaj Babu and others went with her so she did not go by car but walked all the way. Their seventh anniversary was being celebrated for a week and scriptural reading had been performed that day. As soon as Ma reached there a big crowd gathered to do pranam. Ma spent an hour there before returning to the tent. Many devotees sat around Ma and left unwillingly after eleven p.m. We spread our blankets all around Ma and slept.

Saturday, March 30. Today is Holi Purnima. A large crowd had gathered even before Ma awoke. Today the devotees were to anoint Ma's feet with crimson powder and sing kirtan. As soon as Ma rose they applied the coloured powder to Ma's and Bholanath's feet and offered pranam. Some offered sandal paste and tulasi leaves. Ladies offered clothes and sindur and worshipped Ma with a variety of items. Ma was decorated with floral garlands. Finally the ladies began playing Holi with Ma. Ma played with the gang of ladies outside the tent. She then went into the tent where the boys were singing kirtan and joined them. Ma made the ladies also sing kirtan. When all the faces were covered with coloured powder, Ma asked mé to fetch a mirror and

went around placing it before each one, saying, "You are all applying colour, so I also have to do something - I am showing you your true forms !" She laughed but perhaps many did not realise the deep significance of her words. All had smeared colour over Ma's clothes and she in turn embraced each one, transferring the colour on to their clothes. Ma laughed mischievously and as others caught on to her trick, they laughed too. Then Ma asked the ladies to continue singing and joined the boys. They offered colour at her feet. This kirtan and play went on till noon, and then the devotees departed.

I gave Ma a bath and then she had lunch. Panchu Babu and his family are serving Ma with heart and soul. Gopalji and Hariram Joshi have arrived from Dehradun. The days are passing by in great joy and bustle. Kirtan was being sung at Haran Babu's house from sunrise to sunset. He took Ma there. Haran Babu was dancing and singing along with Punjabi devotees. Ma spent some time there and returned to the tent. Manoj Babu was waiting to take Ma to his house. We also went with Ma. An ancient Hanuman temple adjoining Manoj Babu's house, had been occupied by Ma twice before during earlier visits. Ma told Yatish Guha and Rana, "If you have not seen the Hanuman temple, go see it now." On returning from Manoj Babu's house Ma sat in the tent and was surrounded by the

people who had come to meet her. A girl sang beautiful kirtan. I heard that she is Panchanan Mukhopadhyaya's daughter.

A gentleman conversing with Ma said, "Ma, why are we all making no progress.? Is there nothing called grace ?" Ma replied, "Yes, there is ; for without grace you cannot even start. But grace arises only from action, so action has to be performed. Just as one person stretches out his hand and gives while another puts forth his hand to receive. Similarly action and grace occur simultaneously. Action itself is grace, for if there is no grace, whence will right action emerge ?" The gentleman asked, "Ma, does one have to experience all that is in one's destiny ? Cannot the fruits of action be destroyed by taking the Name ?" Ma replied, "Look, this is how destiny is experienced - even a realised soul has to experience his destined lot - just as an electric fan that is switched off, continues to move for some time. The destiny experienced by a jivanmukta is similar. This causes no bondage so far as the jivanmukta is concerned. Again, let us suppose you have a lot of pending work which would have taken very long to complete. Some of your friends come and help you and you are free within a short time. Similarly, japa and other practices do yield results - they release you faster from the bondage of karma." Ma smilingly conversed thus on many topics and all listened enchantedly.

At night Ma was again taken to the Hari Sabha where Sudhir Sarkar was performing kirtan. A large crowd had gathered. As soon as Ma reached many people began touching her feet.

Sudhir Babu's wife came to me and said, "Didi, today I have actually experienced the truth of the fact that Ma surely comes when we call out to her. My husband was saying, 'Ma will not come today' and I was insisting, 'On calling out to her, Ma definitely comes - let me see whether she comes or not.' Thinking thus I was calling out to her and see Ma has arrived !" Actually when it was time for Ma to go to the Hari Sabha the conversation around her had almost stalled her departure, but the course of events did not prevent Ma's visiting the Sabha. Around midnight we lay down to rest.

Sunday, March 31. Today again a big crowd had gathered even before Ma woke up. Ma began conversing as soon as she rose. In the course of chatting she conveyed beautiful pieces of advice. Haran Babu said, "Ma, you have come after nearly a year. We have hardly made any progress. Nama kirtan I find has done nothing. I sing kirtan, I do japa and while I am at it I enjoy it, but when I return to home life everything is just as it was." Ma remained quiet for a moment and then said, "Look, in Chittagong sour substances are called khede. You people eat the medicine and also

eat the khede side by side - therefore you do not get results." Saying this Ma burst out into childlike laughter. All the people became quiet. Some said, "Ma is right. We eat the medicine and also the khede, therefore we get no results."

In the course of conversation Ma said, "To think deeply (alochana), you must become sightless (a-lochana). For, as long as eyes (lochana) are present creation exists ; so long as vision persists so long will creation exist." For half an hour after lunch Ma lay with a sheet over her face. She had said that she should be roused after half an hour. Many people were seated in the tent. The old acquaintance, Nani Ma was present with her daughter and daughter-in-law. Suresh Babu's wife (Tunu's mother) was also there and was calling Ma 'Gopal, Gopal'. Ma responded by lying down in her lap like a little child. She made arrangements for the ladies to sing kirtan with Ma on Monday. In the course of jest and chatter many beautiful truths were expounded.

I began playing the Sacchidanand Game with the boys and ladies. In half an hour Ma sat up. At four thirty, the engineer, Chintamani Pant, took Ma to his house. There Ma sat in the open field with all the devotees around her. Little girls sang and then some refreshments were distributed. Ma had some refreshments and everyone received prasad. In the

evening she returned to the tent.

After some time she was taken to the Hari Sabha where nama kirtan was in progress, Bholanath was also singing and all were enjoying greatly. At nine p.m. Ma returned with us all to the tent. As many people followed her she did not use the car but came walking. Just then a Punjabi gentleman arrived with his car to take Ma to a kirtan session. Earlier he had requested Ma to go to his house. Haran Babu had already gone there to sing kirtan and Haran Babu's son had also come to take Ma. She went there with a couple of us. The venue of the kirtan had been done up like Vrindavan. Haran Babu was dancing with the Punjabis in the attire of a Gopi and singing nama kirtan. Bholanath was tired so he had not come for this kirtan but now a car was sent to fetch him and the rest. Bholanath also joined in the dancing. There was great joy as the kirtan. 'Jaya Radhe Jaya Radhe Jaya Radhe Jaya Krishna Jaya Vrindavana' rang through the hall. Again the words 'Jaya Govinda Gopinath, Gopijana Vallabha' filled the air. The kirtan gathered tempo as the echo of the Name vibrated all over and everyone danced joyfully as they sang. We had originally planned to drop in for a few minutes but it was midnight before we returned. All were happy to be with Ma and sang for a long time. The lady of the house praised her good fortune that she had such an opportunity.

The ladies present promised to participate in the kirtan every Monday. It was past midnight when we returned to the tent and two a.m. when we slept.

Monday, April 1. Yesterday it had been decided that Ma would visit Dr. J. K. Sen and by seven a.m. this morning he was here with his car. Haran Babu and family had also arrived. Ma rose and went with us all to the doctor's house where she sat in the green house in the garden. Ma said, "Your profession is doctoring - now why do you not doctor your mind also ?" He replied, "I do try, but have not achieved much." Further, Ma said, "Give more time - of course you know that until the disease is removed medicine has to be taken and dietary regulations have to be followed. In the same manner, go on taking God's Name and doing japa - you will surely reap the fruit. Look, I am your daughter, a child, but I have heard people claiming that children are true witnesses. They say, 'He is a child and will not speak falsely - he will speak just as he has seen.' Similarly you can believe me implicitly - take the Name and you will certainly gain your end. When you get something nice you wish to share it with all the members of your family. You are all members of my family ; therefore I am telling you - do nama kirtan and derive this great joy."

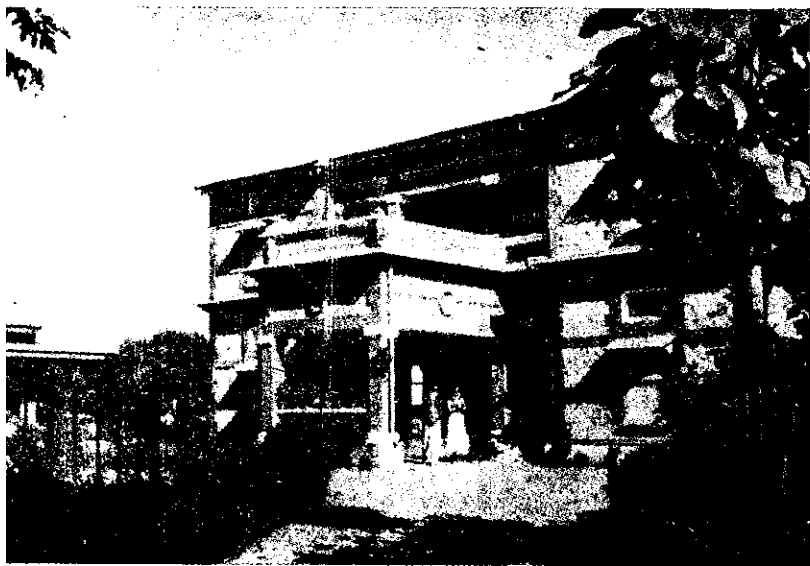
The doctor's wife spoke to Ma privately and Ma was very happy to hear her. She seemed

to be well advanced spiritually though she led the life of a householder. She described her beautiful experiences to Ma and asked, "Ma, I cannot believe in these experiences for I have not practised any sadhana - then why should such bhavas arise within me?" Ma replied, "Though you have not done much sadhana in this birth, your samskaras are good, therefore with a little meditation you are achieving these experiences. I am very happy to hear about them."

The doctor's wife had written in verse, her understanding of upanishadic thought - she presented two copies of the book to Ma. We returned after spending many hours there. Ma told the doctor, "Spend at least some time in this grove, becoming a tree yourself. Sit with that thought."

Ma returned to the tent and found that many people were awaiting her. She sat in the tent, some girls sang, Panchu Babu's daughter danced with her costume and jewelry. Conversation went on till one p.m. Ma was made to eat lunch and then she lay down for some time. As many people had come, she sat up.

Ladies had gathered - it was about three p.m. Ma was speaking on many topics. Suresh Babu's wife had declared that she was Ma's mother - she had formed a Gita Study group and was explaining the scripture to ladies who attended it. Ma commented that the ladies were progressing well spiritually because of the



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Kishenpore, Dehradun



Shahbag Ashram, Dhaka

study group. The ladies were also praising Suresh Babu's wife. Ma told them, "You are fortunate to have this kind of company." Such was the conversation in progress. At four p.m. Ma was to be taken to the Kali temple at Okhla.

Tunu's mother made Ma drink milk. Ma lay down in her lap and smiled like Gopal while Tunu's mother posed as Gopal's mother. Ma said, "Call Jyotish and Akhandanand. Let them see my mother." When they came Ma told them, "Look, here she is my mother - she calls me Gopal and therefore she is Gopal's mother." We all said, "That's fine - then she is our granny." Ma declared, "I shall have a photograph taken of my mother and myself." Just then some one said, "The photographer is here." Ma turned to us and said, "You never told me anything, did you ?"

A photograph was taken of Gopal lying in the lap of Gopal's mother as she made Gopal drink milk. Another lady was made Balaram and she sat near Ma. After this sport Ma went with us all to Okhla. One bus and two cars filled with people accompanied Ma. Devotees carried a dhol and kartal and started singing kirtan in the bus. Wholeheartedly they sang, "Ma, Ma, Ma, Ma !" At Okhla Ma was photographed and kirtan was resumed. The refrain was again, 'Ma, Ma'. It was evening and the group sang the Name and danced as they left Okhla with Ma. Ma raised her left

hand and encouraged the singers. Haran Babu and others danced as they sang, "Ma, Ma". The Name continued during the bus journey. On the way Ma visited Chintamani Pant's house. Kirtan continued till eight thirty in the night, after which Ma was offered bhoga of fruits and prasad was distributed. We returned to the tent singing kirtan. The atmosphere was purified by the heartfelt singing of "Ma, Ma" by her devotees. - the kirtan was extremely beautiful. Many people came into the tent and took leave of Ma ; then those who could not go with Ma to Okhla came and sat near her. Conversation went on till eleven p.m. Then they all left. Ma was made to eat some food. She lay down and then suddenly rose and went out to the street saying, "My body is in no mood to sleep tonight." A couple of us followed her as she walked about for awhile before returning to the tent. But she was quite restless during the night. Rana suddenly began saying "Ma, Ma" and wept. He had been behaving in this manner for the last few days ; he had been getting up and sitting near Ma in the night. Tonight he began weeping bitterly. Ma lay down quietly. Today Jyotivikas (Narasimha) and another Professor had arrived with families from Mathura - they had conversed with Ma for a long time.

Tuesday, April 2. Very early this morning, Haran Babu and his wife arrived. Haran Babu's wife sat near Ma and stroked her head. Immediately Ma sat up wrapped in her sheet and

told Haran Babu's wife, "Come, let us go" and walked out of the tent. She told Haran Babu, "It is good to drive in a car at this time." I repeated to Haran Babu, "Ma has set out to travel in your car." They took Ma and drove away.

At nine a.m. Ma returned by horse cart. I heard that on the way back the car fell into a gutter and Haran Babu was convinced that they were saved only by Ma's presence for had the car tumbled in forcefully they would surely have been finished, but the car slid in gently and came to a halt.

Just then Sudhir Babu arrived with his car to take Ma to his house. We also went with Ma and found that a big crowd had gathered there. Nama kirtan was performed and Ma was anointed with sandal paste and a flower garland. Sudhir Babu had spent some time in England. He visited Ma very rarely in Simla but was finally so enchanted by her that he told Biren Dada, "I am very unfortunate to have missed the chance of meeting Ma often when she spent so many days in Simla. How I regret it !" At his home Sudhir Babu offered pranam to Ma and sat by her feet saying, "Ma, I want to ask you just one thing, This morning I saw you around two a.m. - was it true ? I felt it was a real vision." Ma gave an indirect reply, "You see so many things in dreams, but sometimes dreams are true too." Sudhir Babu is a very serious person. He

bowed to Ma and left. Kirtan went on in his house for hours. Sudhir Babu wanted to get Ma to write in a copy of the Gita given to him by his guru, but after much pleading Ma drew a tiny dot in it. She said, "If I ever have the bhava to write, you tell her," (pointing to me), "the writing shall be sent. At this moment there is no bhava to write at all."

Around one thirty, after kirtan, we returned to the tent. An American gentleman was waiting for Ma. He had heard about Ma long ago and was keen to meet her. He had come to India for the darshan of sadhus and had enjoyed the company of sadhus. He ate chapati and dal once a day and did not even drink tea. He saw Ma and declared, "I shall stay with Ma !" Someone said, "If you stay with Ma you will have to wear a dhoti" to which he replied, "I shall do whatever Ma asks me to do." He took photographs of Ma. Around two p.m. Ma was made to eat lunch.

Then she was taken to a Gurudwara for kirtan sung by ladies. There was a huge hall and a large number of ladies had gathered to sing kirtan with Ma. The kirtan gathered tempo gradually and was most enjoyable. All the ladies asked Ma to give a lecture. Ma said, "I know no reading or writing. Just because I am asked to I cannot lecture. In the course of conversation I shall say whatever occurs to me." Gopal's mother initiated the topic and Ma spoke, "Look, we sang nama kirtan -

what is the meaning of this ? Why is it sung ? The nature of the name is such that it calls forth the bearer of the name. See, by calling Ma as 'Ma', she comes and stands before you. Whoever you beckon by name, appears before you. Such is the nature of the name. Therefore, to attain the One who is named, the Name has to be called out.

Then again, the nature of fire is to change the form of everything into that of fire itself. A wet log in contact with fire becomes dry because of the nature of fire and finally assumes the form of fire. Similarly only by contact with God, that is by repeating His Name, can His company be obtained and can He be realised. Yet another method of procuring his company is possible while living the life of a householder. That is to believe that since no one actually sees the Universal Father or Universal Lord, to see Him in the form of the husband and also look upon the children as manifestations of Baby Gopal and the young girls as forms of the Goddess. Then the service done to the husband and children becomes service to the Lord - thus this attitude results in His company. I beg this bhiksha of you - that you spend a little more time in His company, that you repeat His Name. You all do so much for your children - do this little thing for this daughter of yours ; this is my prayer."

Whenever Ma made this prayer with joined palms and eyes brimming with tears, people

were charmed and immediately agreed to set more time for japa.

After the kirtan Ma returned to the tent. Jyotivikas set out for Mathura accompanied by the Professor. Durgadas Babu was suffering from arthritis and could not come. Ma asked that he be brought by car. He was delighted by Ma's invitation and arrived. A big crowd had gathered in the tent. At seven thirty p.m. Bankim Babu and others were to take Ma to the Hindu Mahasabha for kirtan where many were to gather for Ma's darshan. Ma went out of the tent for a little while and Durgadas Babu waited for her in the tent thinking that she would return. In between he called out, "Ma ! Ma !", but Ma did not return for Bankim Babu and others made her sit in the car as it was nearly seven thirty p.m. and kirtan was to be started at exactly seven thirty p.m. In the car I told Ma, "Durgadas Babu is waiting in the tent." Pat came Ma's reply, "And that would be so ! You people brought me straight from outside the tent and he is going to feel sad. Since I walked out he thought I went out for a stroll and would return." Then Ma called out from within the car, "Baba, I am going." Baba thinks this girl cannot be trusted - she made me sit in the tent and went off. Do something - after the kirtan, send Baba some prasad and a garland from my neck."

Ma reached the kirtan room. Ladies were seated on the first floor and the kirtan singers were seated downstairs. Ma was made to sit on the ground floor and many ladies sat surrounding her. The devotees welcomed Ma with a prayer :-

"Jaya Hridayavasini shraddha sanatani

Sri Anandamayi Ma."

Then they sang kirtan with the refrain of 'Ma ! Ma !' and for a long time the devotees enjoyed the bliss of calling out to Ma. The strains of kirtan purified the atmosphere. Then the devotees started yet another refrain and Ma stayed on till eleven p.m. When we returned to the tent we found a couple of people waiting for Ma. A pandit from Uttar Pradesh performed Ma's puja with a garland, fruits and sweets. At one a.m. people took leave of Ma.

Wednesday, April 3. At six a.m. Ma went with us all to 'Pusa' by Pankaj Babu's car. A number of devotees at Pusa who were waiting eagerly for Ma's darshan were delighted to have her in their midst so early in the morning. The cows at Pusa reminded one of the stories of Krishna tending his cows - they had beautiful countenances.

Ma then went to Rai Sahib Suresh Babu's (Gopal's mother's) house. Rai Sahib did not visit Ma. Ma sent me inside while she sat in the car. What could he have done in such a situation ? He came to Ma and Ma addressed him as 'Baba' while he joined his palms and

bowed before her. His wife said, "This is my Gopal - you must show some affection for my Gopal." He retorted, "You can show it." Ma put in, "Alright, then I shall show affection for Baba" and she touched him lightly and laughed like a child. Every time his wife went to see Ma, Suresh Babu would scold her, but I heard that after this incident he stopped scolding her.

Next, Ma went to Durga Babu's house. On seeing Durga Babu she said, "Baba, I left you and went away yesterday without informing you. I am afraid you are going to scold me. I am scared of you people, am I not ?" And she laughed. Durga Babu was very affectionate and obstinate with Ma. I came to know that he was now no longer upset about Ma's departure. Ma remarked, "If the prasad had not been sent yesterday, Baba's face would have been worth looking at !" And again she laughed the laugh that enchanted the world. The personification of moods has no paucity of moods ! Durga Babu melted instantly. Photographs were taken at his residence.

Ma was taken to Rai Bahadur Satish Babu's house for awhile before returning to the tent where a big crowd was waiting for her. Ma sat amidst the devotees and on being requested she sang nama kirtan, followed by them all. In the afternoon, Ma had lunch ; the crowd of devotees stayed on and grew longer. Now Ma made the ladies sing kirtan.

In the evening Ma was taken for kirtan at Pinakapani's house. A bench had been placed outside for Ma to sit while the kirtan was performed in the verandah. Ma refused to sit on the bench so a bedding was placed on the ground, but Haran Babu and others objected to that for how could they sit on a raised verandah when Ma was sitting on the ground next to it ? Then Ma was offered a stool to sit on. Later I heard that Pinakapani was very upset that Ma would not enter his house. So he had procured a bench and made arrangements for Ma to sit outside. But eventually that was also rejected ; when Ma was about to sit on the ground and all the devotees on the verandah objected, Pinakapani wondered whether he had any piece of furniture on which Ma could be seated on level with the verandah. Suddenly he remembered the stool on which the idol of God was placed in their puja-room. Without thinking twice he placed the idol on the floor and brought the stool for Ma. As he narrated this incident he explained, "Ma accepted this stool by coincidence, but I was satiated by that, for Ma accepted the seat that rightfully belonged to her." This Pinakapani had been a great atheist and he had often argued with Ma. Eventually he reached the stage when he fell at Ma's feet and cried, "Ma, you take full charge of me !" He had met Ma seven or eight years ago.

Today, I received a letter from Sashi Babu. It read, "Didi, I was very worried about how I would instal Ma's image and perform ceremonies in the new place. But it is surprising that before the ceremony, even strangers passing by came and gave their donations. Such a festival has never been performed here before. I shall describe yet another incident - during the festival it seemed that Ma was actually smiling out of her picture placed on her asana. It is not as if only I imagined this - Girija Babu, Jatu's elder brother and many others noticed this ... etc."

After the kirtan we returned to the tent. Charu Babu, Haran Babu, their wives, Pankaj Babu and a few others stayed with Ma till two thirty a.m. Haran Babu pleaded, "Ma, you are the Jagadguru. Give us a cure !" Further he said, "Ma, I know we are wrongdoers - yet we have come as beggars for your grace !" Ma slept at four a.m.

Thursday, April 4. Early morning, Haran Babu, his wife and some others arrived for Ma's darshan. At eight a.m. Ma was taken to Mani Chattopadhyaya's house. His wife is very religious. She had dreamt that Ma was standing and smiling in her puja-room. and Bholanath was dancing during kirtan. She recognised Ma and Bholanath when she first saw them, as the people she had seen in her dream. After seeing them at the kirtan she went home and lay unconscious for two hours.

Ma commented, "That's good - you can sing nama kirtan in this house." And so it was. We all sang nama kirtan and Bholanath danced beautifully.

Around ten a.m. Ma returned to the tent and had lunch at twelve. Many people arrived. At four p.m. Father took Ma to board an aeroplane. For five to six years he had been pleading with Ma to sit on an aeroplane, but she had agreed only now. Father, Bholanath, Ma, Jyotish Dada and I boarded the plane, while the rest of the crowd stood below and looked at the plane. We flew for fifteen minutes and then landed.

We went to Debendra Chattopadhyaya's house for some time before returning to the tent where an enormous crowd of devotees had gathered. Biren had arranged for kirtan which started at seven thirty p.m. Ma stood to one side with the ladies and participated in the kirtan which was sung beautifully. Ma had announced that she would leave for Bareilly by the ten p.m. train the next day and all were protesting. She was to leave today but her departure was postponed. After the kirtan Ashutosh Bandopadhyaya and Narendra Choudhury with families were seated near Ma. It was one thirty a.m. but no one wanted to leave and conversation was on in full swing as if it were broad daylight. The Sacchidanand game was going on in between. Ma was telling the office-goers to leave so as to be able to

attend office that morning, but it appeared that no one had the ability to leave. Their days were being spent in a marvellous kind of joy. They said, "Offices are always present. We do not know when we will get Ma again - let us enjoy as much of satsang as possible !" Those who never went near sadhus and sannyasis, were now crazy about Ma. They left around two a.m. It was decided that tomorrow the ladies would sing kirtan in the pandal where kirtan was performed today.

CHAPTER XI

Friday, April 5. It has been decided that Ma will leave for Bareilly by the ten p.m. train. Early morning Panchanan Mukhopadhyaya's wife arrived. The name of our host was also Panchanan Mukhopadhyaya and Ma had established friendship between these two people bearing the same name. Panchanan Babu's daughter sings beautifully and almost everyday the family had been coming and the girl had been singing for Ma. Ma called Panchanan Babu's wife 'Ma'. Ma normally addressed all ladies as 'Ma', but each individual responds to this relationship in her own fashion. On the day that Panchanan Babu's wife first met Ma, she bowed before Ma ; but the moment Ma began addressing her as 'Ma', she ran to Ma, embraced her, kissed her and declared, "You are my daughter and I have named you Mahamaya." After that she never bowed before Ma, saying, "You are my daughter so if I do pranam to you it will be inauspicious. Yashoda never bowed down to Krishna !" She would embrace Ma and kiss her repeatedly. Each person is absorbed in his own form of devotion and each one thinks that Ma loves him the most. Till noon the devotees sat

surrounding Ma, then she went into her room. Many ladies had gathered for kirtan. A platform had been set up in the centre. Kirtan was sung beautifully. The ladies walked around as they sang. The voices of the ladies singing the Name seemed to light up the atmosphere. Kirtan went on till five p.m. Many took photographs of Ma. Soon it was evening. As Ma was to leave tonight, the devotees sat around her with downcast faces. They had realised that it was not possible to make her stay with them any longer.

In the midst of all this Ma managed to speak privately with those who wanted to and satisfied their longing. At nine p.m. Ma went with us all to the station. Our host Panchanan Babu was weeping and did not go to the station. He said, "I shall only go to the station to receive Ma, not to see her off." A big crowd followed Ma to the station.

The departure of the train was slightly delayed and some commented, "Even the train has shown some pity on seeing our sorrow." Though the heartfelt sorrow of the devotees may have caused it to leave late, it was nevertheless time for the train to depart. All did pranam and descended from the train and the train left. Narendra Choudhary and family had purchased train tickets to travel till Aligarh with Ma. We reached Aligarh at one a.m. where we alighted and changed trains for Bareilly. Narendra Babu was to spend the

night at Aligarn and return to Delhi by the morning train.

Saturday, April 6. In the morning we reached Bareilly. Maharatan and her friends received Ma at the station and took her to the dharmasala. Exact details of Ma's programme had not been announced so as to prevent the crowds from getting too large. But surprisingly, soon after we reached, the wife of a lawyer turned up and Maharatan asked her, "How did you come to know that Ma has arrived?" She replied, "Last night I dreamt that Ma would reach Bareilly today and so I came." I also heard similar experiences from others about having seen Ma in their dreams. The girls here sing kirtan beautifully. They are not Bengalis. Ladies from other states sat surrounding Ma.

Ma was adorned with floral garlands. Then the ladies began playing the tabla, kartal and harmonium and sang kirtan. Bholanath was greatly inspired and danced. Ma instructed us to perform arati for all the singers, with incense and flowers. Yashpal (Maharatan's daughter) and I began performing arati. Each deed performed by Ma is beautiful in every aspect. About one thirty p.m. bhoga was offered. In the afternoon the ladies again sang kirtan.

In the evening Ma was taken for a drive in the car. There was a beautifully decorated garden where five or six of us went with Ma

and spent a long time before returning to the dharmasala.

An American Sahib had been with Ma all along. He wanted to ask Ma some questions so again Ma went out with him and Jyotish Dada. She returned at ten p.m. Many people were waiting for Ma. She said, "This Sahib performs asana regularly and also practises sadhana intensively." Ma had gauged this from the questions that he had asked. Yatish Guha asked the American, "Were your problems solved?" He replied joyfully, "I received beautiful answers." At eleven p.m. all left. I did not see any Bengalis amongst the devotees here - they are people from other parts of India.

Sunday, April 7. In the morning ladies sang kirtan. It had been decided that some Bengali gentleman would come from Delhi and sing kirtan here. They had wired to say that they would reach by Sunday morning. Bholanath was very happy about it. In the afternoon Ma was taken to the Executive Engineer's house and the ladies sang kirtan with Ma. From there Maharatana took Ma to her home and when we returned it was nine p.m. The ladies were singing kirtan continuously. Bankim Babu's letter from Cox Bazar had arrived, saying "At the spot where Ma slept in the tent at Cox Bazar, we have laid a firm foundation with bricks. We all frequent the spot for we are busy constructing a room for kirtan there."

His letter was full of all that they were feeling because of Ma's absence - as we heard the letter being read, our eyes were filled with tears.

Monday, April 8. In the morning, seventeen or eighteen devotees arrived from Delhi and the local devotees received them with warm hospitality. A room in the dharmasala was decorated and kirtan was started at twelve noon. In the morning the ladies here had sung kirtan. Ma walked amidst the singers and sometimes sat on her bedding. Lakshmirani and Pani's daughter had come from Faizabad to meet Ma. Streams of bliss were cascading forth. Maharatan had arranged meals for all. The kirtan gathered tempo late in the noon. In the room adjoining the kirtan hall, Ma was making the ladies sing kirtan. The refrain was,

*"Sri Krishna Chaitanya Prabhu Nityananda,
Hare Krishna Hare Krishna Sri Radhe Govinda."*

The kirtan went on in full swing - it was very beautiful. The crowd in the dharmasala grew immense, as people who arrived participated in the singing. When the men went for lunch, Ma entered the kirtan hall with the ladies and made them sing kirtan. Ma moved amidst them, sometimes raising her left hand and swaying from side to side. The expression in her eyes was exquisite. Sometimes she embraced some one and danced to the beat. At other times she made all join hands and dance in a circle. The sweet voices of the

ladies spread bliss in the four corners of the dharmasala. There was a riot of floral garlands and sandal paste. In the afternoon Bholanath started dancing to the beat of the kirtan. The singing went on thus till eight p.m., when finally, with the call of 'Bholanath ki jai ! and 'Anandamayi ki jai !' the kirtan was concluded. The group from Delhi was leaving by the ten p.m. train. It was time to go but they did not stir from Ma's vicinity. Eventually when time compelled them to leave, they did pranama and tore themselves away. Yatish Guha also left for Calcutta at ten p.m.

Tuesday, April 9. Today again the ladies began singing kirtan before Ma woke up. Ma had been sleeping on the verandah and all of us would make room around her and sleep. Early morning Ma went into her room and lay down as the ladies sang kirtan. Ma was covered with flowers and garlands as devotees offered them to her before joining the kirtan. Ma sat up to the resonant strains of kirtan which went on till nine a.m. Ma's face was washed and she was made to drink milk after which she returned to her small bedding. The ladies were dancing as they sang, which was a lovely sight. Good looking Kashmiri and Punjabi ladies had come well dressed and adorned and they danced to the beat of the Name. Some played the kartala, one the tabla. Ma arranged the little girls in the centre and the ladies walked around them as they sang.

It was truly exhilarating to watch them playing the kartal, dancing and singing nama kirtan. In yesterday's session the local Bengalis and other people participated. I heard that they have a kirtan group here and that once they sang kirtan non-stop for a year. The people from neighbouring villages sang akhanda kirtan after which kirtan was propagated in every village. Yesterday, after kirtan, some gentlemen told Ma, "Ma, this kirtan led by you will spread kirtan in the towns." This morning the ladies had decorated Ma with a crown and other ornaments made of flowers. Ma was laughing like a child and called me to show me her ornaments.

This sport went on till twelve p.m. by which time Ma's bhoga was ready. After Ma and Bholanath had lunch, many people sat down to have prasada. The ladies of this place were so eager to have prasada of the leftovers of Ma's food. They no longer maintained their distance from Ma, but sat stroking her hands and feet. The point being that they no longer wanted to, or no longer could, refrain from enjoying Ma's touch. At first they sat afar and only offered flowers, pranama or arati. They did not have the courage to touch Ma, but Ma's attractive powers had removed the distance between her and them. A dozen ladies sat around Ma to press her feet and limbs. None wanted to make way for another. Her marvellous power of attraction was compelling

them to behave thus and they could hardly comprehend it themselves. All were drunk with this bliss.

The little children were occupied with Bholanath and would not let go of him. He, in turn, loved children. After lunch I covered Ma with a sheet and said, "Now you rest for sometime." Ma obeyed like a child. The devotees sat down to play the Sacchidanand game with Bholanath, but as Ma was lying down it did not go on for long and all became quiet. The tide of bliss began to ebb. Just then Ma sat up and kirtan was resumed. Many devotees wanted to speak to Ma privately so she was taken to Bihari Lal's house. He is an agent of the Imperial Bank.

At night Ma lay down and the Bengalis sang kirtan for her till midnight after which they all left. Narendra Babu returned to Delhi today. No one wants to leave Ma's company so those who can stay on.

Wednesday, April 10. This morning again the ladies sang kirtan, "*Jaya Shiva Shankara Bom Bom Hara Hara.*" After kirtan many people spoke to Ma in private. Maharatan took Ma out and returned in the afternoon. She bought a whole lot of clothes and draped Ma in a red silk sari and clothed her in a red silk blouse, kerchief and chappals. Ma went to Dikshit's home dressed in that apparel. Dikshit's wife was cooking bhoga for Ma in the dharmasala. Ma went to the dharmasala and

showed her costume to us all. A Bengali youngster gazed at Ma and remarked, "It appears that Ma has assumed the form of Mohini today." Truly, the dress was accentuating Ma's loveliness - it was all so beautiful. After everyone had been blessed with the sight, Ma changed and lay down. Lakshmi and Dikshit's wife had cooked the bhoga. The people from Faizabad had also prepared a variety of vegetable curries and offered them to Ma. After bhoga Ma covered herself with a sheet and lay down. The ladies sat surrounding her ; right after the bhoga Ma asked Lakshmi, "Lakshmi, did you burn yourself anywhere while cooking the bhoga ?" Lakshmi replied, "No Ma, I have not got a burn anywhere." Ma said nothing. She sat up and again the stream of bliss began overflowing. Ma asked Jyotish Dada, "Has anyone missed a train ?" Jyotish Dada replied in the negative. But the next day we heard that Naren Babu was left high and dry in the station as he had missed his train.

Ma was taken to lawyer Dwaraka Prasad's house where ladies were to sing kirtan. A big space had been readied within the garden. Ma was draped in a yellow silk sari and adorned with floral ornaments. Ma laughed and said in Hindi, "You have decorated the bride but where is the groom ?" Many ladies were dressed in yellow saris and noticing this Ma asked, "O, so you had planned this all earlier, had you ?"

Ma and Bholanath were photographed together and then we were all made to stand near them and a group photograph was taken. Then Ma was made to sit and the ladies wore dancing bells on their feet and danced to the music. Deputy Babu's wife, Mrs. Dikshit, also wore a yellow sari and bells and danced. The import of the song was, "O God, listen to my plea, I am drowning in the ocean of samsara. O Merciful One, do whatever you will." They addressed the song to Ma and danced to the song, bowing before Ma with joined palms with such devotion - it was most charming. After the dance they did pranama and kirtan was started. The ladies in yellow saris formed a circle around Ma and danced as they sang nama-kirtan keeping the circular formation as they moved. They held hands, they clapped and danced - all went on thus in unison. Others sat and joined in the nama-kirtan. It was almost evening. Ma joined in the kirtan sometimes embracing, sometimes holding hands and dancing a little now and then. She was wearing beautiful apparel, a garland around her neck, sandal paste on her forehead - it was as if the Divine Mother Herself were present. A variety of Names were being sung, "Jaya Guru, Jaya Ma" or "Gopala Jaya Jaya, Govinda Jaya Jaya ; Radha Ramana Hari Govinda Jaya Jaya." At times it was, "Raghupati Raghava Raja Rama, Patita Pavana Sita Rama." and sometimes, "Hare Krishna Hare Rama Sita Rama Jaya Radhe

Shyama." The echo of these Names resounded till the heavens and purified the atmosphere all around. It seemed as if Mother Nature were also watching, enchanted by the sight.

After the kirtan Ma and Bholanath were made to sit and arati was performed as the ladies sang an arati in praise of Devi, which meant, "Ma, Tara, no one is able to transcend you. The four Vedas, Brahma and Vishnu sing your praises, yet they cannot transcend you." Then, fruits were offered as bhoga. The Bengalis of the town were to take Ma for kirtan. Their car was waiting and soon after bhoga, they drove away with Ma.

We accompanied Ma. The Bengali crowd was delighted to have Ma in their midst. Many were having Ma's darshan for the first time. Ma is not so well known amongst the Bengalis here except for a Professor Dasgupta's wife, who had met Ma during Ma's last visit - she was now present. At first she was a little quiet as decorum demanded. After the kirtan at Dwaraka Prasad's, she embraced Ma and declared, "Ma, I shall come again tomorrow and take you to my house. I cannot live without you." I laughed and remarked, "All these days you remained quiet as decorum demanded - today Ma's power of attraction made you embrace her." She also began laughing.

Kirtan went on till eleven p.m. Then Ma was offered bhoga of fruits. A boy said, "Ma, you will have to eat all this fruit." Ma replied,

"Alright, come here, I shall eat it all. Not one will be left on the plate." The boys surrounded Ma and she asked me to distribute all the fruit till the plate was empty. She laughed and said, "Look, there is nothing left in the plate. I ate it all up." Everyone laughed to hear this. Ma returned to the dharmasala at midnight. Maharatan went home with the ladies.

Lakshmi and the person who had accompanied her from Faizabad, fell asleep near Ma. Ma seemed to have turned them crazy. A resident of Bareilly said, "I just cannot stay at home. See, my son is very ill and the doctor who came to examine him was surprised that the mother of such a sick child had abandoned him and gone away. He had never seen me do such a thing. He asked the servants who could not give him any information about my whereabouts for I have come to the dharmasala without saying anything to anyone. If I request any of my daughters to stay behind, they begin to weep. Ma's wonderful powers do not allow anyone - young or old - to stay at home !" In this manner, different people narrated different experiences.

Yashpal told Jyotish Dada, "There have been many kinds of tales against Ma in this town." Jyotish Dada asked, "What kind of tales ?" He replied, "Today I had visited the Deputy Sahib's house. He was saying, 'Just see what kind of trouble has descended on us ; I return from office and find that my wife

is not at home. I heard that she has gone to see Mataji in the dharماسala. Ever since Mataji arrived, we have the same complaint in every home." Ma's lila was progressing in this manner.

Thursday, April 11. Ma awoke in the morning, many spoke to her privately. Arati was performed. Then the devotees sat around her and talked. The Sacchidanand game was started. With victory and defeat nama kirtan and japa went on. At two p.m. Ma had lunch and then she lay down while the devotees sat joyously to eat prasada. No one had to be instructed - whoever wished to have prasada sat down. As Ma was lying down, some rushed home to have lunch in order to return before she sat up. Some could not tear themselves away even for that much time. They ate whatever was available and sat near Ma.

This morning Lakshmi came up to Ma and said, "Ma, yesterday my finger did get burnt but I did not realise it. Therefore when you asked me I replied that I had no burn. But today I found that I had a big blister on my finger."

In the afternoon Ma was again taken to Professor Dasgupta's house and then to the house of a local devotee where ladies were singing kirtan. Ma was dressed up as Krishna with peacock feathers and floral garlands ; the kirtan went on till nine p.m.

Then Ma went to Maharatan's house where a Begum Sahiba was to speak privately with Ma. I went too. As soon as we reached, the Begum Sahiba arrived with two other ladies, one of whom was a dancer. Begum Sahiba had heard about Ma from Maharatan. The Nawab's house is in the Civil Lines. The Begum Sahiba spoke to Ma till midnight. She poured out her domestic woes to Ma and also talked about her spiritual practices. She lives a pure life. Ma returned to the dharmasala at midnight. No food was eaten. At one thirty a.m. we all slept.

Friday, April 12. Early morning, the wife of a Deputy Sahib came with many other ladies to take Ma for a boat ride in the Ganga. We set out at six thirty a.m. Kirtan was sung by the ladies in the car. The import of the song was, "Ma, we have taken refuge in you ; you must uplift us." The second song went thus, "Think of Ma, take Her Name, for without singing Ma's glory, you cannot get Krishna." Kirtan continued in the boat till nine a.m. Then Ma was taken to another house, a temple and then Begum Sahiba's house before returning to the dharmasala around one thirty p.m.

We may leave for Nainital tomorrow. Ma has had nothing to eat since the morning. Many people were waiting for her and she spoke to them as they sat enchanted, trying to get closer to her. In the past few days even householders have not had much contact

with domesticity. Everybody's countenance seems to wear a detached look. Some had neither oiled their hair nor found time to comb it. All routines of eating and drinking were broken and daily schedules were haphazard - yet all were immersed in joy. Every day kirtan was going on in atleast a couple of houses where all gathered. The ladies sat for kirtan with tabla and kartala (Punjabi ladies play these instruments during kirtan) and decorated Ma's asana beautifully.

Each person begged Ma to come to his home for kirtan, but due to lack of time it was impossible to satisfy every plea. Bihari Lal, an agent of Imperial Bank, came to take Ma with all of us to the Ganga again. Four or five car loads proceeded to the Ganga and went boating. Kirtan was sung. Ma was decorated with floral garlands and then the garlands were distributed as prasada. Bihari Lal had arranged for some refreshments. Milk and ice were put into a machine to make kulfi. After sunset Ma was taken to Zamindar Mihir Prasad's house, where beautiful decorations had been made for kirtan. The ladies sang kirtan with great gusto. Ma was again adorned with flowers to look like Krishna and the twenty odd young girls danced around Ma as the ladies sat to one side with a harmonium. The ladies told Ma, "Ma, come. You are our Krishna and we are your gopis." Once before they had made Ma get up, surrounded her

and danced to the kirtan.

Today, however, Ma did not get up. Then they began walking around Ma in a number of different formations so very beautifully - sometimes circular, sometimes semi-circular, singing kirtan ; then turning in unison they came and stood before Ma, bowing and doing pranama all together. They did not again insist on Ma's getting up. It appeared that they were all incensed alike for those moments. The place had been decorated radiantly and watching this kind of lila in that set up made us all reminisce about the happenings at Vrindavan. I for one was constantly reminded of the stories of Vrindavan. The ladies of this state have such independent nature - there is not a trace of shyness in them. Today again these ladies formed a circle and danced to the beat of the kirtan, wearing colourful saris. In the radiance of the setting they looked very beautiful. At ten p.m. Ma returned to the dharmasala. The Bengalis who had come from Biharipur began singing kirtan at the dharmasala.

Ma was to leave by the twelve o'clock train and so all the devotees had gathered. Many eyes were wet with tears. Lakshmi Rani was leaving for Dehradun. At ten p.m. it was time to leave. Ma suddenly rose from the kirtan room and went to another room, followed by the ladies. Two saris, floral garlands and sweets were purchased according to Ma's instructions. She made Lakshmi and me give

the saris, garlands and sweets to Maharatan and Bihari Lal's wife. Then she declared, "From today you both are related as sisters." She then told them, "Now the two of you change into these saris, exchange garlands and feed sweets to each other." When that was done she said, "Now embrace each other." They obeyed Ma's orders. Ma told Bihari Lal's wife, "I had given Maharatan her name. Now I name you Premaratan." Maharatan and Premaratan bowed together at Ma's feet. Ma said, "From today you two are spiritual sisters. You should help each other to go in 'that' direction."

Garlands and sweets were distributed to all present. Everyone applauded spontaneously. Just as this sport was completed, we were called upon to leave. We got into four or five cars and left for the station. At eleven p.m. Lakshmi left accompanied by Sher Singh and family. The latter had come from Dehradun for Ma's darshan. Many were weeping. Some were conversing with Ma. The Bengalis were repeatedly shouting 'Anandamayi Ma Ki Jai' and 'Bholanath Ki Jai', making the station echo with sound. Bihari Babu's wife had brought a new bedding for Ma and she spread it out for Ma in the train. The train departed late and it was nearly one a.m. before it left. The ladies were weeping bitterly. I could notice a great change on their countenances within the last few days. The signs of worldly involvement had practically disappeared and they

were immersed in a state of inebriation day in and day out. Today the mine of bliss was leaving and their hearts cried out in agony. The Bengalis declared, "Ma, next Saturday we shall come to you and sing kirtan." The train left. Many ladies and boys ran beside the train for a long way. We kept telling them not to do that but no one listened to us ; they told each other, "Keep running." They were running with all their might, for whose sake ? They could hardly see Ma any longer - nor could they hope to have her darshan after running. Yet they kept moving with the train like mad people. Their only thought was, 'Ma is sitting in this train - we shall go along with her as far as we can' - this was their innermost feeling. What beautiful love this is ! There is nothing to compare with it. Little girls and ladies from respectable homes, always brought up in luxury, were now weeping and running beside the train at one a.m. By whose attraction were they made to run thus ? A crore of pranamas at the feet of the One who has, in such a short time, made this Divine Love blossom in the hearts of these girls. Mere pranamas cannot express the feelings of one's heart. Nor can any words describe how such things have happened. It appears that one cannot even imagine their cause. Gradually the ladies were left behind as the train gathered speed. They merged into the darkness of the night. They had churned the depths of my heart as well.

CHAPTER XII

Saturday, April 13. At six a.m. we reached Kathgodam and went to Nainital by car. It was eight thirty when we reached Nainital. Chintamani Pant of Delhi was the tehsildar there and he was waiting with some others near the car. Ma was taken by rickshaw to the dharmasala which was about a mile from the motor car stand. As we got off the car we could see the Talli Taal - which is a mile long lake. The beautiful expanse of water amidst high hills was a joyous sight. All around us mountain chains were touching the skies. The mountains were dotted with lovely houses and bungalows. Talli Taal was enhancing the beauty of its surroundings.

Ma and I drove in one rickshaw. Ma said, "When I came here earlier there was more water here and it looked even more beautiful." We reached the dharmasala next to Naini Devi where Ma had stayed during her last visit. The priest, servant and watchman offered flowers to Ma as soon as she reached, and did pranama. Ma expressed her joy at seeing them. Clouds had gathered in the sky. The dharmasala was just above Talli Taal, with the lake on one side and a small field on the

other side. The field was icy cold. Ma went in and lay down. Cooking took very long time and Ma ate lunch only at two p.m. The hill tribe women began arriving. In the afternoon we went for a stroll with Ma. By evening batches of people began coming continuously ; they stayed for some time, did pranama and then left, by which time another batch arrived. This went on till nine p.m. A bachelor called Devi Dutt lives here. He leads a life of purity, performing sadhana with great devotion. He had made all the arrangements for our stay. He knew Ma since very long. Once Ma had been to Almora from Dehradun, with Jyotish Dada, Hari Ram and others and visited Nainital from there. It was then that she had met Devi Dutt. He had again met her at Rishikesh and was a staunch devotee of Ma. His particular desire is to be able to serve her as much as he can.

We slept at ten p.m. and everyone thought that it was rather unusual.

Sunday, April 14. Ma awoke and took Jyotish Dada to the bank of Talli Taal and sat on a bench. There was a little sunshine. After some time Ma came in. She has been having a cold for the past few days. She ate something and lay down. Groups of people arrived. We sat down to play the Sacchidanand game and the ladies enjoyed it greatly.

A girl called Mohini was amongst the group ; everyone called her 'Munni' - she hails from

this place and is a widow. Her parents, too, are dead - she has no one. Devi Dutt is supporting her and she is living with a cousin. By Ma's instructions she has kept mauna since Ma's last visit and performs worship and scriptural reading regularly. The girl has a cheerful personality and a smiling face. When she laughs she seems to do so with her whole being. She enjoyed the Sacchidanand game immensely. Since I had taught her the game she was addressing me as 'Guru'. In fact, I was losing constantly and she was winning as we played - a lot of merriment ensued over this. Ma laughed and said, "The student is so powerful that she has robbed her Guru of all her learning !"

When the men arrived the women stopped playing and Ma told the men to continue the game. The American Sahib had gone to Almora from Bareilly. Today he had arrived here and he had to join in the game. The sun set and it became very cold. We all set out for a walk with Ma. After we returned, crowds of people arrived to sing kirtan in Ma's presence. They left around ten p.m.

Monday, April 15. Today Ma awoke a little late. She drank milk and went out for a walk. When she returned she had bhoga and then lay down. Once in the course of conversation a man asked Ma, "Ma, why do you not give diksha ?" Ma replied, "Look, it is true that the teacher-student relationship is also a kind of bondage - but in the case of this body such

things do not happen thus. Atma to atma bonds are there already - then what new bonds shall I make ?"

Today, after lunch she said, "I saw that a man died" and she mentioned the name of a man. Then she said, "I see so many things about so many different people at different times ; so many events occur all around." I asked, "Just as a dream about a certain person, sometimes turns out to be reality for another, does the same occur with you. You mention something about a particular person, but I see it happening to another." Ma laughed and said, "Whatever I see is quite correct - when I talk about it, it is often worded differently and you are not able to understand it properly."

Sometimes Ma lay down when surrounded by a crowd of devotees after telling us to wake her after an hour or half an hour. She would pull a sheet over herself. Exactly after the time she had specified she would either get up on her own or someone near her would rouse her. Now she sat up and the Sacchidanand game went on for some time.

Then we went with Ma for a boat ride. Talli Taal is one mile long and one mile broad and we went boating in it for an hour. It was very sunny. Ma then walked about in the streets and returned to the dharmasala before sunset. The American had been following Ma - tomorrow he is to go to Dehradun. Many others had

arrived for darshan. Only one Bengali boy was in the crowd - there are practically no Bengalis here. The boy was very happy to meet the Bengalis accompanying Ma. Ma was telling some gentlemen, "You are working ; you do your duty everyday and will finally get your pension. Similarly, perform 'that' work also regularly with the same kind of routine and you will get your pension - that pension will never get exhausted. This pension lasts only so long as you live." Ma gives beautiful advice in simple language.

The hill tribe women who came to visit the temple, also visited Ma regularly and performed arati with camphor to the tune of lovely songs. They did not converse with Ma, but performed arati, offered flowers and sweets, did pranam and left. The hill tribals sang kirtan. Because of the cold they left by nine p.m. Devi Dutt saw to all our needs and departed at ten p.m.

Tuesday, April 16. Today again Ma woke up late. She had a walk. The American Sahib was to leave for Dehradun. He had presented Ma with a watch. Jyotish Dada had given him a jumper that Ma had worn and he had joyfully taken it with him ; he was returning to America. He had said that he would wind up his business matters in a year's time and return to Ma. When the watch was given to Ma she said, "Just as this watch ticks away steadily on its own, I want to see you also meditating with one-pointed attention on the

unbroken One, so that outward disturbances do not hamper that meditation." The Sahib was delighted to receive this advice and prayed for Ma's blessings with joined palms.

After lunch Ma rested for some time. Hill tribesmen and tribeswomen filled the room and Ma sat up. The Sacchidanand game was played. Then some people from a cinema theatre came to take Ma to see a film. Ma neither likes nor dislikes anything - she looks upon everything with equanimity. Ma said, "Today the play called 'Prabhu Ki Pyari' is being shown in the talkies." We returned at nine p.m. from the film which was being shown close to the dharmasala. Ma drank some milk and we all retired for the night by ten p.m. The Deputy Superintendent of Police has been visiting Ma for the last two or three days. All are extremely happy to have Ma's darshan.

CHAPTER XIII

Wednesday, April 17. Ma woke up early and went out for a walk. She drank some milk on returning and then sat in a room facing Talli Taal. She conversed with a couple of people who were present. At ten a.m. she declared, "I shall lie down now." When she was requested to rest after lunch she said she had no desire to eat. Finally on our request she remained seated and did not lie down till after lunch. She got up at four p.m. and conversed with those present.

There has been sunshine everyday and the weather has become less cold. A Deputy Magistrate had come with his family. Ma had met them at Bareilly. The Deputy Babu's wife had brought bananas and banana flowers for Ma. She said, "Please use this lowly offering in Ma's bhoga. My offering is like Sudama's beaten rice." She folded her palms and stood humbly. I accepted her offering for Ma with great joy and told her, "An object offered with love can never be lowly."

Tonight again we slept by ten p.m. The whole night through Ma sat up and lay down alternately, saying, "I have no mood to sleep."

Thursday, April 18. Ma awoke in the morning and went out for a walk with Jyotish Dada. At eight a.m. she returned and said, "Feed me with whatever is available now." I hastily made some chutney out of greens and roti and Ma had a very little of it. By eleven a.m. she lay down. In the afternoon Munni and many other ladies and gentlemen arrived and Ma sat up. Sri Krishna Pant (Tehsildar) and others sat down to play the Sacchidanand game. Jyotish Dada and some other local residents also joined the game. Sri Krishna Pant lost and began doing japa. With one-pointed concentration he performed japa for a long time, while the winners sang kirtan. The game always resulted in nama kirtan on the one hand and the opposite party engrossed in japa of Kali's name. It was nice to watch the game in progress.

In the afternoon some post arrived. I held the letters in my hand - many sealed envelopes were amongst them. Ma said, "From the last two or three days I have been constantly remembering the wife of the person to whom Bholanath gave diksha in Krishnanagar." On opening an envelope I found that it was the same lady's letter. There seemed to be a transition in the life of Mohini Mohan Bando-padhyaya. He wrote, "My wife and I are longing for your darshan. When will you give us darshan ?" I thought, "Mohini Babu's wife must have remembered Ma repeatedly, therefore

Ma's mind also resonated in response."

Before evening Ma went out for a walk. Maharatan's son and Bihari Lal's son are studying in Nainital. They had come for Ma's darshan. The Sacchidanand game went on for some time. At sunset Ma returned to the dharmasala. Sri Krishna Pant had brought a friend with him. The friend is an accountant in the Police Department. Sri Krishna Pant narrated a beautiful true life story to Ma. "Yesterday my friend's son was pestering him to buy him the equipment necessary to play badminton. On calculating they found that they would have to spend three and a half rupees on the items. So the gentleman told his son that he did not have so much money to spare and therefore could not buy the things. Then the son went to the deity of Shiva that had been installed in their home and prayed, 'O, Shiva, please give me the sports items. I shall study well and never be naughty.' These events had occurred yesterday. This morning the gentleman received a letter from a top official and he brought the letter to show Ma. The boss had written, 'I owed you Six and a half rupees. I am enclosing a ten rupee note. Please keep rupees six and a half and with the remaining three and a half buy some play things for your son.' The gentleman was astonished to read the letter and came to narrate the incident to Ma. Ma remarked, "Now you can buy the sports goods for your son."

The gentleman bowed at Ma's feet and said, "Ma, for the last twenty four years this Sahib has never given me a single paisa." Ma replied, "Today also it is not he who has given it. The One who gives has granted it." The gentleman offered prānams repeatedly and left. We were very happy to hear of an actual experience of this kind in these times. We heard that the Shiva in their house had been found on the terrace after they heard a sound. The simple faith of the hill-folk is worth seeing. We are near the Naina Devi temple. (a Bengali has installed a deity of Kali) and we can hear the peals of bells and the singing of kirtan almost all the time. Early morning onwards, we can see people bathing in the lake and then circumambulating the temple and reciting stotras with joined palms. Little boys dressed in coats and trousers visit the temple right from the morning. They ring the bells outside the temple as they pass by.

In the afternoon I made Ma drink milk and eat fruit. She ate nothing more at night. Ma strolled to and fro in the long room facing the pond. When it was time to sleep she said, "You can leave the door of this room open. I do not feel like lying down on the bedding all the time. I can walk in this room all by myself. If I remain lying down I may just keep lying down." And so it was - we kept the door open.

Friday, April 19. Ma awoke and went for a walk with Jyotish Dada. Again she had an early meal of roti as soon as she returned. By eleven a.m. all of us finished lunch. After eating Ma had another walk and then lay down. Not many people had come. She sat up after some time and conversed with whoever was present as she had been doing on previous days and then went out. Ladies from different communities followed her. These ladies hail from Peshawar, Marwar, Nainital, Mathura and many other places. Between nine p.m. and ten p.m. they all departed.

Saturday, April 20. Again this morning Ma went for a stroll with Jyotish Dada. Then we had a quick meal and went to 'Bhumiya Dhara' four miles away. A gentleman owns a garden and a bungalow there. He had taken Ma during her last visit and took her again now. We rode on a horse-carriage enjoying the scenery of the mountainous region as we went. We sat on a cloth spread under a tree on the mountain top. Ma lay down for some time. The owner had sent some seasonal fruit and papaya earlier - these were served on leaves. Then a servant peeled some oranges and served them on the peels. Potatoes were roasted and served with salt mixed with chilli powder and coriander leaves. The leaves of trees had been woven together to make plates and we ate the potatoes off the leaf plates. Then hot milk was purchased. We sat on the mountain

top and enjoyed the hospitality of the hill folk.

The owner told Ma, "Ma, if you so instruct I could build you an ashram at this very beautiful spot. You can come and stay here whenever you want." No doubt the place was uninhabited and surrounded by lovely scenery. Seeing a torn flag fluttering at a spot Ma went there. Two stones were covered with sindur, we knew not which deity had been installed there. Signs of its having been bathed with milk were also present. A wall of stones surrounded the spot and a small bell hung from above. Ma played with the bell and sat at the spot for awhile. As it was past four Bholanath was anxious to return to Nainital and so Ma got up. Suddenly Ma exclaimed and I asked, "Ma, did you meet any subtle body here also ?" Ma kept her face covered as she lay down and answered, "Certainly we met last time. This time again I have been brought here. I shall lie down and look properly," So saying she lay down fully.

On our way back in the horse carriage I asked, "Ma, did you come here to satisfy some desire of the person in the subtle body ? Did that person want to see you ?" Ma said, "You could put it that way." I said, "If they so desired they could always meet you anywhere." Ma replied, "No, some stay only at one place. Because of strong attraction to a particular spot they are unable to leave

it and go elsewhere."

Before sunset we reached the dharmasala at Nainital. An American lady had come from Calcutta to see Ma. We had received a telegram from her yesterday saying she would be reaching today and staying in a hotel. Soon after Ma's return the lady arrived for darshan and knelt before Ma with joined palms. She then sat to one side. We came to know that she had been practising sadhana for the past three years. She believes that if one can meditate on God no further practices are necessary. She had a very serene appearance. Ma also said, "She has practised some sadhana and gained fruit." Akhandanandaji and Jyotish Dada were translating the lady's speech. She was forty two years old. When she heard that Ma was fortyone she remarked, "My Ma is then one year younger than I !" At ten p.m. all took leave of Ma.

Ma sat in the Seva Samiti room and spoke about the different stages in a sadhaka's progress. Jyotish Dada and I were present. Ma said, "People do not understand how many states are possible and therefore commit great mistakes. The bhava that occurs during kirtan is of many kinds. Sometimes it appears that the sound of the Name causes a wave in the body and then it causes weariness and fatigue. Because of that the sadhaka remains unconscious for some time. Look, there are any number of states ; first the sadhaka remains

engrossed in the enchantment of form, like forgetting oneself while thinking of the form of Krishna, worshipping Krishna or reaching an exalted state while hearing the Name of Krishna. Then ensues the next higher state like looking at a black cloud and visualising the form of Krishna therein, or feeling that whatever I see or think of is nothing but a form of my Krishna. Then the feeling of 'my Krishna' arises in the mind. On purification of the mind and its becoming one-pointed, the feeling of one-ness pervades the mind. Yet another state is exaltation due to the enchantment of form - the decrease of that bhava causes weeping. One more state is when the sadhaka sees a shadow of his Beloved in everything and feels happy. In that state also the attention is on form. There is another state in which the body lies unconscious and on being roused for some time, becomes unconscious again. Brahma-bhava can also be attained. That is when the sadhaka and his goal are one, there is no longer an emphasis on form. The attitude that there is nothing but the One is now aroused. One other state, that of savikalpa samadhi, also exists in which the One Reality is experienced and nothing else is experienced as real. There is also the state of Nirvikalpa samadhi during which nothing remains ; and there is then no consciousness of what is and what is not. That bhava is neither described by saying 'no' nor by saying 'yes'. The kinds of bhavas are innumer-

able. How much can be said ? Only one-sided pictures can be given."

I asked, "These states do follow one after the other, don't they ?" Ma replied, "If one does not cling to any one state, they do occur one after the other, but if one holds fast to a particular condition, there may have to be a halt." Further she explained "Then the condition that has been experienced earlier will still affect the state in which one is stationary ; and the state to be attained next will also cast its influence while one is in the previous state. Therefore in a single state, the past, the present and the future mingle and play their roles simultaneously. By seeing the characteristics one can make out which state the sadhaka is in." In the context of her own experiences, Ma said, "Do not take into consideration what happens to this body. This body plays so many games. You all have observed the radiance of what is in your eyes - mahabhava and yet you have also observed some state previous to that. It is all your vision." She also said, "After nirvikalpa samadhi some may give up their bodies."

Sunday, April 21. Early morning Ma went for a walk. It rained heavily. Seven Bengali gentlemen from Bareilly came to sing kirtan in Ma's presence. They started at twelve noon and went on till seven p.m. The local people also participated in the kirtan. The American lady came at ten a.m. and spent two hours

with Ma. She returned at five p.m. to listen to the kirtan. She conversed with Ma till late in the night. Ma's gaze permeates everywhere.

At twelve noon when the men came to sing kirtan, Ma went out of her room and said, "Have some flowers brought." Pointing to a low bench in the Seva Samiti room she said, "Decorate the bench with flowers, keep some picture on it, light incense, put a flower garland around every singer's neck and a sandal paste tilak on the forehead." She instructed us about each detail in this fashion. She said, "These people have come from so far. If you do not all help them how will they enjoy it? I am observing that unless I tell you, you do not think of it at all." We have also observed that it is exactly as Ma says. We are unable to do any job perfectly. Man's actions are always incomplete and imperfect - there is no doubt about this. Even after seven p.m. when the kirtan stopped, the American lady sat near Ma and conversed with her. At ten p.m. all the devotees left.

Monday, April 22. Suddenly, in the morning, Ma took her entire gang and went by boat to Sri Krishna Pant's house. Pantji had expressed the desire to take Ma with all those around her to his house for kirtan, but that could not be done yesterday so now Ma set out without informing him earlier. Seeing Ma with her devotees arrive all of a sudden, Krishna Pant was extremely happy. Today is Ram

Navami. Kirtan was sung vigorously in Pantji's garden. Ma and the group from Bareilly had lunch there. The American lady sat near Ma and listened to the kirtan. She has been visiting Ma twice a day and spending long hours in Ma's company. Sometimes she sits with her eyes shut, sometimes she converses on various topics. She said "I heard about Ma from Aurobindo Ghosh at Pondicherry."

Aurobindo Ghosh had probably said that Ma Anandamayi had reached a very high state. The lady asked Ma, "What should I do here ? How should I live, please tell me." Ma replied, "All that will be discussed later." Around two p.m. we returned from Pantji's house to the dharmasala by boat. As the boat drew up at the ghat we saw that at the Naina Devi temple, across the lake, a sacrificial fire was going to be lit. Many people and pandits had gathered. This had been arranged on the occasion of Ram Navami. Sacrificial fires and other ceremonies were being performed for the last few days. When Ma reached, the pandits said, "We shall perform a havana. Please sit here." Ma and Bholanath complied. The havana had not been started till then as the pundits had been waiting for Ma to return. The Taal yajna started, Ma sat for some time and then got up. She was followed by a group of girls and boys. Ma clapped and asked them to sing kirtan. They sang very joyfully. Ma told me to distribute whatever was present in the house. I cut

some fruit and gave it. Ma played with the children for some time, went into her room and lay down. She got up at five p.m. Group after group of hill tribe women offered flowers and fruits to Ma and performed arati. This has become a daily routine for these women. Those who have seen them know that these women take flowers, sandal-paste, camphor and sweets in a plate and offer it at a temple - that is their manner of worship. As they recite stotras they anoint the forehead and body of the deity with these items, light the camphor and perform arati. Their method of worship is different from that of Bengalis. The women who visited the Naina Devi temple also worshipped Ma similarly. The American lady arrived soon after Ma got up. As it was cold, a wrap used by Ma was given to her. She said, "It is not necessary to give me this wrap to keep your memory fresh in my mind." Ma and she both laughed over this. Just before sunset she took Ma to speak to her privately. Jyotish Dada went along and they returned after dusk. I heard that she had asked Ma about how and what she had to do. She returned to the dharmasala and took leave of Ma. Many of those who had come from Bareilly returned today.

Tuesday, April 23. Around six a.m. Ma went out for a walk and returned after some time. I made Ma sit in the sunshine and washed her hands and face. Some hill folk came with

fruits and sweets for Ma which were distributed to all present. At nine thirty a.m. Devi Dutt took Ma to his house as per the previously arranged programme. He is a disciplined brahmachari and owns a press (King Press). We all accompanied Ma to his house. As per his Guru's instructions he has set aside one room of his house as an ashram and performs havana and other rituals everyday. A Nepali sadhu also lives in that room. Ma and I went and sat in that room. The American lady arrived to meet Ma. We sat there for some time. Since yesterday Ma has been laughing at the slightest cause - a laughter-filled mood seems to have risen in her. In that laughter every part of her body seems to laugh. In Devi Dutt's house this laughter broke out. The lady was delighted to witness it and said, "One night I dreamt that a fountain of laughter emanating from your feet sprouted as high as your forehead. My entire body seemed to be overcast by the laughter." Ma lay down and said, "That is what is required. That is why this" pointing to her body "has mingled with laughter."

She rose to return to the dharmasala and the lady followed her. As soon as Ma stepped into the sunshine, the lady ran forward with an umbrella and held it over Ma's head. She made Ma sit in a rickshaw and then walked with us to the dharmasala. She sat with her eyes shut next to Ma for a long time and returned to the hotel at noon. By five p.m. she was

back. Ma had had lunch and had rested for awhile. The lady had brought some photographs one of which was of the South Indian Ramana sadhu. The photograph of a saint near a tomb in Egypt was also in the collection. The lady had brought them to show Ma. I heard that Ma had told her the previous day, "You have photographs of many people who have helped you on this path." She answered in the affirmative and brought the photographs to show Ma. She asked Ma, "Have you ever seen such picture?" Ma acknowledged that they were good.

In the evening the lady took Ma out for a walk and we also went along. We walked towards the mountain. The lady had wrapped the shawl given by Ma in the manner of Bengali ladies but could not manage it - the shawl kept slipping off. A little later we all returned to the dharmasala to find a great number of people waiting for Ma. Day by day the numbers are increasing.

Wednesday, April 24. Nothing much happened today. In the morning Ma suddenly said, "I am telling Bholanath and you all - if you put obstacles in the way of my natural behaviour, this body acquires a beautiful state - the breathing becomes totally different." The hill women came in the afternoon and sang lovely bhajans and danced. We liked it very much. Day by day more women are getting attracted to Ma. After a walk in the afternoon Ma said, "Lock me in this room I shall stay alone. If anyone

comes to meet me say I shall meet them after dusk." We did as she wanted. After dusk the door was opened. Crowds of hill folks offered flowers to Ma and performed arati. They left around ten p.m.

Thursday, April 25. In the morning Ma had a walk and drank some milk. The American lady came at ten a.m. and stayed till two p.m. after which Ma had lunch. Today again the hill women came, sang bhajans and danced for Ma. Ma clapped, played the kartal and expressed a desire to listen to them again and again. This made them ecstatically happy. Ma was to visit a place in the mountains three miles away with the American lady. We set out at five p.m. Ma and some others went in a palanquin and the rest went on foot. The spot was very desolate. We returned before dark. At night Ma had food and then strolled about. Tomorrow we are to leave for Almora.

CHAPTER XIV

Ma went for a walk and by the time she returned many people were waiting for darshan. Amongst them were a Deputy Postmaster General and his wife from Madhya Pradesh. They first met Ma last night. They reside in Bareilly and were in Nainital for a holiday. Last night the couple spoke to Ma privately. This morning they came with a silk sari, a shawl and many kinds of fruits for Ma. The lady said, "How surprising it is - I saw you for the first time last night and dreamt of you continuously through the night ! My only thought then was about when it would be morning and when I would come to meet you again. I am unable to understand the great power of attraction you wield." Ma smiled and said, "It is but natural that the mother should long for her daughter." She also asked them about their sadhana. The fruits and sweets were distributed as usual. At twelve noon we set out for Almora. The American lady had decided to take Ma to Almora and had hired a bus at her own expense for the purpose. She has become greatly attached to Ma. In the bus she sat near Ma and expressed great delight at her being able to do so. She had kept cutlery - a fork, a

spoon and a plate - in a small suitcase and she showed these to Ma. Ma laughed and said, "I shall steal all these." The moment Jyotish Dada translated this sentence to her, the lady joined her palms, did pranam and placing the suitcase in Ma's lap she declared, "Why should I allow Ma to steal - I shall give it to Ma. I shall give Ma whatever she wants - there is nothing belonging to me which cannot be given to Ma." Ma immediately rejoined, "You will give whatever I want, won't you ? Explain to her - I want all her mind." On its being explained to her the lady laughed, joined her palms and gazed at Ma saying, "Sure, sure." She then made a gesture by taking off her cap and placing it at Ma's feet.

We left Nainital at twelve noon and reached Almora by six p.m. ; we enjoyed the beautiful mountain scenery all the way. At three p.m., while in the car, the American lady sought Ma's permission to eat biscuits. She also enquired as to whether Ma would eat something and Ma replied in the negative. At four p.m. she peeled an orange and fed it to Ma with great devotion and then ate some herself.

In the evening we went to the Nanda Devi temple. Devi Dutt had sent a man to make arrangements for Ma's stay there. The town of Almora is very beautiful. While driving in we saw the town situated on the top of a semicircular mountain range while at its base stretched vast fields of wheat crop.

As the town is situated at the top of the mountain and the fields occupy the foot hills, there is a feeling of openness. Bungalows spaced far apart, looked very pretty. As we entered the town, a group of young girls who were walking on the road saw Ma and spontaneously joined their palms to do pranam. On asking Ma I found that they had never seen Ma before this. We reached the temple and found that the girls had followed Ma there. A large crowd surrounded Ma and the girls sat down near Ma. The American lady who was also with Ma sat near her. A carpet had been spread outside the temple. Arrangements had been made for the lady to stay at a Dak Bungalow. Ma began conversing with the girls. We went inside to settle our things ; later Ma called us and said, "See, these girls live in a place near Kailash. They are here for their studies." I also conversed with the girls and found them very simple and straightforward by nature. Some of them had been to Kailash three or four times. Tonight some of them were returning to their homes with Narayan Swami who has an ashram there (Sharada Ashram). These girls live in Garbiyan from where Kailash is a four or five days' journey. The girls said, "We had seen a photograph of Ma at our teacher Pandit Srinivas' place." Suddenly on sighting our car one of the girls became strangely moved ; somehow she was certain that this was Anandamayī Ma and spontaneously, without realizing it,

her hands rose and she did pranam to Ma. Simultaneously the others also did pranam. They were very happy to meet Ma and wished to take her to Kailash. Bholanath had long cherished the desire of going to Kailash and he was ready to leave the same night. The girls would guide us painstakingly. Later, it was discovered that the road to Kailash would not be accessible before June and so the journey had to be postponed. There was talk of going to Bengal for Ma's birthday celebrations and it was decided that the journey to Kailash would be considered after returning from Bengal. Just then the hill folk arrived with a big collection of fruit and flowers. Some had received news of Ma's arrival in the afternoon and finding Ma in their midst they felt they were having darshan of the Goddess Herself. They adorned Ma with flowers. Around ten p.m. they left and Ma lay down to rest.

Saturday, April 27. Early morning, even before Ma arose, she was surrounded by people, some of whom were famous in these parts. As soon as Ma sat up the conversation started. One man questioned, "Ma, what is Jada samadhi? Samadhi is the play of consciousness, how then can it be lifeless (jada) ?" Ma replied, "There are many stages before jada samadhi. Look, normally when you speak of external behaviour, if someone can meditate on God with one-pointed attention, while in the midst of normal activity, the body does become

lifeless ; sometimes the mind also becomes lifeless. This is all mind's play. Once such a state has been attained, even if he reverts to his previous state it is quite natural that the behaviour of his mind and body do undergo a change. And that which is called jada samadhi - until that state of being completely engrossed in meditation is not reached, it is natural behaviour to remain lifeless (jada). This is but a glimpse of the kingdom of samadhi. Just as savikalpa samadhi has various forms, the manifestation of jada samadhi is also the manifestation of a form of savikalpa samadhi. The kriya of consciousness remains within. But at that time the play of complete consciousness is not manifested and therefore appears thus. On feeling the throbbing of complete consciousness there remains no trace of lifelessness. For then it is only the play of consciousness. In between there are so many other experiences. Now the discussion revolves only around a small part of it all."

One person asked, "Ma, are Shiva, Vishnu and Brahma real or are they imaginary ?" Ma replied, "All exist." Another person queried, "We hear that they have hands and legs - is that true ?" Ma replied, "It is all true. So long as there is sight there is creation. Creation, preservation and destruction - these three are personified as Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva. If you call it imagination, then you are also imaginary - everything is imaginary. Just as

you assign a particular piece of land to a particular landlord, so also are Brahmaloaka, Vishnuloka and Shivaloka." She laughed and repeated, "Creation, preservation and destruction always exist."

This afternoon Jyotish Dada was snoring in his sleep in one corner of the room while the ladies sat singing bhajans in the same room. Ma laughed and remarked, "Look at this - there is so much noise close by and Jyotish can't hear a thing ; if he can attain this state in ordinary sleep then who knows what he may attain if this state changes to one leading in That direction. No worldly matter can ever reach him - this is proof of that." After such conversation the visitors left.

In the afternoon the ladies arrived and filled the room. The marvel was that everyone was beginning to feel the same way - that Ma is verily the Goddess Herself. As they offered flowers they uttered the names 'Kalika', 'Jagadamba' and recited various incantations as they showered flowers on Ma. Sweetmeats and sugar puffs of this place were piling up repeatedly and were being distributed simultaneously. The girls living near Kailash had arrived. Some of them taught at the Mission School here and some of them were studying there. Ladies had been coming to see Ma twice a day. Most of them were students.

One named Nanda narrated her life history to Ma which was very beautiful. She said,

"Ma, when we first came here no one from our native place had ever come here before us. My father brought my sister and me to study when I was thirteen years old. Till the age of ten I studied at home for I was too scared to go out of the house. Whenever the inspector came to the school I would hide below the table and he would force me to emerge and would lovingly place me in his lap. Now there are many other girls from our native place who are here to study but at that time we were the only two. My sister died as soon as she came here."

The girls were very well-behaved and humble - they had received good education. They also knew to sing and sang a couple of bhajans for Ma. I noted down some songs. I realised that as in Bengal, the young girls here did not want to miss the opportunity of sitting near Ma. Once they had planted themselves near her they did not budge from her vicinity. Some sat to press Ma's feet - the gist being that they could sit near Ma and touch her.

As we step out on to the roads, crowds gather and join their palms in pranam to Ma. Earlier Ma had been here only for a day with Hariram and others - Hariram's house in Naainital and Ma had been here and to Almora from Dehradun. We were not with her then.

In the afternoon two nieces of Devi Dutt, who lived here, arrived. Both girls spoke Bengali fluently - I was surprised to hear them. I heard

that they had spent six months in Santiniketan and had acquired such proficiency in the language in that short time. Devi Dutt took us all to see the town. We visited the Ramakrishna Mission and heard that two or three Americans were living there and practising sadhana. They lived further downhill and we did not go so far ; we returned by dusk. Our American lady companion brought an American to meet Ma. He was wearing a dhoti, a shawl and a turban. They did pranam to Ma and sat down. The lady introduced him as a friend. As they did not know Bengali there was not much conversation and after some time they left.

The gentlemen of this town sat surrounding Ma in the temple. One of them asked, "Ma, for a realised soul, no feeling of hot and cold exists. Why then do you use a blanket ?" Ma laughed and replied, "I am just like you who said I was a realised soul ?" The man rejoined, "Then why do so many people come to you ?" Ma laughed and said, "Why do they come ? They know that I look upon each one as a parent and they affectionately regard this body as their daughter and therefore they come. I do nothing - I eat, drink and walk about." So saying she laughed her childlike laugh which enchanted all of us. The same gentleman persisted, "Alright, those who have realised the Self have such great powers. You can stop the rain. You can perceive all that goes on in

our minds - then what is the need of questioning ?" Pat came Ma's reply, "Leave my case aside ; I am your daughter. But to stop the rain or to perceive the thoughts of another one does not have to be a realised soul. Then regarding the matter of knowing the thoughts and giving replies - those who come with extrovert issues are given extrovert replies and those who can understand introvert matters are given replies to their questions inwardly. That is not a great thing. Just like the telephone - an instrument is installed here and another instrument is situated wherever the information is to be transmitted - conversation ensues." Hariram's cousin, who is a judge, was waiting to speak to Ma privately. He had been sitting silently till then. He folded his palms and said, "Ma, you have spoken out my thoughts - that is absolutely true."

The man who had been conversing with Ma said, "Alright Ma, the darshan of Mahatmas is enough to achieve everything. And you are telling us all - perform sadhana and you will get the fruit. Why is that so ? Now that we have had your darshan, everything should now occur spontaneously for us." Ma replied, it is true that darshan is enough to achieve everything - but are you really having darshan ? I ask you to perform karma so that you become worthy of darshan. Without karma, mere talking will achieve nothing. If you enquire about the M.A. course without passing the matriculation

examination, you gain nothing. Everyone must put up with some hardship and you will see that you will surely reap the fruits." The man went on, "Mahatmas can do everything. God has made you a Mahatma. Why do you not make us ?" Ma replied, "Alright. Do nothing more than remember constantly that whatever has to be done for you is being done by a Mahatma." The man laughed and said, "If I had that much strength, I could have. Why don't you please shower your grace and do it for me ? If I do everything then what is the use of the Mahatma's grace ?" Then the Judge Sahib softly intervened, "The fact that you are asking so many questions is only because of their grace ; this desire that you have to beg for grace sitting here at eleven p.m., is only because of grace. Do you not experience that ? We receive any amount of grace but we rarely experience it, because we are not worthy of it. That is why Ma is asking us to perform karma in order to become worthy of grace."

The man continued, "Alright Ma, this morning you said that God Himself creates, preserves and destroys. But all the evil in creation - is it not His partiality ? And if He knows that it is all unreal, then what is the meaning of sporting thus and torturing us all ? Then again, though we know it is unreal, why do we remain engrossed in this game ?" Ma replied, "We do not really know. If we knew it truly we would never get attached while playing

the game ; we may play but we will never drown in the game. The jivanmukta can also be seen playing, but he does not partake of anything in the game. Therefore no new karmas are created and by the effect of destiny the game comes to an end of its own accord - just as the potter's wheel turns for awhile even after he stops rotating it. Also, we know for sure that if we put our hand in fire it will burn, do we then still put our hand in fire ? Similarly if you know something for sure, you will not do it, We only know from hearsay or by reading about it, where do we have determined conviction ?"

"And talking of partiality, we are obsessed with partiality and therefore blame Him for that flaw ; in reality, can there be fault of partiality in Him ? When there is none other than the One, who will be partial or impartial to whom ? And whom will Ma torture ? He Himself sports in different forms, it is His lila. If we were to place one hand inside a blanket and the other outside, then the hand within could say, 'See, how warm I have been kept - he loves me' and the other hand could say, 'I have been left out in the cold' and we would have been called partial - that is what you are saying. In reality, joy and sorrow, bliss and grief are but the play of one bhava, nothing else. Creation is a lila-sport."

"Just as you put apparel on your bare body to cover it, go to work and then take off

your clothing as you will, to become bare bodied again, so also He covers Himself with Himself and sports in various forms in various ways - where does the partiality arise in this ?"

The man said, "But we suffer." Ma said, "Look, you were free to begin with, then you got married, you had children and now you ask how you can be free again. You have to reap the fruits of the work that you have done. On achieving happiness you have to suffer unhappiness also. Where there is no happiness there is no unhappiness either. Like in the case of the jivanmukta - the external jobs are all done ; but there is neither happiness nor unhappiness."

In the course of conversation on a variety of topics, Ma narrated the incident of how Bhola-nath had experienced the vision of a headless figure, had gone to Tarapeeth on Ma's behest and then had actually seen that the head of the image of Tara Ma made of silver was removed at night and fixed on during the day.

At one a.m. the devotees reluctantly took leave of Ma and we lay down to sleep. Tomorrow we are to go to Uttar Vrindavan, which is fourteen miles away, to meet Mrs. Chakravarty.

Sunday, April 28. We were to leave by the eleven a.m. palanquin to Uttar Vrindavan and had finished our repast ; we were ready. The American lady is very keen to visit all the saints of India. She had Mrs. Chakravarty's address with her. An American was serving

Mrs. Chakravarty. He was a professor and the American lady was very keen on meeting him. Just then she received news that the American had gone away somewhere and her desire to go there waned. The American was returning the next day but we were to go back to Nainital tomorrow. As the American lady had brought Ma to Almora she wanted to return with Ma, otherwise she could have stayed on for a day more and met the American. A Deputy Postmaster General had offered to pay for our travel to Uttar Vrindavan and back but we did not go finally. Ma was seated on her asana. From yesterday Ma had the kheyal that, 'those people are not there ; we shall not go' but she did not stop anyone. For she always says, "It is necessary to perform all the karma that had to be done. It is not right to stop it for everything has a purpose." Therefore she never expresses a strong approval or disapproval over any matter. Normally she participates in whatever is being done.

Today again the ladies arrived and sat surrounding Ma on all sides. They offered so many flowers that Ma was nearly covered fully with flowers. They were offering fruits, sweets and whether else they had managed to get, at Ma's feet. They had brought at least an orange or a banana each. They were singing Ma's praises saying, "You are Kalika, you are the All Powerful." Many gentlemen had also come

including the man who had questioned Ma incessantly yesterday. He asked Ma, "Ma, is there greater happiness in samadhi or in normal day to day activities ?" Ma replied, "It is only because there is greater joy in samadhi that everyone goes to Mahatmas with the desire of understanding its essence. Again it can be observed that those who revel in worldly existence do not gain permanent happiness - they suffer more agitation. Sadhu Mahatmas who are in samadhi are immersed in a kind of bliss all the time. They are in such bliss that by merely having their darshan people gain that bliss." The man asked, "In that case why are you not always in samadhi ?" Ma burst into a ripple of laughter on hearing this and said, "I am but your daughter." Akhandanandaji who was nearby, said, "Ma is always in samadhi. While she speaks to you, or lies down or walks or talks - she is always in the one state of samadhi." Ma laughed and said, "See, what is the conclusion of this talk ? I am an individual just like you all." The man gazed long at Ma and said gravely, "No, that is not so - the conclusion can be drawn from your countenance." Ma again laughed and said, "How do you do that ? Just like you I also have hands, feet, face and the rest." But the man refused to agree with this and merely shook his head in disagreement.

People began leaving - one man stood up and Ma said, "Baba, are you also going ?"

He replied, "Yes, Ma. You lie down, I shall go." Ma laughed and said, "Listen, I am always sleeping. Even while I converse with you I am sleeping." He did pranam and left. After conversing for some time, Ma covered herself with her sheet and lay down. At twelve noon ladies arrived and sat surrounding Ma while she rested. She arose at one p.m. and began enjoying the company around her in various ways. Sometimes she threw flowers and fruits here and there playing with the children present. She asked the devotees to sing nama-kirtan, saying, "Sing Hare Krishna Hare Ram - what is the use of idling away time with an empty tongue ? Sing nama-kirtan - '*Kaho jina janama diya, Kaho Rama Siya !*'"

In this manner Ma spread bliss. Once I took Ma out to the toilet. As I returned with Ma the ladies began saying, "Ma, as soon as you left, our plight was like that of the wedding party without the bridegroom. In those two minutes our bliss was turned into gloom." One lady said, "Ma, you are our Lord and we are all your wives." Ma laughed and quipped, "How shall I feed so many wives ?" They all laughed together and said with joined palms, "Ma, by your grace each of us eats in her own home," Ma said, "Then all of you put together are my one Lord and I am the wife." They refused to accept this and said, "No Ma, it can't be so, it can't be so. We are in your shadow - you are our Lord." Ma laughed and

replied, "Alright, whoever is my wife will receive this flower and fruit," and she started distributing the fruits that had been offered to her and the flowers that covered her. There was a veritable scramble to receive these as all eagerly stepped forward to receive the flowers that had adorned Ma's feet.

Amidst this bliss; the palanquin arrived. We got into the palanquins which were originally meant for the trip to Uttar Vrindavan and went with Ma for an outing. The American lady also went with us. The Deputy Postmaster General, Devi Dutt, Srinivas and many others walked alongside. We were being taken to a Kali math about four miles away. The scenery enroute was marvellous. We also passed through a thorny jungle. The American who had come yesterday with the American lady to see Ma, lived in an ashram close by. He lived here to practise sadhana in solitude as did some other men and women. As we reached the ashram the American came forward, did pranam to Ma and joined us on our trip to the Kali math. This time I observed attentively and noted that he wore clothes in the Bengali style and a thick Punjabi kurta. The clothes were grimy. He explained that saying, "The water source is far away and therefore it is difficult to wash clothes." The clothes seemed to be of good quality and appeared to have been tailored to order - hard labour seemed to have spoiled them.

We reached the Kali math. It was a quiet and beautiful spot surrounded by exquisite scenery. The American lady photographed Ma alone, then with Bholanath and then with Munni and myself. On Bholanath's suggestion the American took one photograph of the American lady seated between Ma and Bholanath. Then we all returned. On the way the American lady visited the house of a German painter where she had been invited to tea.

A little while later the owner of the house and his wife came out and took Ma and all of us to their house. We saw a Spanish girl who had run away from her country where there was the fear of war. She said, "The Western world is bad - one cannot have peace there. I am gaining much peace after coming to India." Another foreigner was dressed as people do in U.P. Later we came to know that he was the person staying in Mrs. Chakravarty's ashram in Uttar Vrindavan. The German couple, the Spanish girl and the gentleman from Mrs. Chakravarty's ashram touched their foreheads to the ground and did pranam in the Bengali fashion to Ma and Bholanath. As Ma would not enter the house they made arrangements to seat her outside. The German showed his paintings to Ma. He had painted Buddha Deva, Swami Sharadananda, Swami Shivananda and many others. Then the lady of the house had her servant bring orange juice for us all. Using brass plates, bowls and glasses all drank juice.

We sat there for a long time. The scenery around the house was picturesque - it was a tranquil spot. We then returned to the dharmasala.

The American gentleman and lady were still with us. The lady said, "At seven p.m. a sadhu from the Ramakrishna Mission is coming to meet Ma." We were awaiting his arrival. Srinivas and the girls sang kirtan very well. The sadhu arrived at the correct time, accompanied by the Doctor Babu and his American wife who were connected with the Ramakrishna Mission. Nothing particular came up in the conversation ; but they requested Ma to stop at the Doctor Babu's house on her way back to Nainital the next day. Gradually everyone departed. At nine p.m. the Judge Sahib and some others arrived but Ma lay down silently and not much conversation ensued. Around eleven p.m. they all left. Finding Ma so quiet everyone around her got up.

Monday, April 29. Before Ma arose some masters made their students stand in the compound of the Nanda Devi temple and recite stotras. Ma rose and went outdoors. After the recitation the boys lined up and went back to school. Ma entered the room and sat on her bedding. People began arriving for darshan. I was engrossed in finishing the cooking quickly and was unable to listen to the conversation. By twelve noon we set out. The girls from Garibyan had come and were

pressing Ma to visit Kailash sometime. They promised to show Ma around. The Kailash route would reopen by May or June. We would have to go via Almora. It was sort of decided that if all went well we would go to Kailash. The girls were delighted. They accompanied Ma to Doctor Babu's house. He is a student of Jagdish Bose and wished to show Ma his laboratory. We drove by car to the house and were received by the couple, the sadhu who had come yesterday (we learnt later that his name is Ramaswami) and two other Swamis of the Ramakrishna Mission (one was an American) who expressed great joy on Ma's arrival and took her inside. The Doctor Babu wished to show Ma his instruments and other equipment inside his room but Ma smilingly refused. Ma was seated in a garden of flowers. She was accompanied by many men and Srinivas. Three sadhus stood near Ma and expressed great joy. Ramaswami pointed to the American sadhu and said, "He was very keen to meet you yesterday but could not do so as he was unwell. On coming to know that you would be here today he came very happily. As the Nanda Devi temple is very far off he did not have the strength to go there, but surprisingly, though I am so old, I experienced no difficulty in going so far. I cannot understand how that was so." Ma laughed and said, "Everything is the sport of that One." He replied, "Everything is verily That, but because of

impurity within we are unable to understand it. The Paramahansa once said, 'that even a slightly blunted needle could not be used to stitch.' Ma commented, "That is absolutely right." Ma left after some time. The sadhus followed her to the car. The American sadhu joined his palms and said repeatedly, "It is my great good fortune that I had your darshan." Ramaswami also made similar comments. He said, "Why do you say so ? I am your daughter - look upon me thus." Immediately Ramaswami said, "How can that be ? You are our mother !"

We were about to leave for Nainital. Four or five of the girls from Kailash who were with us, began crying and saying, "We feel like going with Ma right now. We shall complete our studies and then go to work with Ma." I was wonderstruck and tried to analyse what these young hill dwellers had gained from Ma in these two or three days. Actually these girls are so straightforward and simple, it is no wonder they behaved thus. They embraced me and repeatedly requested us to come again. They said, "When you all go to Kailash we shall go with you and remove the snow from the path for you." Their sincere, heartfelt affection made a touching impression on our minds. I was enchanted by Ma's power - these girls could barely understand Ma's language and yet this weeping ! One event that I forgot to mention - seeing some school boys Ma had a kheyal and said, "Every one should be given a

note book to write the Name in. In the morning they should first write God's Name in it and then do other work." There were a hundred and forty five boys and a note book was purchased for each one of them. The Judge Sahib bore the expense and insisted that no one else should pay for the books.

In the car the American lady questioned Ma and Jyotish Dada interpreted their conversation. The lady asked, "Is the consciousness in birds and animals, plants and trees the same as in human beings ?" Ma replied, "It is the same - just as we are all present in one space. Space cannot be cut up and separated - exactly that way."

The lady asked, "Alright, if there is the same consciousness in everything, are you able to experience it ?" Ma replied, "That is an extremely natural thing." The lady said, "Sometimes I feel trees can talk. When the wind blows I feel all the elements are one and it appears to me that the trees speak." Ma said, "Trees can also speak - yes that is true." The lady said, "Right then, is the consciousness in human beings and that in birds and animals of the same kind ? Can animals and plants pray to God ?" Ma replied, "Everything is in God ; they are also in Him. The human birth is the highest for even a childish and ignorant man can be educated to become a scholar whereas a plant or an animal cannot be thus moulded. God's special manifestation

is in man. It is also true that plants or animals cannot worship God as humans do, but it is nevertheless a fact that they can attain peace and bliss. But there is a particular point about this - like jada Bharata who became a deer. For those who remember their previous births it is a different matter. In this manner plants or animals do worship God ; but it is a special instance and if for some reason some human being acquires the form of a plant or animal for some time, this may happen."

The lady said, "The universe was created from Aum. Then how does the universe dissolve into it again ?" Ma smiled and said, "Just as there is creation so, also is there destruction. Just as we came from Nainital by a road and will return to Nainital by the same road." The lady was very happy to hear this reply. She was extremely attentive about Ma's comfort and repeatedly asked Ma whether she suffered any inconvenience. She pulled her suitcase near Ma's feet and asked Ma to place her feet on it. In the afternoon she again peeled an orange, fed some to Ma and ate the rest. Ma spoke a couple of words of English like a child and the lady was delighted to hear it and praised Ma's flawless pronunciation. It was a six hour journey and we reached Nainital at six p.m.

As the car came to a halt the group of devotees at Nainital gathered and prayed at Ma's feet. In the car the American lady had

asked Ma, "How did you like Almora ?" and Ma had replied, "All places are alike, I do not feel any difference." This answer made the lady very happy. She is very intelligent.

We got off the car and went by boat from Tallital to Mallital where we proceeded to the dharmasala at the Naina Devi temple. The hill women who were waiting for Ma were seated on the steps leading to the lake. A stream of joy burst forth as Ma reached. The ladies came up and followed Ma into a room where bhajan was started. After dusk they left. We all slept by nine thirty p.m. Akhanda-nanda Swami sat practising sadhana.

Tuesday, April 30. Early morning Ma went out for a stroll and had some milk on returning. At ten a.m. the American lady arrived. A devotee had presented Ma with a silk dhoti and shawl and Ma had given these to the American lady who had worn them today. She had not wrapped them on correctly and Ma made me dress her up in the right fashion. She began expressing her joy in many ways and various languages. She joined her palms and prayed, "Please bless me that I may be as worthy inwardly of this dress that you have given me externally." It seems she believes that on wearing this Indian costume one becomes a sadhu within. One sadhu had given her a brass kamandalu and she had brought it with her. She looks very nice ! She invited Ma and all of us to go to America. Looking

at Bholanath she said, "I like him very much - I had seen a sadhu once and he reminds me of that sadhu." Around one p.m. the lady left. The hill women had been dancing and singing for Ma - today they did so in front of the American lady also.

By five p.m. the lady returned and went out with Ma for a walk. They got back after some time. Today arrangements had been made for serving refreshments to the lady. She eats our kind of food with great relish. At nine p.m. she did pranam to Ma, thanked us all for the meal and left.

CHAPTER XV

Wednesday, May 1. Ma went for a stroll in the morning. We are to leave for Bareilly by the six p.m. train. I forgot to write something yesterday. When Ma went and lay down on her bedding at night we were preparing to sleep and the talk turned to the matter of blankets. Jyotish Dada said, "When blankets were in use pure stuff used to be made. Now-a-days they mix all sorts of stuff. Now quilts are preferable." Everyone began joking over this statement. Ma said, "They use the fur of dead animals to make blankets." Saying this she laughed and looking at us she said, "Look, when I first used one of the blankets that I have to wrap myself with. I felt that some fat, healthy sheep were moving around my body - one of them was dead. I was wrapping a blanket made of the wool from their bodies and therefore they had come near me."

While I washed her face this morning she said, "Today I have a pain in my throat. I went to many places while I slept last night. I could make out that I started getting a pain in my throat because of the cold. This morning when I went for a walk I found that I really did have a pain." Ma only had some

fruits and milk in the morning and declared, "I shall not eat lunch this afternoon. You all eat and I shall eat whenever I feel like." And thus it was.

We are to leave for Bareilly at six p.m. We finished lunch and got ready. We were to leave at three or three thirty p.m. by car for the one and a half hour journey to Kathgodam from where we were to board the train. Around two thirty Ma sat for lunch. Many ladies had gathered and kirtan was going on. As Ma sat down to eat she said, "Today when you were cooking I was asleep and I could see that while boiling you had overcooked the radish pieces that you had put in the curry." And actually as Bholanath began eating he said, "The radish is overcooked and tastes bitter." Though all these are very small matters for Ma, ours is a doubting mind and we are wonderstruck by such incidents and our doubts are effaced. Therefore for us every incident regarding Ma is valuable and hence I write down about such incidents as far as I can remember. We repeatedly forget that Ma is omniscient.

After lunch we got ready by three fifteen p.m. The hill women were performing arati to Ma and singing alongside ; the gist of the song was, "May you live fearlessly - may you keep well," and so on. It was as if they were bidding farewell to their daughter. We ferried across from Mallital to Tallital and then drove

by car to Kathgodam. Earlier the American lady had not decided to accompany Ma, but finally she got ready to go with Ma to Bareilly. We left Kathgodam at six thirty p.m. and reached Bareilly by ten thirty p.m. The lady made an interesting comment in the train. Whenever Jyotish Dada translated Ma's speech for the lady he would convey the meaning very concisely. It seemed that the lady was dissatisfied with this for today she told Jyotish Dada, "Ma speaks so long, but you just say something in short and keep quiet. I don't like that", so saying she laughed. People had thronged to meet Ma, a couple of stations before Bareilly, loaded with garlands. Maharatan and Premratan were amongst them. We all went to the dharmasala. The crowds stayed on till one a.m. and then dispersed.

Thursday, May 2. Ma was taken to a number of places early in the morning. In one temple the local people had been singing akhanda kirtan for fifteen days and Ma was taken there. The American lady was served lunch at the dharmasala. At first she was given a table and chair but she said, "If this were to be done I might as well have eaten at the hotel. I shall sit with you all on the floor." After lunch the lady took photographs of Ma. In the afternoon she went to the hotel. In the evening the Bengali devotees sang kirtan in the dharmasala. Then Ma went with us all to the kirtan hall of the people of Uttar

Pradesh. We returned to the dharmasala at midnight and slept at two a.m.

Friday, May 3. In the morning Mrs. Dixit took Ma to her bungalow. She drove the car herself and made Ma sit next to her. Here the ladies move about very freely ; they are involved in all the organisations and enjoy themselves in many ways. There is no reservation of any kind. Mrs. Dixit was accompanied by two or three other ladies. They first took Ma to Mrs. Dixit's house. They had got up very early and cooked for Ma ; they fed Ma there. They also took photographs of Ma. Then many ladies got together and took Ma to a garden where they adorned her with a golden-embroidered crown and a yellow brocade shawl. They wanted to take many photographs of Ma dressed as Krishna, but I observed that Ma smilingly and mischievously evaded being photographed. Some of them said, "We shall keep these photographs with us" and as they said this their eyes filled with tears. Many of them began pleading with Ma, dressed her in many ways and made her pose while the previously instructed photographer clicked swiftly. Songs were sung side by side - truly they had created a Vrindavan there !

We were to go for a meal to the Engineer's house by eight thirty a.m. so they were compelled to finish this delightful sport and let Ma go. On returning to the dharmasala we found that the Engineer's wife was waiting for Ma

with a car. She was to speak privately with Ma and so she took Ma away. On returning we went to the Income Tax Officer, Avtar Krishna's house at ten thirty a.m. Yesterday Mrs. Dixit had pleaded with Ma and made her agree to go to her house. She had arranged for refreshments. Ma returned from there at one p.m. We had lunch. Bhoga for Ma had been sent from some house and we all had prasad. The crowds were large and by the time everyone ate it was five p.m. At five thirty p.m. Ma was to go to Bihari Lal's house and at exactly that hour three or four cars were waiting to take her. Ma was taken to Bihari Lal's house along with a big crowd.

The American lady was also present ; here again a hotel room had been arranged for her. Ma was again dressed as Krishna in Bihari Lal's house and the ladies attired as gopis stood around her and had photographs taken. Finally the American lady embraced Ma and had a photograph taken. It was only because of Bholanath's kindness that such a photograph could be taken and she expressed great joy for having received his permission. Another photograph of the lady kneeling before Ma and praying to her was also taken on the request of the lady.

The place for kirtan was beautifully decorated. Then Akhandananda Swami spoke about Ma's glory which stood revealed to him of its own accord. The gist of it was, "If we live

with one-pointed concentration on Ma, the impurities of our mind are removed automatically. I have experienced this myself" and so on. Then Hari Ramji also spoke - he had come for darshan. He told all the people present about the ten minutes of the day that Ma always spoke about. Spontaneously many listeners decided to perform the practice (of setting aside ten minutes for God everyday) regularly and had their names recorded. The purpose of listing these names is to offer these names in the sacrificial fire rites performed on Ma's birthday every year for the spiritual progress of the individuals who practise the ten-minute sadhana. Then the American lady also addressed the people in English. Hari Ramji translated her speech into Hindi and explained its import to the ladies present. The gist of her speech was, "I have come to India for the darshan of sadhus and sannyasis. I have visited all the saints whose names have been specially mentioned. In the course of such visits I first heard the mention of Ma's name by Aurobindo Ghosh of Pondicherry and I was very eager to have her darshan. I had no information regarding her and did not know where to find her. Meanwhile I reached Calcutta, heard about Ma and also got information about her whereabouts, namely that she was in Nainital. I travelled to Nainital and had Ma's darshan. I was enthralled - I have never ever seen such a beautiful form. I feel she has appeared

in this form for some particular work to be accomplished and as soon as it is done she will leave. I believe that she is my one and only mother. I am your sister for we all have the one and same mother. But unfortunately I know neither Hindi nor Bengali and I am pained that I cannot converse with you. I cannot speak to you about Ma. Ma knows everything that goes on within us and if we can have one-pointed concentration on her, we get all the replies within ourselves - I have experienced proof of this. I also feel that if anyone meditates on Ma unwaveringly as I have done, they shall experience the truth of what I have said. I have faith that whether I remain in India or go to England or America, I shall never be separated from Ma. My ultimate desire is that Ma's picture should be permanently imprinted in my heart."

At ten p.m. we returned to the dharma-sala where the Bengali boys began kirtan. The American lady joined the kirtan, sitting on the ground. We were to go to Jamshedpur by the four a.m. train. The lady wanted to see Rishikesh and so she was to go at eleven p.m. by train with Hari Ram. At eleven p.m. she again did pranam to Ma, took leave of us all and left. At Bihari Lal's house, when all the women were performing Ma's arati to the accompaniment of melodious songs in praise of Ma, the lady had stood with eyes closed and hands joined. For though she could

not understand the language she could certainly feel the import. As Ma was leaving tonight, many people had gathered.

An advocate had had Ma's darshan for the first time today and he was gazing at her fascinatedly. He asked me for a photograph of Ma saying, "This picture of Ma has got impressed on my heart, yet may be the shadow of worldliness will cover the impression and therefore I am asking you for a photograph." Around two a.m. many devotees left. Many lay down on the ground near Ma for a little rest, for they would see Ma off at four a.m. before returning to their homes. At three a.m. they all accompanied Ma to the station. At four a.m. Ma left for Jamshedpur leaving them all in tears.

CHAPTER XVI

Saturday, May 4. As the train pulled into Lucknow many people gathered for Ma's darshan. Manik took a month's leave and joined us. At twelve noon we reached Faizabad where big groups of men and women thronged to see Ma. The District Judge, the Additional Judge and others were all present with families. Earlier in their lives there never used to be even a mention of religion, but after meeting Ma there has occurred such a drastic change. They have come to the station in spite of the blazing hot sun and have brought so many floral garlands lovingly strung by them. Their devotion is worth seeing and experiencing. Their eyes are filled with tears while they smile. Some wish to follow Ma wherever she goes. Somehow Ma managed to speak consolingly and pacify them. At the correct hour the whistle blew and the train resumed its journey. The devotees touched Ma's feet and stood with tears in their eyes, praising their good fortune. Ma's birthday celebrations were to be performed from 19 Baishakh (May 5) to 14 Jyeshtha (Krishna Chaturthi) in Dhaka with akhanda kirtan. The devotees who had gathered noted down the date of Ma's birth as per the Hindu

calendar and resolved to sing kirtan without a break on that day. They all entreated Ma to stop at Faizabad on her way back. At three p.m. we reached Kashi station where Bacchu, his mother, Nepal Dada, Krishna Ma, Swami Shankaranand and others had come. Knowing that Ma was journeying in the heat Bacchu's mother had painstakingly prepared a variety of cool drinks for Ma. These people travelled with us till Moghulsaraï and then departed with moist eyes. In this manner did the Universal Mother move, satisfying the longing of her devotees as she went.

Sunday, May 5. As we reached Howrah station this morning, an enormous crowd was waiting. Ma was to spend only two or three hours at the station before leaving for Jamshedpur. A lady from Almora was with us - her name is Godavari. Though she was repeatedly asked by her people she did not leave Ma's company. Shankaranand had also accompanied Ma from Calcutta. Many people had brought refreshments for Ma to the station and they fed Ma and her companions with great affection. Dilip Roy had come to meet Ma and said he would sing for her when she returned. He spoke to Ma for some time and then left. At the appointed hour we boarded the train. The people at the station stood near Ma for as long as it was possible.

In the afternoon we reached Jamshedpur. The devotees who had gathered there raised

their voices in hailing victory to Ma. Today it is the nineteenth day of the Baishakh month and in several places Ma's birthday celebrations will commence ; here also devotees have got together at one place to celebrate Ma's birthday. Ma was first taken to that place. The site of the festivities was beautifully decorated with a variety of photographs of Ma. As Ma reached, the ladies welcomed her with the blowing of conch shells and auspicious sounds. They made Ma sit and offered floral tributes at the feet of Ma and Bholanath. Bhoga was offered and many received prasad. Ma had lunch. As soon as Ma reached, a terrible storm raged suddenly accompanied by a heavy down-pour. The decorated place was thrown into disarray. A little later the weather cleared completely. All said, "Ma, the rain poured just as you arrived." Ma laughed and said, "You are all indulging in joyful celebrations - the storm and rain also arrived to join in the happiness." After dusk Bholanath joined the kirtan and got thoroughly involved. Kirtan went on for a long time.

At midnight we went to the Kali temple followed by a big crowd. Ma was to stay there. The priest of the temple was very devoted to Ma and was extremely happy to have her there. Around one a.m. she slept and so did we. Tomorrow Ma is to eat lunch at the residence of the late Nalini Datta and many people are to receive diksha from Bholanath there.

Monday, May 6. When Ma awoke she was taken to Nalini Babu's house where many received initiation. Around four p.m. we returned to the Kali temple. A Kashmiri family which is very devoted to Ma, escorted her to the temple. It was decided that Ma would go to their house at five p.m. She rested for a while in the temple and at five p.m. the Kashmiri family arrived. The ladies themselves came to take Ma and all her companions to their house. Elaborate arrangements had been made for Ma's meal. Ma stayed there till late in the night before returning to the temple.

Tuesday, May 7. Today Ma was to eat at Ashwini Kumar Babu's house. All the people sat surrounding her under the spell of her attractive power. In Kashi an Engineer had come with his family to the station. Ma had first met him at Nainital and then at Kashi. He did not visit Ma very often and was not particularly interested in religion either. The previous time when Ma was in Kashi he had been to see her and had sat for some time speaking on many topics. Who knows what kind of a change he underwent on speaking to Ma. This time at the station he started saying on his own accord. "Ma, the mind is so restless running after so many different things - the remembrance of God occurs rarely." Ma said, "Keep at your practice regularly - you will get the fruit."

After lunch at Ashwini Kumar's house Ma returned to the Kali temple at four p.m. Today again many took diksha including a little girl who was so keen to receive diksha from Bhola-nath that he finally complied. At six thirty p.m. Ma was taken to a Ram temple belonging to some people of Uttar Pradesh. Hindi and Bengali speaking people gathered there and kirtan was sung for a long time after which we returned to the Kali temple. We sat around Ma and listened to her speak till late in the night. Ma was to leave for Calcutta by the ten a.m. train the next day and therefore the devotees were feeling the pangs of separation and wondering when they would see Ma again. Dr. Yatish Babu's wife was following Ma everywhere in spite of indifferent health and was arranging for Ma's comfort. Many others were taking great pains to ensure that Ma and her companions suffered no discomfort. We slept around three a.m.

Wednesday, May 8. Today again many were to receive diksha at Harihar Babu's house where Ma was to be offered bhoga. Ma would go to the station directly from there. Three or four people received diksha and after a hurried lunch Ma was taken to the station. At Harihar Babu's house Ma indulged in a game. Two or three houses stood next to Harihar Babu's. The inmates of these houses did not come to see Ma nor had they invited her to their homes ; but Ma walked up to their door and

standing under a tree she declared, "This spot is very cool - I shall sit here." We made space for her to sit. Seeing a papaya tree close by Ma said, "Look there - a papaya has ripened. Similarly when you become ripe within the colour shows without." Ma sat in that compound for some time and then went to the door of Harihar Babu's house. The inmates of the neighbouring house came with the ripe papaya cut and ready for Ma. Ma laughed and said, "Even if you had not brought it for me I would have gone across and taken it for myself ; you are all my fathers aren't you ? Taking all of you together I have only one father !" So saying she laughed.

Many people followed Ma to the station. The Kashmiri family also went along. A girl of that family called Krishna who was studying for her B. A. degree took a photograph of Ma, Bholanath and all of us at the station. Ma boarded the train at the appropriate hour but it did not start and we were told that there was some trouble with the engine. The people declared, "Ma it is your grace that we can enjoy your darshan a little longer." They were standing under the blazing hot sun, gazing at Ma's face. The elderly mother of a doctor clung to Ma and expressed affection in many ways and said, "As soon as I heard you were coming, I exclaimed, 'Why does she come again ? She seems to come to burn us. Sometimes she comes, just burns us with a fire

and leaves'." Ma laughed and replied, "The fire does not burn well enough Ma. If it burnt as it should then everything would be reduced to ashes and the question of burning or not burning will no longer exist." So saying she laughed like a child. The old lady persisted, "You all know only to burn - you are burning the entire country." The train left almost an hour late. As the train started I jokingly told Ma, "The people here say that it is by your grace that the train left late but now it will also reach Howrah late and the people there will ask, 'Where is Ma's grace in our case ?'" Ma only smiled and said nothing. She lay down. When we reached Howrah we found the train had arrived five minutes before schedule. We reached Howrah station at five p.m. and found a large crowd present. Ma's birthday celebration had been commenced on 19 Baishakh at Yatish Guha's house and Ma was first taken there. Arati was performed at dusk and the kirtan was started at eight p.m. At twelve midnight we went to the Shiva temple built by Birla. Many people went with Ma intending to spend the rest of the night with her. They spread their beddings all along the verandah of the temple. Naren Babu had come from Delhi, Triguna Babu from Sri Rampur ; Govardhan and many others had also come. Around one thirty a.m. we all slept.

CHAPTER XVII

Thursday, May 9. In the morning Ma was taken to Yatish Guha's house and then to Prankumar Babu's house. A person was given diksha there. All gathered at that house. Ma was to leave Calcutta on the thirteenth night. In the afternoon Ma went to Yatish Guha's house for lunch and then returned to Prankumar Babu's house. Prankumar Babu had had a dream and had requested Ma to let him discuss it with her in private. Two or three of us went with Ma. As Ma was conversing Yatish Guha turned up with two top people from Tata's who had been awaiting Ma's darshan since very long. Yesterday some ladies brought a 'Ma' with them. She was dressed in saffron robes. Ma behaved in her most natural manner - she made the 'Ma' sit on her own asana and she herself sat on the floor saying, "This is my Ma" and showing her off to all present. When someone went to do pranam to Ma she declared, "You can do that only after you do pranam to this Ma of mine" pointing to the Ma seated nearby. When the lady embraced Ma affectionately, Ma lay down in her lap. The lady lived in a building owned by a rich Kshatri from Uttar Pradesh and satsang was

held in one part of the building. Ladies got together for the satsang and Ma was to be taken there. This lady had come to specially invite Ma the previous day and now she had come to escort Ma there. Many of us accompanied Ma.

When we reached the enormous satsang hall we found it packed with many ladies. The Yoga Vasishtha was being read and bhajans followed. We spent some time there and then proceeded to Yatish Guha's house.

Dinesh Thakur was to sing kirtan for Ma at seven p.m. and he arrived soon after Ma reached. A pandal had been erected to accommodate the crowds for Ma's birthday celebrations as Yatish Guha felt that he could not accommodate them in his house. Kirtan was begun there soon after sunset. Dinesh Thakur, Manmatha Nath and Nirvana Samajpati and others had been singing kirtan every evening; kirtan used to go on till after midnight. Ma was taken into the hall around twelve thirty a.m. and the devotees spent the hours in blissful festivity. Around two thirty a.m. we returned to the Shiva temple.

Every night this was the programme. In the evening Ma was taken to the hall in Yatish Dada's house. Till then arati used to be performed before Ma's photograph, but now Ma was herself present. Yatish Dada's persevering efforts had been rewarded. Kshitish Dada's daughter performed the arati and bhajan was

sung as usual. Dilip Roy had come to meet Ma with some of his distinguished friends. Whenever a pile of garlands adorned Ma, they were taken off and distributed - that was done again today. Sometimes Ma herself garlanded some people. Today she put a garland on Dilip Roy who felt very happy. Sanjna Devi who was present told Dilip Roy, "Sing some kirtan for Ma." He agreed. After the arati Ma was taken to the pandal as the crowds were immense. Dilip Roy sang a couple of songs and Dinesh Thakur also sang many songs. His rendering of a particular song moved Nirvana Samajpati so deeply that he embraced Dinesh Thakur. Later Brajendra Ganguli also sang kirtan. The kirtan lasted till midnight and then Ma was taken to the hall to be offered bhoga. The hall was verily Ma's temple. The men, women and children of this household had sung Ma's name, performed arati, offered bhoga to Ma and converted the house into a divine temple. Therefore it seemed probable that though the Universal Mother did not step into any other house she agreed to sit in this particular hall. During the last few visits she had not entered this hall but this time, on the entreaty of her devotees, the Beloved of Her devotees had entered the room.

At twelve midnight Ma ate her meal. Bhramar sat in one corner of the room and started leading the kirtan followed by other ladies. As soon as the kartal (given by the

Punjabi) was played the devotees present again got involved in singing nama kirtan. The Bliss incarnate man - Bholanath joined in the singing and the kirtan went on till one thirty a.m. after which we returned to the temple. A large crowd followed Ma with the intention of spending the night on the verandah of the temple in Ma's vicinity. We slept at three a.m.

Friday, May 10. At seven a.m. Ma was taken to Yatish Dada's house as it was his heartfelt desire that Ma should be present when invocations were read out in front of the deity in the hall after nama kirtan at dawn. Ma sat there till nine a.m. and then returned to the temple. A daughter of the royal family of Tripura and a daughter-in-law of the royal family of Nepal came to see Ma. These two have been visiting Ma regularly. They settled down for a private interview with Ma. Soon after, Mrs. C.R. Das and her daughter, Aparna Devi, came to see Ma and gradually many other people also arrived.

Professors, Munsifs, Lawyers and many others arrived. Some were moved to tears and many entreated Ma to allow them to take her out in their cars. Many of them who were meeting Ma for the first time, began asking various questions and conversing with her on different matters. To begin with they seems to have the attitude of wanting to test her, but finally this attitude disappeared - enchanted

by Ma's words and gaze, they took refuge in her.

Yesterday during kirtan in Yatish Dada's hall, a lawyer from the High Court was overcome with ecstasy. Joining his palms in front of Ma he recited invocations from the Durga Saptasati without moving his gaze from Ma. He repeatedly addressed Ma as the Goddess Bhagavati Herself. Professor Naresh Babu was meeting Ma for the first time. He began by questioning Ma but for the past few days his eyes have been moist with tears. Today he asked Ma, "Ma, since when have you acquired such man-eating knowledge ?" Ma laughed and said, "Some one had called it 'Guru-destroying knowledge' and now you call it 'man-eating knowledge' ?" Looking at me Ma said, "Did you hear what he said ? He says I have man-eating knowledge." I queried, "How much has she devoured ?" The gentleman replied, "She has swallowed the whole." Ma commented, "If I had swallowed the whole there would be no further discussion. He would have been mauna (silent)." I said, "Ma always says that a rupee is not made without sixteen annas. The eating is not finished yet - Ma is not satiated with just this much." All the people present burst into laughter and Ma also joined them.

In the afternoon Ma went for lunch to Yatish Dada's house where people received prasad in honour of the festival. Sachi Babu donates much wealth for this festival. His

wife died young and he did not remarry. He lives with his aged mother and many other family members. He is the Assistant Commissioner of Income Tax. He declares, "I met Ma when I was forty nine years old. Now I am fifty two. In these three years of Ma's company I have progressed much more than in forty nine years of religious observation and study - this is my experience. I cannot express the profound effect of Ma's company. I have experienced this intimately and therefore I say so." Ma is able to encourage each one's attitude towards God, and therefore all get so much divine essence from her. Everyone derives bliss in her company.

After lunch Ma went to Suresh Babu's house. Everywhere that she went she was followed by four or five cars packed with devotees who did not want to leave her side even for awhile. Suresh Babu had reserved a place for Ma on the fourth floor of his house and the festival of bliss was continued there. In the evening Ma returned to the pandal. Barrister Sarat Babu and some other highly placed people had come for Ma's darshan. A large crowd had gathered and there was no place left for people to even stand. Ma was made to sit on a platform and the crowd around the platform was very dense. The people could not be dispersed in spite of repeated efforts. Brajendra Babu and many others sang kirtan after which Ma was taken to the hall

at eleven p.m. Kirtan was resumed there. Thus the blissful sport continued till two a.m. when Ma returned to the temple followed by people who carried a single rug or blanket or mat and spent the night on the verandah in Ma's vicinity. Around four a.m. we all slept.

Saturday, May 11. In the morning Ma was taken to the devotee Yatish Guha's house where the morning's programme of kirtan, invocation and arati was conducted followed by offering of bhoga to children. It had been decided that Bhramar would take Ma to her school and at eight a.m. Ma left followed by a big crowd. Ma was welcomed by the school girls with floral garlands. They sang kirtan and recited scriptural texts. Ma sat amidst the girls. The administrators of the school expressed their feeling of blessedness by repeatedly saying that the school was fortunate to have Ma's presence. They requested Ma to give the school girls some advice. Ma smiled in her charmingly sweet manner and said, "I know nothing, but I beg this as bhiksha from you all that just as you spend some time regularly on studying, you should also spend some time similarly in taking God's Name. That will increase your joy and peace." She also explained how nama japa was to be performed for ten minutes.

At ten thirty a.m. we went to Kumar Suresh Sinha's house and a couple of other houses before returning to the temple. At eleven a.m. Dilip Roy was to come to speak privately

with Ma. Mahendra Sarkar was also to come to speak to Ma alone. As soon as we reached the temple Dilip Roy arrived with one or two people. He declared to Ma, "I have derived the utmost bliss from your darshan." He also promised to come to the temple and sing for Ma on Monday. He explained, "I have sung in many houses. But I long to sit at this beautiful spot and sing for Ma." He sat near Ma for a very long time. As soon as he left Mahendra Babu and family arrived and sat near Ma conversing with her at length. Unfortunately I was not present. Mahendra Babu was extremely happy and left saying he would return the next day.

At two p.m. Ma was taken to Bhramar's house where arrangements had been made for Ma's lunch. A shade had been erected in the garden for Ma to sit beneath. At six p.m. after the meal Ma was taken to some other houses and at eight thirty p.m. she reached Yatish Dada's house. Nibaran Samajpati and Brajendra Babu sang kirtan which went on till midnight as on other days. Then Ma was taken to the hall. Meenu (Prankumar Babu's youngest son) and the girls got together and adorned Ma with a floral crown and other floral ornaments. They started singing kirtan as they walked around Ma. Ma picked up a kartal kept in the hall and started singing, "*Jaya Radhe Krishna Krishna*". The kirtan gathered tempo. Everyone was enchanted to

see Ma's divine form adorned with floral ornaments and when they heard nama kirtan sung in that sweet voice, they became ecstatic and joined in the kirtan forgetting themselves altogether. This went on till two a.m. after which Ma was brought back to the temple decked in flowers.

Professor Naresh Chakravarti and a prosperous businessman, Nagen Babu, had had their first darshan of Ma. They were waiting with their cars, wanting to drive Ma around. They followed Ma almost all the time. Naresh Babu said, "See, I had a feeling of great pride that no one could refute my opinion of dharma ; but Ma has torn it into fragments. Ma has brought me to such a state that even working is difficult. I shall go to Dhaka for the festival." He had spoken to Ma at length and his eyes were always filled with tears.

At three a.m. we all lay down to rest. The daughter of lawyer Ghoshal, Amala, Dr. Girindra Mitra's daughter, Savitri, and Commissioner Surendra Bandopadhyaya's daughter, Nani, were constantly with Ma and even slept next to her at night. None of these three has ever left her own people and stayed with others outside her own home - such is Ma's power of attraction ! Nor are their guardians the least bit worried in letting them go thus. They are happy that the girls are with Ma. Truly, if we worry about the pride of the family, God cannot be attained.

Sunday, May 12. As usual a large crowd had gathered at the temple in the morning. At eight a.m. Ma was taken to Yatish Dada's house and to three or four other houses. Special bhoga had been arranged in the afternoon. Being a Sunday, a large number of people had come. In the morning Janardan sang 'Goshtha' - a song about the pastoral exploits of Lord Krishna, which went on till twelve noon. Then with much effort Ma was taken aside for many people wished to speak to her alone. Yet, complete privacy was just not possible and people spoke to her wherever they could. At two p.m. bhoga was offered. The kumari girls sat next to Ma in the hall to receive bhoga. People were getting exhausted without doing anything because of the crowds, yet our Ma sat serene and immovable, her blissful form not affected in the least.

After bhoga Ma was taken to the pandal. At five p.m. school girls arrived and sang 'Mathur' - songs describing the grief of the people of Vrindavan when Krishna left for Mathura. As soon as the 'Mathur' was completed, Ma was taken to Pisima's house at Dhakuria. Then she was taken to Bholagiri Maharaj's ashram. Principal Gangacharan Babu is a disciple of Giri Maharaj. He and some other disciples escorted Ma there. Here, the people in the pandal became restless because of Ma's absence. A line of cars drew up at the gate. Ma returned at nine p.m. and kirtan was started.

A group of kirtan singers had arrived from Andool. They sang Kali-kirtan, each dressed in the same kind of costume. A Mataji who lived in crematoriums had come. Ma made her sit beside herself and took great interest in her karmandalu and trident. Brajendra Babu sang again and at midnight, after the kirtan, Ma was taken to the hall. Today again a fresh set of floral ornaments were ready for Ma. Floral crowns, bangles, garlands, anklets and armlets were put on Ma. She played a tiny kartal and walked around the room as the devotees sang kirtan. It appeared as if an image of the Goddess was walking about in Yatish Dada's house. On the wall opposite big photographs of Ma had been decorated with flower garlands and lights. Very often when Yatish Dada sat in this room to do japa, he could see Ma strolling about. Today Ma had fructified the devoted sadhana performed by Yatish Dada's family all these years in this room. Ma made the men move out for some time and shut the door. Then she started singing kirtan with the ladies who danced as they sang. Ma handed a fan to one lady, a lamp with five wicks to another, an incense pot to one, a flower to another and a cloth to yet another, instructing them to perform arati. This arati heightened the beauty of the proceedings. Ma's ever-new lila is infinite in its scope - we watch and cannot gauge its limit. Has anyone ever been able to see the end of

the lila of the personification of lila ? She emerges in new forms constantly.

When the kirtan came to an end the ladies called out "Jai Ma !" Immediately Ma placed a finger on her lips and indicated to all to remain seated in silence. The big group of ladies sat down to meditate. Ma now opened the doors and called out to the men saying, "Now come in and see what our kirtan is like." The men who had been distressed by the separation from Ma rushed into the room. It was nearly three a.m. and Ma went briskly to the temple followed by some of the crowd. The rest sat down to eat. I wonder how the hunger of these people has vanished - they have no sleep either - they go on thus under the influence of some kind of spell. When Ma rushed to the temple she asked that the girls who had followed her there should be given some fruit. They just shared a couple of bananas and oranges saying, "No one has the desire to eat." These girls who have been brought up amidst luxury are in this state and yet do not reveal the slightest signs of tiredness or discomfort. They follow Ma day in and day out. It seems as if some power infuses strength into each one. Ma said, "If this bhava is assumed truly for a long time, not only does the body remain healthy, a permanent change comes over the mind also." At three a.m. we all slept.

CHAPTER XVIII

Monday, May 13. Today Ma is to leave for Baishari by the three p.m. train and therefore crowds thronged the temple since morning. Ma was repeatedly anointed with sindur. Whenever the redness became excessive I washed her face. At eight a.m. Dilip Roy arrived to sing for Ma. He was accompanied by his sister and his cousin, the princess of Kakina, and some other gentlemen and ladies. He sang for some time and then requested, "Ma, now you say something. These people have come with me to hear you speak. I have found your words very sweet and told these people so." Ma laughed and said, "Your ears are sweet and therefore you hear my words as sweet." She began speaking smilingly in her characteristic, childlike manner. The listeners laughed merrily over every incident that she narrated - they all seemed to be floating in a stream of bliss. Renuka Sen of Dhaka was also present. Her sister is the wife of Professor Dasgupta of Bareilly. Renuka Sen had come to know Ma closely at Bareilly. She had come to Calcutta and had arrived with her sister and others to meet Ma. Dilip Roy said, "Ma, Renuka sings well. Please hear her sing." He called

her to sing and she sang a couple of songs. Another student of Santiniketan, who sings well, sang for Ma. It was getting late but no one stirred to go to office. They sat enchanted. Mahendra Sarkar and his wife were present. They offered clothes and other items to Ma. The queen of Dighapatiya had come with clothes, flowers and many other offerings for Ma. I mention these items not for their material value, but for the love with which they had been brought - she was so anxious as to whether she would be able to wrap the sari around Ma. It seemed as if Ma had stolen everyone's heart. Though each mind is wrapped in so many problems, it is surprising that Ma is able to claim so much of its attention. Ma deals mostly with worldly people - yet it appears that she elevates these enmeshed souls into the kingdom of love for some time at least which is probably impossible even by the practice of thousands of kinds of penances.

A gentleman wanted to show Ma a letter written by his wife and I read it out to Ma. The woman had written to her husband - "If I meet Ma once more I shall go away with her. If at that time you remind me of my duty, it will be of no avail. I cannot remain a householder any longer. I am no longer attached to you or to your children. Ma had said that my mind would calm down gradually. Yet it is a month since Ma left and my condition continues as it was. I can see only Ma in

my waking, sleeping or working states. This rakshasi Ma is not letting me remain calm for a moment - she leaves me and then advises me etc." This letter shows how the effect of Ma's company exerts its powerful influence on worldly people, even after a month.

However, Dilip Roy was seated and at eleven a.m. Mrs. C. R. Das and her daughter, Aparna Devi, arrived to sing kirtan. There was no place and only after Dilip Roy's company rose and made room near Ma, could Aparna Devi and her group sit down to sing kirtan. Basanti Devi embraced Ma. Ma had eaten nothing. Basanti Devi made her drink milk. The kirtan was beautiful but could not be sung for long due to lack of time. They said they would sing again after Ma returned. Aparna Devi's husband, Sudhir Babu, was ill. She said, "Whenever he falls sick I see Ma standing in front of me in a dream and soon after he recovers. This time again I saw Ma and am therefore confident that he will recover again." Seeing Ma ready to get up Aparna Devi also rose. Some people were receiving diksha and Bholanath asked for Ma to be present. Ma went and sat in the doorway of the room where diksha was being given. She was followed by as many people who could crowd around her there.

After the diksha ceremony, Prankumar Babu took Ma to his house where bhoga was to be offered. Ma was photographed and Pran-

kumar Babu's daughter bathed Ma with milk. Then I bathed Ma again. After bhoga was offered to Ma and Bholanath, a large number of people sat down to receive prasad. They ate quickly and then proceeded to the station. Girija Babu's nephew had come from Baishari to escort Ma. Girija Babu had constructed an ashram for Ma in his village, about four or five years ago. But as Ma had not been there, the ashram had not been installed as yet. It was hoped that the installation would be done this time.

All the devotees had followed Ma to the station. The train left on time. Some stood like statues stolidly gazing at Ma while some others ran alongside the train. Abani Babu and others had come from Behrampur. At eight p.m. we boarded a steamer and on the morning of Tuesday, May 14, we reached Dularhat where we stayed till nine a.m. before continuing our journey by steamer. Ma lay down most of the time. At twelve noon we alighted from the steamer to the cries of 'Anandamayi Ma ki jai' which resounded at the ghat as the steamer drew ashore. Subodh and others had come from Dhaka. We got off the steamer and spent about an hour in a boat. As the boat reached the ghat the gang of men sang songs welcoming Ma and escorted her ashore. The group of kirtan singers took Ma, Bholanath and us to Girija Babu's ashram. Girija Babu had constructed a beautiful

building and had been waiting with intense devotion for Ma's arrival all these years. Today his effort and the expenses incurred were made worthwhile. He took Ma and Bholanath to the temple where kirtan was sung for a long time followed by lunch. After Ma and Bholanath had their meal, we all received prasad. Near the ashram were a pond and open space. Kirtan was to be resumed after sunset. In the afternoon Ma sat surrounded by little girls who did not allow any one else to get near Ma. They stroked Ma and whispered to one another, "Have you ever felt such a beautifully smooth hand before ?" Stroking her hair they said, "Isn't her hair beautiful and soft ?" They seemed to find everything about Ma exquisite.

I laughed and told Ma, "How will the crowds around you ever lessen ? You attract everyone by your mere touch, by your sweet words, by your laughter and your wonderful gaze. What can humans do ? It is surprising that there are some who still manage to get away !" Ma smiled and said, "Well, what have I done ? Did I ask anyone to stroke this body ?"

Then she made all the people sit down to a game of Sacchidananda. In the evening she emerged from her room. Hindus and Muslims had gathered in large numbers for Ma's darshan. As kirtan was in progress, people were not able to speak to Ma as she usually forbids people from talking while kirtan is

being sung. After the kirtan Ma conversed with the people who had come. A question that was posed was, "What is the mind and what is prana (the vital force) ?" Ma replied, "I say that as in a tree that has grown big - the power that does this (kriya shakti) can be likened to the mind - and that which this power of doing (kriya shakti) relies on to do its work, is prana. Without the prana how can kriya be manifested ? Because the mind is present you observe everything around you as different objects. It is the nature of the mind to accept one thing and then disregard it. Whatever you see and enjoy - desire and longing, are all in the realm of the mind. It is all the sport of the quiet mind. You can also view this in another manner. Prana is nothing other than Mahaprana. 'That' is itself present in the form of prana and then again in all other forms. I know nothing at all. What do your shastras say in this matter ?"

After the conversation kirtan was resumed. Girija Babu was serving Ma and her companions with whole hearted devotion. He had been very sick when he received the news that Ma was arriving. When he told Ma about this she laughed and said, "Knowing that we were coming God saved you - else how could we have come ?" The atmosphere was charged with bliss. We slept around one a.m.

Wednesday, May 15. In the morning Ma went for a walk. When she returned she sat in

the ashram verandah. Gradually people began gathering. Girija Babu's son asked, "Ma, God does everything then why should we be accused of any wrong doing ?" Ma replied, "You do not have the right to say that God does everything, because in truth you do not know Him at all. That is why you have to perform karma, so that you gain the right to know Him. It is like trying to explain the subject matter taught at the M.A. level to this little child here - it will not understand anything and can only repeat what it has heard." The boy reiterated "Even if we try to perform good deeds and are unable to do so, what can we do ?" Ma replied, "Always remember - if you get joy out of doing something you can presume that a fresh karma has been produced from it. Again, when you are reluctant to do a certain job, which you might even think is wrong, but are compelled to do it because someone forces you into it, you must understand that it is the result of some previous karma that is making you do it. Therefore the job that gives you no pleasure is the exhaustion of prarabdha. Keeping this in mind we should fix our gaze towards God and perform karma so that that karma no longer produces any more karma."

Once in Nainital Yatish Dada had asked Ma, "Ma, can there be a state in which there is not even a touch of worldliness ? To give up the husband-wife relationship is alright,

but imagine can the mother-child relationship be also foregone ? The body does remain." Ma had replied, "Yes, such a state does exist - when the body itself undergoes a transformation." Then Yatish Dada had said, "If you say so then it must be possible." Now I asked Ma, "Ma, how does the body change ?" Ma replied, "Just as potatoes get cooked, just as rice turns into puffed rice - just that way !" A professor from Barishal and some other gentlemen had come and they conversed with Ma on some other topics.

Thursday, May 16. Today kirtan was sung from dawn to dusk. The crowds were immense. Kirtan was stopped at sunset and people departed around midnight. Today there was a great feast and Ma sat to eat with us all. Someone adorned Ma with a crown of flowers and she showed it to all around her like a child, laughing all the while.

Friday, May 17. Today we are to leave for Barishal. Ma awoke in the morning and walked all around the village. At noon we finished lunch and set out by steamer. The people wept saying, "We shall be motherless today. Just looking at the ashram will make us sad." This refrain was on the lips of young and old alike. The crowds were so large that it was difficult to get Ma's darshan. Even when it was nearly time to leave Ma was taken to two or three houses. After lunch when Ma came out to the street, the sound of

weeping arose all around. Some rolled on the ground at her feet and wept loudly. Villagers are simple folk. Their behaviour astonished us. They had been with Ma only for three days. Many went along with Ma.

One particular thing that we noticed was that Ma established friendship or some relationship between people who had some facial resemblance. She told them, "This is surely because of some acquaintance in the past." Commenting on the resemblance between Girija Babu and Subodh she said, "Subodh also belongs to this family. These two are brothers."

We went by boat and boarded the steamer. Many people climbed on to the steamer in order to accompany Ma till the next station. They could not afford to go any further and were saying, "Let us enjoy Ma's company as long as we can." Jyotish Dada's cousin, zamindar Kshirod Babu, had an ustadji called Sakhanath Babu who lived in Barishal. He had received information about Ma's arrival from Jyotish Dada and had come to see her. He was very outspoken. From his appearance and behaviour he seemed not to care for anyone's opinion. As soon as he had Ma's darshan he did pranama by stretching fully on the ground and then said, "Wait, wait a moment. Let me see your countenance properly." He stared for awhile and then exclaimed, "Oh ! You are verily a Goddess ! I have seen many beautiful women made up and adorned intricately, but I

have never seen such a beautiful form as this."

We reached Barishal at nine p.m. and sat under a tree at the ghat. No one knew of Ma's arrival. Bholanath went to inform Chintaharan Babu's brother Manoranjan Babu. Surprisingly enough a crowd collected around Ma and stood gazing at her. The station superintendent came along with some others and did pranama. When Manoranjan Babu and Bholanath arrived to take Ma, they found her surrounded by many people. Ma was also accompanied by many people. Some of us went with Ma to Manoranjan Babu's house and settled down in the mandap-house. The others who had come with Ma went with Purna Sarkar, a longstanding devotee, to his house.

Saturday, May 18. We spent the day at Manoranjan Babu's house in Barishal. Many people had still not received information of Ma's arrival and we were to leave by the two a.m. steamer for Chandpur. There was talk of proceeding to Ma's birthplace from there.

One man asked, "Ma, is the form of Sri Krishna everlasting ? And is it true that it occupies a particular space ?" Ma replied, "Surely, it is all true and everlasting." Atul Thakur said, "Ma, how is that ? Is the form of Sri Krishna everlasting ?" Ma said, "That is the truth alright." He said, "It is better to say that basically it is not true." Ma said,

"When you speak of a base then the point is that all this is true. When you say something, want to hear something, or converse, there is no question of a base or baselessness. Then there will be no language either." In the course of conversation Ma said, "The world is full of comings and goings. So long as sight exists, creation also exists. To begin with, you had no teeth in infancy. Later in old age you are again rendered toothless. Only in between for some time you have this clatter because of teeth being present - what do you say boy ?" Saying all this Ma laughed in her child-like manner.

In the evening kirtan was sung. Ashwini Dutt's nephew and many others from Bholaagir ashram had come to meet Ma. Many of Girimaharaja's disciples were saying, "Ma, are we not your children ? Why are you going away in such a short time ? We have just received information about your arrival and have hastened here for your darshan. Can anyone be satiated by meeting his mother for such a short time ? Ma, when will you come again - at least tell us that." Ma laughed like a child and answered, "Can a father ever feel satiated looking at his daughter ? Whenever you call this body it will come. It all depends on you. This girl roams about. I have come since very long - if Baba could not find out what can be done ?" One of them began weeping. Many people had gathered.

Some repeatedly sought permission to leave but were unable to tear themselves away. We left at two a.m. by steamer for Chandpur.

Sunday, May 19. We reached Chandpur at twelve noon and left by the three thirty p.m. train for Kasava. We reached Kasava at eight p.m. At a place called Comilla on the way, many people who had come to know that Ma was going by train to Kasava, came for her darshan. It was raining and we spent the night at the station.

CHAPTER XIX

Monday, May 20. In the morning we hired six palanquins and proceeded to Kheora to visit Ma's birthplace. Many walked the distance of five miles and we reached Kheora in two hours. It was raining heavily, yet a large number of villagers had gathered for Ma's darshan. Ma's birth and marriage had taken place in this village. Two years after her wedding she had gone to Vidyakut. Thus till the age of about fifteen Ma had lived here. Ma showed us the spots where she used to play as a child and the pond where she used to bathe. Those who had been her companions in her childhood sport told us their experiences. I was drawn by a particular feature in all these reminiscences. Almost all the villagers were saying, "Nirmala spent most of her time in our house - we played so many games together." Someone declared, "Nirmala cooked for us many a time - she always visited us." I felt that Ma's childhood was spent in the warmth of everybody's love. Ma asked each person about his welfare in sweet words and described each one's affection - delighting them all. She enquired about those who were not present. It was surprising that even old ladies

who were related to Ma did not think twice about bowing down at Ma's feet to do pranam. In fact they were seeing Ma for the first time in this state.

Once before we had visited this place but had not met anybody. First we visited Jagadananda Bhattacharya's house. We had darshan of the spot where Ma was born. Subodh photographed Ma there. As soon as we returned from there Bholanath wanted to leave immediately for Kasava. We thought we could have some food quickly. Ma said, "Let us go to Jagadananda Bhattacharya's house and set out from there." We went to the house and heard that Jagadananda's sister had been saying, "When you left soon after you arrived I bowed my head before Narayana and said, 'Chandi left our house soon after she came. I could not serve her'." I told her, "Look, we were to visit some other houses but Ma came back straight here." We had refreshments. Ma said, "Whenever I visited this house, she (Jagadananda's sister) would not let me go without partaking of milk and beaten rice." Surprisingly enough today also there was milk and beaten rice in their house and we were served the same. Before long ladies arrived soaking wet in the rain, with offerings of puffed rice, mangoes and laddoos for Ma. They began kirtan. Ma ate some refreshments.

Just then the daughter of Lakshmicharan Bhattacharya who had been a close acquaintance

of Ma, requested Bholanath to stay on and he immediately agreed to stay for a day. There is a bit of history behind this incident. At first Bholanath had just not agreed to stay here and had declared, "I shall return soon after we reach there." On arriving here he had reiterated the same statement and believing that he would leave immediately no arrangements had been made for cooking a meal. It had been decided that we would just have some refreshments at Jagadananda's house and leave. When we all sat down at Jagadananda's house we all wished that we could halt for a day but since Bholanath was adamant about leaving at once, no one had the guts to propose otherwise. When the crazy Baba comes to the forefront no one dares to say anything. Realising how everyone felt, I told Ma, "Ma, crazy Bholanath insists on leaving today and therefore no one dares object. Please reverse his thinking - then it will be fine !" I said this jokingly and did not believe that anything would really come of it. I just spoke casually. But surprisingly, soon after when Bholanath and Ma sat down to have refreshments, the village folk pleaded with them to stay on but they met with flat refusal. Suddenly I noticed Bholanath signalling to me with one finger to indicate that we were to stay for a day. With all this discussion afoot Ma sat absolutely still - agreeable to whatever was decided upon. When we were to leave and

everyone sat down hurriedly to the refreshments, she did the same. And when Bholanath suddenly underwent a radical change of opinion, we were astonished. Even then I did not recollect my request to Ma ; I remembered it only later. Bholanath, in complete contrast to the decision he had staunchly insisted on till then, now said, "Having come here during the birthday celebrations, shall we go away so soon ?" I laughed and commented, "It is alright, for I see that you have yourself started speaking completely the reverse of what you were saying earlier." Baba Bholanath is simple at heart - he now began enjoying himself thoroughly in the company of all those present. The village folk were delightfully surprised at this sudden change in Bholanath. Lakshmicharan Bhattacharya's daughter began preparing bhoga at her house.

A little later it rained heavily. I heard that people here had been thirsting for rainfall. They declared, "Ma stopped here and granted us coolness." Everywhere we noticed the same turn of events. Jamshedpur had been in the grip of unbearable heat and rains had been scarce. Devotees had decorated Ma's asana with elaborate effort. Ma sat on the asana and kirtan was sung. Just as Ma was taken for a meal, there was a fierce storm and rain and all arrangements were turned upside down. In Calcutta again people were feeling miserable because of the heat and were wishing

that there would be rain to cool down the weather for Ma's arrival. As Ma stepped into Calcutta, it rained heavily and the weather cooled down considerably.

In Baishari we had the same experience. Everyone said, "Our whole country is being cooled by the touch of Ma's feet." However we took Ma to the mandap at Lakshmi Narayan Bhattacharya's house. Ma reminisced, "Durga puja was performed at this house and I was invited for all four days of the puja every year. During my childhood, I spent four days of every puja season in this house." Today again Ma was spending a day at the same house. The ladies got together and sang kirtan for Ma. Ma was taken to many houses. She recognised each person in spite of the years that had elapsed and remarked, "How much this village has changed ! Earlier, not a brick was ever seen here, now all the buildings are made of bricks. I can also see tin roofs on several houses. This village has progressed greatly." Young and old alike did pranam at Ma's feet. Not one hesitated on the score that he was elder. Muslim men and women narrated incidents from Ma's earlier life with great delight. Ma enquired about each one's welfare and made them feel very happy. We were overjoyed to hear these reminiscences of Ma's childhood. This joyful activity in Ma's company went on till one thirty a.m.

Everyone was delighted with Ma's charming ways. Ma made them happier by narrating how she had been so fond of so and so, how she had played with this one, how this person would take her to help out in the cooking when faced with an emergency and so on. Each one of them felt that though Ma had now become so famous, she had not forgotten them in the least. This little village probably never had such a big procession of palanquins arriving altogether as the fourteen or fifteen members following accompanying Ma. Even those who had no idea of Ma's spiritual greatness thought, "She who is surrounded by such glory, is mixing so freely with us" and felt blessed. In this fashion the personification of divine sport spent one day at her birthplace. It was decided that we would leave the next morning.

Tuesday, May 21. Early morning we left for Kasava in order to reach in time for the eight a.m. train. The villagers accompanied us a long way. We reached Kasava well before the train arrived, so we visited the Kali temple at Kasava where Ma's grandmother had found herself praying for a grand-daughter while actually desiring a grandson. The birth of Ma was a result of that prayer. We spent some time in the Kali temple and then went to the house of the station master. When the train arrived we left for Chandpur and reached our destination by twelve noon. Girija Dada (Bholanath's nephew) took us to his house. Ma was seated

in the dispensary. Girija Dada is a staunch devotee of Ma. After Ma's lunch everybody received generous helpings of prasad.

There was a proposal to visit the Kali temple belonging to the sweepers but since Ma had already been there two or three times she was not taken again. None of the devotees wanted to part from Ma and so they just stayed on near her. In the afternoon Ma went by boat to Purna Sen's house. She returned to the dispensary where a big crowd had gathered for her darshan. At ten p.m. we boarded the steamer for Dhaka.

Wednesday, May 22. The steamer embarked only at five a.m. this morning and reached Narayanganj at ten a.m. Before the steamer reached the shore the rain came down in torrents. We waited in the steamer a long time for the downpour to subside. Amongst Ma's travelling companions was a lady called Godavari from Almora and a boy called Kharash who hailed from Karachi but worked in Jamshedpur. He had taken diksha from Bholanath and had taken leave to travel with Ma. He was going to see Dhaka for the first time and was excited about it.

Bhupati Dada had come to Narayanganj to receive Ma. When the rain subsided we boarded a train to Dhaka. As the train reached the station devotees cried out : "Jai Ma ! Jai Bholanath !" Ma was garlanded profusely as she stepped out of the train. The devotees

of Dhaka were overjoyed to have Ma in their midst after such a long time and during her birthday celebrations. Prafulla Babu's wife made Ma sit in her car. The others in Ma's company followed in Satyendra Bhadra's car. We heard that many people had arrived at the ghat yesterday expecting Ma's arrival for she was to have arrived straight from Barishal. They did not know about our sudden journey to Kheora and had received our telegram only last night. Ma's car drove slowly into the ashram where auspicious urns decorated the doorway.

Jatu and other devotees had painstakingly decorated the ashram to welcome Ma. All around the kirtan room the word 'Ma' was inscribed. An asana had been made with the word 'Ma' for Ma and she was escorted to the kirtan room amidst the auspicious chants and sounds made by the women. Nama kirtan was being sung continuously and would go on for the next fifteen days. An immense crowd was present. Ma was offered bhoga and prasad was distributed.

At two p.m. Ma lay down in one corner of the kirtan room surrounded by women. Girin Doctor's daughter Savitri, Yatish Guha's daughters Latika, Juthika and son Gaur, Prankumar Babu's daughter Anna, niece Sumati and son Meenu, had all come. Manik who was in Calcutta had also come with them. Everyone was amazed to see the devotion and faith with

which the parents of these young teenaged daughters had sent them to Ma. Disregarding any thought of right and wrong etiquette they had sent their daughters to benefit from Ma's company. Ma told the residents of Dhaka, "Look, they have proved to the ladies of Dhaka that though you could not go, they could come." Truly, without abandoning thoughts of family prestige and similar ideas, God cannot be attained. We cling to all our faults, go to Ma and then feel sad that we do not gain anything. Whatever we empty, Ma certainly fills it up - there is no doubt about that. She is waiting to give, but do we ever take ?

Thursday, May 23. There is no incident of particular interest to be mentioned today - a festival of bliss prevails. At seven a.m. Ma went out into the fields and sat under a tree saying, "This spot is fine. You people want to confine Ma within the four walls of an ashram. You bow down only inside a temple - as if Ma is not present elsewhere." Saying this she laughed sweetly. Recently Ma's countenance has brightened. She had been looking rather pulled down and now it seems as if a lustre has burst forth - she no longer looks worn out. Her countenance has regained its former brilliance. After the illness at Siddheswari she had not got back to her former appearance till now and was looking pulled down. Whenever I expressed sorrow on this score she would say, "Wait, I shall

become fat again !" After a long wait I exclaimed, "Yes, yes, you are becoming fat, aren't you ?" To which she replied, "Watch and see whether I will or won't." In fact now she looked healthier and rosier than she did before. Yet she now eats less than what she did when she ate a meal every alternate day. Now she has a couple of morsels of rice, or a couple of rotis made of wheat flour or semolina with a helping of vegetable. Pointing to her body she often declares, "See how fat I have become !" Showing her red palms and soles she says, "See how much blood there is - my palms are a brilliant red !" And she laughs asking those around her laugh too.

During the evening arati Ma sat out in the verandan of the temple surrounded by the ladies. After the arati she told me, "Have you brought the songs from U.P. to lock them up in a treasury ? Go and bring the arati song just now." I did so. Ma began singing the Hindi song with the authentic tune and the ladies joined in. Ma had decided she would sleep inside the temple tonight and I spread a blanket for her. Ma told me, "Go with the girls to the place where I slept last night and sleep there." She was asking me to take charge of these young girls. She then said, "See where Annada Babu's widowed daughter is. Make her sleep next to you. Give her some refreshments now." The Universal Mother does not miss out on the smallest details, her

attention encompasses all. She told Savitri and Juthika to sleep in the room. The other girls had gone to relatives' houses - all arrangements were streamlined and flawless. Around midnight Ma slept.

Friday, May 24. At five a.m. Ma rose and came out to the verandah where she lay down. She told the brahmacharis, "You will clean the temple, won't you ? I shall go to the verandah." A little later she got up and walked around the grounds. When she returned, Bhupati Dada's wife wished to speak to her privately and Ma said, "Let's go now." After speaking to her Ma went to Akhandanandaji's hut and lay down. Devotees crowded at the entrance of the hut. Ma lay with a cloth covering her face.

Ismail, from the Nawab's household, visited Ma today and declared, "Today I have been truly blessed !" I heard that he had been to a fakir who had told him, "You must go to Anandamayi of Dhaka - she is in a very elevated state ; why have you come to me ?" Ismail Mian had got news of Ma's arrival from Jogendra Ghosh and had come to see her because of the fakir's advice.

The ladies were to sing kirtan throughout the night and Ma had asked for sandal paste and flowers to be brought. Ma lay in the temple for some time. At ten p.m. the kirtan was started. The personification of divine sport started sporting in various ways. Ma was

dressed up as Krishna. Ma called the young girls aside and began dressing them. She then walked around with them singing kirtan and moving about in different formations. A wonderful atmosphere was created. Finally the girls held hands and moved in a circle around Ma. She said, "Bring the ladies, married or widowed, one by one." Since Ma was dancing with young girls, the married ladies were feeling left out and therefore the Compassionate One called each one in turn and gladdened them by making them feel blessed.

In this manner did Ma bestow her grace on all in the form of sport. Some ladies experienced a total change in attitude on feeling Ma's touch. They seemed drunk with some other worldly bliss. All men had been made to leave. Ma's attention was focussed all around. Kirtan went on throughout the night and till three a.m. Ma did not let anyone sit down. Bliss overflowed. In the morning the kirtan was concluded and bhoga was offered.

Saturday, May 25. Ma spoke to all present and lay down for some time. Pramatha Babu arrived and began calling Ma. Ma replied with her eyes shut, "I shall certainly not get up now. When I am sitting up you do not come. As soon as I lie down you arrive." Pramatha Babu said, "Ma, why do you come for such a short time ? If you stayed longer we would allow you to sleep for a very long time." In connection with this matter of sleeping,

Ma told us later, "Just as I speak to you all now, so do I speak when I am asleep - only you are unable to perceive it."

A little later Ma rose and went to the kirtan hall because the ladies refused to let her remain lying down. After bhoga at noon, Ma went to the temple and lay down. Because of the immense crowd that gathered in the afternoon, Ma was taken to the grounds. No special advice was uttered by her. Anandamayi spoke to all on various matters and showered bliss. Though it was late in the night, people were unable to tear themselves away from listening to her sweet words and seeing her wonderful form. At ten p.m. she came into the temple verandah and at two thirty a.m. she went into the temple to sleep. Nama kirtan was being sung day in and day out and no one seemed to even think of sleeping.

Sunday, May 26. The same kind of programme continued today. Elderly people sang kirtan throughout the night. Bhudeb Babu asked Ma, "You are the Goddess Herself. Then why are we not liberated by your touch ?" Ma replied, "Should you say that to your daughter ? I am the youngest daughter of all of you. I eat, drink and move about." When Bhudeb Babu persisted with the same query she said, "Leaving aside anything to do with this body, all mothers are the Goddess Herself." Professor Naresh Babu said, "Then what are we ?" Ma replied, "You are Shiva."

After much conversation Ma said, "Let us not consider this body ; but in fact the reason why you do not receive the fruit is because there is no faith. The progress is always in conformity with the amount of faith. Yet you can say that though you may not know fire, if you touch it its one job - that is burning - is accomplished. In reply to this it can be said - there is so much coolness that it takes time for the heat to enter. But the fruit will definitely be there. Nothing is wasted ; therefore it is necessary to keep the company of sadhus."

Monday, May 27. Girls below the age of twenty performed kirtan the whole night through.

Tuesday, May 28. Ma sang kirtan along with the ladies, throughout the night. Amulya Dada's wife suddenly underwent a transformation. Ma embraced her and brought her back to normal. It seemed as if a torrent of bliss was pouring forth from Ma's entire body ; witnessing it, all were immersed in joy. No one was aware of anything else. Two or three other ladies also experienced transformation. Bhudeb Babu's wife went into a trance while singing kirtan. Ma gave instructions to make Amulya Dada's wife lie down on a blanket spread over Ma's bedding. That blanket was given to her.

Wednesday, May 29. After the whole night's kirtan Ma went with all the ladies to a pond in a garden adjoining Akhil Babu's house and

had a bath. The large group of ladies accompanying Ma for the bath after singing kirtan the whole night through, and returning after the bath - made a wonderful sight. In the ashram bhoga was offered to children. At two p.m. Ma was taken to the houses of a number of devotees. The priest of the Dhakeswari temple took Ma to the temple. An incident occurred there. A lady made a touching appeal to Ma to cure her of some illness. She held both Ma's hands. Ma was holding a rose in her hand and the rose fell into the lady's hand most spontaneously. Surprisingly, however, the lady did not notice the rose though she was looking at it and it fell to the ground. I noticed it and exclaimed, "How astonishing!" Ma glanced at me and smiled slightly. Later I picked up the rose and brought it with me. While returning from the temple Ma said, "You noticed, didn't you ? She could not take even when given. That is why I say, whatever has to happen will invariably happen. You all uselessly persist in beseeching." I have myself experienced the truth of this saying. Yet there is no doubt that we do receive the fruit of spontaneous Grace.

On returning to the ashram Ma lay down in the temple. In the afternoon Ma was taken to the houses of many devotees. Continuous kirtan was being sung for twenty seven days, for a whole lunar month from the date of Ma's birthday. It was difficult to protect Ma's

body from the crowds. Tonight many people joined in singing kirtan with great gusto throughout the night. Around two a.m. Ma lay down and rested for some time.

Thursday, May 30. Early in the morning Ma took the boys and went to the pond for a bath. Then bhoga with curds and other items was offered to children. Manmohan Ghosh never visits the ashram but he is good at heart and helps the ashram to the best of his abilities. Ma was taken to his house where she gave him a rudraksha necklace. I heard that he had dreamt that Ma had told him, "You come, you are one of us !" Tonight, Manmohan Babu visited the ashram.

Saturday, May 31. Prabhat Babu took Ma to Ananda Ashram to offer bhoga. The person in charge of the ashram, Charusheela Devi, anointed Ma with sandal paste. Kirtan was sung and all those present enjoyed themselves greatly. Then Ma went to Surendra Mukherji's house where kirtan was sung. At Satyendra Bhadra's house we enjoyed meeting a number of people. Ma returned to the ashram and was taken to the house of the Dhankodas. After visiting a couple of houses she returned to the ashram. Many people received diksha from Bholanath. At least two or three people took diksha everyday.

At midnight the Mahanisha Kali puja is to be performed. After the daily worship the doors of the temple were kept open. Today all

were allowed to visit the temple regardless of caste or creed. At sunset the temple doors were shut and Kali's doors were opened. Abhishek and other rituals were performed and at midnight the puja was performed. At three a.m. Ma's tithi-puja was to be performed. In the noon Bholanath had performed yajna. He had started a vrata for twenty minutes every day for his spiritual progress and had now offered oblations into the fire.

The crowds are increasing day by day and it has become impossible to take Ma from one place to another. Because all are making demands on one person ; some differences of opinion and feelings of being hurt are bound to occur and these were already occurring. On the other hand one could see the wonderful manner in which some people struck such staunch friendships in Ma's vicinity though they had never known each other before. Arati and kirtan went on all around Ma. Men and women, brothers and sisters, brothers-in-law and sisters-in-law, mothers and daughters, fathers and sons, all clapped in unison as they sang kirtan. Many fainted as they sang nama-kirtan. A strange spell seemed to enmesh all the people.

Saturday, June 1. Ma was taken to many homes. It had been decided that we would all leave Dhaka with Ma on Monday. All are unaware of how the days and nights are being spent. Professor Naresh Babu, Nagendra Babu,

Nabataru Babu and others have come from Calcutta. Prankumar Babu's daughters, the girls of the Guha family and Girindra Doctor's daughters have come from Calcutta. None of their parents have escorted them — these girls have been sent to Ma and Ma told me, "Always keep an eye on these girls and look after their well being." Our Ma does not neglect any aspect. This night was again spent by Ma in singing kirtan with the ladies.

Sunday, June 2. In the morning Ma went for a bath with the ladies and this was followed by bhoga offered to children. Today again she was taken to many houses. The crowds at the ashram were so huge that we feared that people might be killed if a stampede occurred. In between Ma was taken into the grounds. Today a great festival (Mahotsava) was to be celebrated. Ma sat in the temple and conversed with the devotees. Sometimes she lay down. It rained heavily in the afternoon. Some people had eaten lunch but after that they could not be seated.

The personification of divine sport manifested yet another lila. She said to me, "Come, let us go out for a little walk." I protested, "It is not necessary to go out in such a down-pour !" A little later she said, "Come, let us go to the bathroom." I took Ma to the bathroom and found that many ladies were seated there, singing kirtan. After awhile Ma told them, "You stay here, I shall go out for some time."

She took me along and went towards the open grounds. The rain was coming down heavily. As we went into the grounds we saw Manmohan Babu standing there. Seeing Ma he ran to her and did pranam. Ma said, "Baba, I have come here only for you." Ma walked all around the ground and entered the ashram. Large groups of people followed Ma into the rain and started singing nama-kirtan. Ma began clapping joyously and playing in the rain like a little child. As Ma entered the ashram Bhola-nath stepped into the rain. In the grips of ecstasy he began rolling in the slush. People lifted him and took him inside. When he recovered he again emerged into the rain. Men and women alike lost all feeling of decorum and threw themselves into the fray singing nama-kirtan. They held hands and encircled Ma. No one had eaten. Ma took some khichdi and gave it to two or three people. Immediately there ensued such a scramble to receive khichdi from Ma's hands that she was unable to give any more. She asked Bholanath to serve the khichdi. All the khichdi and vegetable curry was taken out to the ground. Ma said, "Spread your cloth and take khichdi." All obeyed. Some people could not hear Ma's instructions. When Bhudeb Babu and others refused to take khichdi in the end of their dhotis, Ma told me, "Hold the end of the dhoti and serve khichdi in it." Knowing it to be Ma's orders, rich and poor, men and women, all spread

a cloth and accepted khichdi and began eating it as they got drenched in the rain.

It was a wonderful sight. Ma told Bhudeb Babu, "Keep this cloth as a memento of this bhiksha." Much time was spent thus. Before sunset Ma sent Bholanath to the pond with the boys for a bath. She then returned to the temple and conversed with all present.

Monday, June 3. Today Ma was to leave for Calcutta. Suresh Babu's wife, Jatindra Babu's wife, Sadhana and Nagendra Dada's daughter set out with her for Calcutta, while many others accompanied Ma till Narayanganj. All were aggrieved that Ma was leaving, wondering when she would come again. Their hearts wept over the indefinite separation. Ma was garlanded by many and excellent items of food were offered. Ma ate a tiny morsel of each offering and had the rest distributed.

Each person served Ma according to his own kind of devotion. No one seemed satiated with the amount he could do. Ma Anandamayi laughed - many wiped away their tears. Speaking to them consolingly she said, "Alright, look here now - can you tell me why you weep for the one who is laughing?" Thus did she give bliss to those who were torn by the pangs of separation by her various expressions and ways of conversation. So that for some time they all forgot that Ma was leaving. They were engrossed in the bliss of Ma's satsang even at that moment of separation.

Ma said, "Do you know the nature of satsang ? It is like the bird who had been caged for a long time. When the cage was flung open it did not fly out for it had forgotten how to fly. Then one day a group of birds turned up and all at once the caged bird flew out with them. Similarly, though the jiva forgets his true nature, when he understands that someone is free, though he may feel it only for a short while, during a temporary phase, he derives inspiration. Though the influence may seem impermanent the impression remains - nothing is wasted. This is the nature of satsang. Keep in mind that there is special benefit to be gained from satsang." Further, Ma explained, "Look, one can never desire something that one has never tasted. The desire for permanent bliss that each one experiences is because permanent bliss is present in them. They struggle because a covering has fallen over it and till it is found they do not have absolute peace."

The wife of Judge Phani Babu of Siddheswari (this was the first time she was coming to Ma) said, "I had never seen Ma but I worshipped her photograph. One day I saw Ma laughing. I told the photograph, 'Ma, I do not understand - but I do not like your photograph any more - if you do not give me darshan of yourself in person, I shall tear this photograph.' Some days later a man came to tell me that Ma had come to Rajmohan Babu's house

and asked if I would like to go." That time Ma had been to Siddheswari only for a day and had stayed at Rajmohan Babu's house. Others who had had similar experiences of receiving advice from Ma in dreams or in the waking state while doing japa, began narrating them.

We felt exhilarated to hear such incidents of Ma's grace. Phani Babu's wife did not like crowds and she told Ma everyday, "Ma, I will not come to add to this jostle and bustle around you - I like to worship you in solitude." Yet, she would turn up everyday saying, "Ma, what is this ? I have never been like this - why are you making me dance in this fashion ? I am unable to remain at home."

Ma took leave of all and left for Calcutta. She told them, "I never leave you and go away. I am always with you."

Ma visited Dwijendra Babu at Narayanganj for a short time, but still a huge crowd presented itself there. I do not know how people get news of Ma's arrival. Many had come from Narayanganj to the ashram for Ma's birthday festivities.

Tuesday, June 4. At Calcutta devotees were waiting at the station. They escorted Ma to the Birla temple. Birla himself visits Ma occasionally. Nagendra Dada performed havana and worshipped Ma in solitude on the terrace till three a.m. He went into an ecstatic state after the puja.

Wednesday, June 5. At twelve noon we went to Srirampur on the invitation of Triguna Dada. Ma sat with all the devotees on the banks of the Ganga and returned to Calcutta at dusk. Till one a.m. Ma was surrounded by crowds. Some devotees stayed the night on the verandah of the temple, all around Ma.

Thursday, June 6. Ma stayed on in the Birla temple. In the course of conversation she said, "Without unbroken nama-kirtan unbroken darshan is not possible.

Ma was taken to Aparna Devi's house for kirtan and Aparna Devi sang kirtan along with other ladies in Ma's presence. During our return it rained heavily. Basanti Devi and Aparna Devi wished to sing kirtan in the downpour in Ma's company but Bholanath objected and Ma did not step into the rain. We returned to the temple. At one a.m. Ma took the girls with her and slept on the terrace of the temple.

Friday, June 7. Today Ma was to leave for Nainital. Early morning many people arrived including Basanti Devi and Aparna Devi. Ma gave them a kartal and they accepted it with great joy. Aparna Devi declared, "Henceforth, I shall always keep this in my hands whenever I sing kirtan." Kirtan was in progress. Ma left by the ten p.m. train for Bareilly. We were thinking of proceeding to Nainital, Almora and Kailash. The girls of Garbiyan had pressed me to go to Kailash, the last time we had met them. Bholanath is also very keen

to go, therefore we planned to go to Kailash. The hill tribe girls had promised, "Ma, just come to our place once. If you are unable to walk we shall carry you - we shall shovel the snow and make a path for your journey." Great preparations were afoot for Ma's journey to Kailash. Many people wanted to accompany Ma but since the journey was hazardous they had been forbidden from joining her. Amidst the cries of victory and tears of devotees, our train left Calcutta.

Saturday, June 8. Today Ma gave darshan to devotees at Kashi, Faizabad, Lucknow and other places and reached Bareilly at eleven p.m. Devotees were waiting at the station to receive Ma. As the train drew up beside the platform, cries of victory rent the air. Ma was loaded with garlands of flowers and her feet were touched repeatedly. The devotees accompanied her to the dharmasala close by. They enjoyed themselves in Ma's company till two a.m. and then returned to their homes.

Sunday, June 9. Narendra Babu and family, from Delhi, Hari Ram, Narasimha and Manmatha Babu from Dehradun arrived today. Kirtan was in progress. Ma spent the night on the terrace. Even before she awoke, people with flowers and garlands were eagerly waiting for her to get up. Ma spent the whole morning and afternoon in the company of devotees. Many photographs were taken. In the evening, Maharatna, Bihari Babu's wife and I took Ma in a

car and went shopping for essential items for the trip to Kailash. We shopped till late at night.

Monday, June 10. The whole day long the devotees enjoyed Ma's company and at twelve midnight Ma left by train to Nainital.

Tuesday, June 11. In the morning we reached Kathgodam and within two hours we travelled by car to Nainital. Ma, the Mother, spread bliss with kirtan and conversation with the hill-tribe devotees. Pandit Dwarakprasad's wife had accompanied Ma from Bareilly. Avtar Kishan, an income-tax officer, who had had Ma's darshan in Bareilly had taken Ma to his house for kirtan was in Nainital now. All were delighted to have Ma in their midst.

Wednesday, June 12. At twelve noon Ma left for Almora but as the car broke down we had to halt at Ranikhet for the night. A group of men and women was accompanying Ma and they all spent the night in a spacious room with Ma.

Thursday, June 13. At seven a.m. we left Ranikhet and reached Almora at ten a.m. where we stayed at the Nanda Devi temple. All were busy with the preparation for the trip to Kailash. The hill tribe girls were to escort us from here. The path is treacherous and the Bengali devotees were angry that Ma was being allowed to go. The day was spent joyfully.

Friday, June 14. Ma went for a stroll in the morning. Discussion about the trip was on - it has been decided that we will set out for Kailash this Sunday. Rabi Thakur's daughter-in-law came here to meet Ma.

Saturday, June 15. The whole day was spent in preparing for the trip. Ma was herself instructing us about the details. All these days I could not organise the packing as well as Ma made me do today. We are to leave on Sunday.

When we went to Calcutta on the way to Kailash, Bhramar and Nani had pleaded to be allowed to join us, but somehow they could not make it. Bhramar and especially Nani (she is Rai Bahadur Surendra Bandopadhyaya's daughter who has a keen spirit of renunciation ; while in Calcutta, she was with Ma day in and day out) were extremely disappointed.

On the day before our sojourn to Kailash, Ma told me in Almora, "Write to Bhramar and Nani that they are accompanying us mentally." I wrote accordingly. Even before Nani received the letter she had seen a vision in her puja-room - Ma was saying to her, "You wanted to go to Kailash, but could not and were sad. Come quietly and sit in my palanquin and go with me to Kailash." She felt Ma wrapping her in her upper cloth and embracing her. Nani had yet another beautiful dream which she described thus, "I could see it as clearly as in a film - I saw a brilliant light first - Ma

was seated in its midst - a little baby was in her lap. Gradually the baby took the form of Ganesh. Ma was seated as the Mother of Ganesh with Ganesh in her lap. Then again the form of Ganesh was transformed slowly into the form of a little baby ; gradually Ma and the baby merged into the surrounding brilliance."

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