

ANANDAMAYI MA'S
INSCRUTABLE
KHEYĀL

With a Foreword by

P. N. GHOSH
Principal (Retd.) Midnapore College

ANIL GANGULI

Published by
SHREE SHREE ANANDAMAYEE
CHARITABLE SOCIETY
Publications Division
31, Ezra Mansions
10, Govt. Place East
Calcutta-700 069

First edition 1980

All rights reserved

Price Rs. 5.00 or \$ 1.50 or shilling 12.00

Printed by
K. K. RAY
Navana Printing Works Private Ltd.
47, Ganesh Chunder Avenue
Calcutta-700 013

Dedicated to
the sacred memory of
Gurupriya Devi
who had completely
surrendered herself in Ma
and so could instinctively
anticipate Ma's kheyāl.

ANIL GANGULI

FOREWORD

Mr. Ganguli allowed me the pleasure and privilege of reading in manuscript his excellent booklet on Ma Anandamayi. His first encounter with the Mother was certainly no accidental event—it was the preordained starting-point for a new life. The author has attempted through the narration of certain anecdotes to give his readers glimpses into the inner life of the Mother. The outward mode of living, on the surface not very different from that of worldly people, often conceals the Divinity within. The Mother's enigmatic Kheyal seems to have been very convincingly interpreted in the preface and effectively illustrated by the anecdotes.

This booklet will prove a very useful introduction to Ma Anandamayi literature.

P. N. GHOSH

September 29, 1980.
50/D, Hazra Road,
Calcutta-19.

CONTENTS

	Page
Foreword	v
Preface	ix
My first <i>darśana</i> of Anandamayi Ma ...	1
“If you must be angry, focus your anger on me” —Ma	16
“Can a mother forsake a sick child in distress” ? —Ma	20
Ma’s consolation at bereavement	22
Ma’s congratulation on bereavement	26
Ailments are Ma’s “guests”	27
Apparently unreasonable <i>kheyāl</i> leading to the healing of suffering	31
Erratic <i>kheyāl</i> prompting partiality to save a calamity	35
A non-descript blessed with a pearl necklace ...	38
Ma “arrested” by the Police in Navadwip ...	40
Mahatma Gandhi dubs his “little daughter” as “thief and robber”	43
Key to <i>kheyāl</i> in the light of Bhaiji’s <i>Precepts</i>	52



PREFACE

Just a glimpse of *līlā* touches a devotee's heart more easily and more effectively than volumes of abstract discourses on controversial issues such as "What is Ma?" or "Who is Ma?" In the background of living facts, Ma appears in innumerable shades of what Ma calls *kheyāl*. Here are a few anecdotes most of which illustrate *kheyāl*. It may be recalled that *kheyāl* is a form of Indian classical music which gives the singer ample liberty to improvise as he pleases, subject to certain norms. But Ma's *kheyāl* is something altogether different. To appreciate Ma's *līlā* it is necessary to understand what is meant by *kheyāl*. To *kheyāl* she attributes most of what she does or refuses to do.

"What Mother calls *kheyāla*", observes Mahāmahopadhyāya Gopinath Kaviraj, "is really an upsurge of Will in a particular direction which is undoubtedly free and not indicated in the plan of things—it is usually connected with the domain

of special Will rather than the general Will. No law governs this region and there is no interruption in its freedom of activity. Even pre-destination which takes into consideration the triple flow of time-current is not an appropriate word for an urge which knows nothing but the Eternal Present. . . . It is also difficult to say whether it is intellectual or volitional. It has all the freshness of a playful and apparently unpurposeful act holding within itself incomprehensible possibilities."

Once I asked Ma what was meant by *kheyāl*. Ma raised her hand upwards and indicated that *kheyāl* emanated from above. Thereupon I concluded that the motive force behind Ma's *kheyāl* must be the Will of God Almighty. Then, what is the difference between Ma's *kheyāl* and an ordinary man's wayward will? The answer to this question is implanted in Ma's saying: "There is only One and nothing but the One. Everything is in the One and the One is in everything." This philosophical doctrine is to Ma not a mere

conglomeration of words but a living truth ingrained in her which conclusively rules out the possibility of a second entity such as 'I' of an individual as distinguished from the 'One'. Therefore, so far as Ma is concerned, the question of the existence of an individual will apart from the Divine Will does not arise at all. An ordinary man, however, lives in duality. His will arises from his desires and intelligence and is conditioned by his *karma* and *saṃskāras*. Ma has no individual life. Ma is in a state of uninterrupted oneness. Naturally, there is a very definite difference between Ma's *kheyāl* and an ordinary man's wayward will.

Ma's *kheyāl* is usually unpredictable and unconventional and sometimes apparently illogical and devoid of rhyme and reason. But Ma is ever benign and gracious. All apparent contradictions of *kheyāl* dissolve in her into a perfect sense of poise and proportion, inspiring awe and wonder.

Yet Ma is full of sparkling humour and a perennial fund of merriment.

Ma Anandamayi may, perhaps, be called a *crux criticorum*—a puzzle for critics—critics, who delve in theories. Theories too often provoke inconclusive thoughts in a searching mind. *Lilā*, on the contrary, provides peace and joy to a thirsty heart. *Lilā* brings us close to Ma.

The anecdotes included in this brochure have been gleaned partly from my contemporaneous diary and partly from books on Ma and the Quarterly Ānanda Vārtā, many back numbers of which are out of print.

Bijaya Dashami
19.10.80

ANIL GANGULI

MY FIRST DARŚANA* OF ANANDAMAYI MA

It was one of the coldest nights in Northern India—31st January, 1947. The Calcutta-bound Delhi Express was about to leave Delhi Junction Railway Station. I was rushing frantically from one end of the platform to the other in search of accommodation on the train. The porter led me to a vacant compartment and then went away to his other duties. I occupied one of the upper berths—a fact which eventually proved to be of great significance.

Soon after, some important-looking gentlemen claimed that the compartment had been reserved for Anandamayi Ma and I realized that law, equity, convention—everything was against me. I deserved to be turned out of the compartment as a trespasser. However, I was not; on the

* *Darśana* literally means sight or vision. One speaks of having *darśana* of a deity or a saint which means "to be blessed by his sight and presence."

contrary, I overheard the sweet voice of a Bengali lady: "Leave *Baba* (the poor child) alone; he is so tired!" I could not see the lady, but was agreeably surprised and deeply touched by the sympathetic tone of her voice. The sense of the words uttered by her was comforting, the sound simply captivating. My first impulse was to be chivalrous and to leave the compartment. But expediency prompted me to feign sleep. In fact, I did fall asleep within a few minutes, not caring for my fellow-passengers; nor did they bother themselves about me.

Early the following morning I awoke, refreshed by sound sleep. The glow in the eastern sky indicated that sunrise was near at hand. From my upper berth I could see the lower berth on the opposite side occupied by a motherly lady with a radiant face and a pair of sparkling eyes. A cluster of her black, silken hair was overflowing her pillow and swinging in rhythm with the movement of the train. Her gracious gaze, focussed on me, seemed to penetrate into every

fibre of my being. It was so loving, so soothing! I was told, later on, that she was Anandamayi Ma and that by such a gaze she often makes, as it were, an X-Ray examination of a person's personality. Be that as it may, I seemed to read a mystic message in that gaze—a message of love and peace. My eyes were automatically closed in silent salutation. After some time I recovered from the bewildering effect of the first *darśana* and opened my eyes to find the Mother's face covered. I was disappointed.

As the day dawned, I came down from my upper berth. I wanted a seat on the berth below mine, partly occupied by a *samnyāsini*. She looked the very picture of peacefulness. Later on, I was told that she was Didima, the mother of Anandamayi Ma. Evidently, Didima was then immersed in *japa* (meditation with a rosary). She did not speak to me but offered me a seat on her berth and then sprinkled holy Ganga water on my head. I appreciated her courtesy, but not the chilling effect of the drops of water that had

moistened my forehead on that cold winter morning. However, I accepted the gesture without protest and quietly sat down.

Soon I realized, to my dismay, that my fellow-passengers were all ladies and I was the only male in the compartment. I felt extremely embarrassed and out of place. The Mother continued to remain covered up as before and was absolutely motionless. The impression of my first *daršana* kept my mind fully absorbed. Barring the train noise from outside, there was complete silence. Didima suddenly broke it by mildly warning me that I should not touch certain of her belongings. I was not quite familiar with the rules governing the orthodox Hindu way of life; naturally, my uneasiness in the company of my fellow-passengers increased. Concluding that discretion would be the better part of valour, I packed up my bedding and prepared myself for a change of compartment.

Meanwhile, I noticed that the Mother had uncovered her face and was sitting on her berth,

tenderly looking at me. The train stopped at a wayside station and I tried to leave the compartment. However, the Mother would not let me go. Gently she asked me, "Where are you going?" Instead of replying to her question, I simply apologized to her for my trespassing into a ladies' compartment. She uttered two words in an East Bengal dialect offering me a seat beside her. I gratefully accepted the kindly gesture and was thrilled with a peculiar sensation of love, peace and joy. The Delhi Express moved on slowly. Sitting so close to the Mother, I had the delightful feeling that I was being caressed by my own mother. It was a unique experience indeed! The Mother's very presence inhibited speech. For some time there was no exchange of words between us until she broke the silence with several questions of a personal nature and then we talked on various subjects which did not include religion or spirituality.

Occasionally, our conversation was enlivened by the intermittent intervention of a middle-aged

lady with an impressive appearance and of an imposing personality. Later on, I came to know that she was Gurupriya Devi (popularly known as Didi, that is to say, elder sister), authoress of *Sri Sri Ma Anandamayi*. On recalling the next turn of events I blush at my impertinence and tactlessness. Didi made a kind offer of *prasāda* (sacramental food offering) at a time when I was hungry. However, there was a snag in the offer. She added that she was waiting for me to change my clothes, (in accordance with the convention observed by orthodox Hindus) before I took *prasāda*. I told her that I was not in the habit of changing in the morning, adding that I should be much obliged if I got some food from her, otherwise I would have my breakfast elsewhere. My apathy to *prasāda* was bad enough and my attitude worse still. Didi looked sullen. The Mother, however, seemed to be indulgent. She observed with a smile that the rules regarding changing of clothes were not for me. This one gesture from her was enough to make Didi all

smiles and she gave me *prasāda*. I appreciated the Mother's liberal outlook and enjoyed the delicacies received from Didi.

Our conversation, temporarily interrupted by the *prasāda* episode, was resumed by the Mother. Without any preamble she asked me to sing a song and I immediately sang a Tagore song which was followed by an unprecedented experience—the Mother seemed to be pleased with my performance and asked me to sing more songs. For a normal listener one musical recital by me would have been more than enough. Incidentally, I told the Mother how several years ago my prospects of becoming a great musician had been ruined by a well-meaning connoisseur of music who regularly used to listen to my daily voice-training practice. Once he wondered whether I thought that my song was in tune with the accompanying stringed instrument. Hearing my confident answer in the affirmative, he remarked in despair, "Well, if that is your assessment, I

am afraid music is not your line." Thereupon I bade good-bye to music.

I had previously narrated this sad experience of mine to several persons. Every listener enjoyed the fun, laughed at my cost for a few seconds and there the matter ended. But the Mother's reaction was simply amazing and almost alarming. An insignificant event, or rather an adverse opinion, spoiling the doubtful prospect of my becoming a great musician seemed to prove hilarious enough for the Mother to create quite a scene. She suddenly burst into a loud laughter which continued until she was half exhausted. After a short pause, she started laughing again and would not stop until she was almost out of breath. This fit of convulsive laughter went on relapsing at short intervals. The Mother's face turned red, tears rolled down her cheeks and at times she seemed to be almost reaching the point of suffocation. All this was terrifying beyond measure. Didi sternly stared at me with a look of consternation and I felt I was supposed to be

responsible for the mischief. I failed to realize how I was at all to blame. I never had the faintest idea that my simple narration could possibly lead to such a serious climax. I had a mixed feeling of embarrassment and apprehension at this unforeseen calamity. I regretted my original decision to continue travelling in the ladies' compartment, and now I learnt, from practical experience, that the Mother was absolutely unpredictable. Didi gently suggested to me that the mischief could be remedied by offering prayer to the Mother. I considered it worth while to experiment. With all the sincerity I could command I prayed to God (and not to the Mother as advised) that nothing untoward might happen to this strange lady. Instantaneously the Mother again became as charming as before—a gentle smile replaced her roaring, erratic laughter and the alarming symptoms completely disappeared.

The train stopped at an important station—Fatehpur, if I remember aright. Several devotees

forced their way into our compartment and prostrated themselves in salutation to the Mother. I thought it was also my duty to do so. As the train left the station I bowed to the Mother in reverence and was about to touch her feet when Didi admonished me indicating that my conduct had been objectionable. I could not understand why, as it is the time-honoured custom of Hindus to touch the feet of a superior person as a mark of respect for him or her. I did not know if there was any particular reason for not touching the Mother's feet. I imploringly looked at the Mother, expecting support from her. Had she not already rescued me from several awkward situations? On this occasion even the Mother did not come to my rescue. In fact, she seemed to approve of Didi's objection. She would not permit me to touch her feet. I felt hurt. Had I not begun inwardly to regard her as my mother? What did she mean by depriving a child of its natural right and privilege to touch its mother's feet? Anyway, I quickly finished a formal

salutation from a distance and immediately thereafter I left the Mother's berth and shifted to the berth on the opposite side. Soon after, my heart leapt with joy when suddenly the voice of the Mother reached my ears—"Why not come to this bench?" I looked at her and noticed an apparently mischievous smile on her face. I came back to the Mother and she resumed talking to me, as if nothing had happened. This was enough for me to forget my childish pique. The mother asked me whether my people would expect me in Calcutta on the morrow. I said, "No, Mother". "That's very good!" observed she. I failed to understand the implication of such a remark. Her second question was, "Is anyone coming to meet you at the Railway Station?" I said, "No". The Mother repeated her first remark "That's very good!" I was unpleasantly surprised, because a repetition of the same remark seemed to confirm her apparently unsympathetic attitude. A mother who alternately attracts and repels seemed an enigma to

me. Indeed, her "That's very good!" remained a mystery to me for the time being. Within a few minutes, however, I discovered that it had a deep significance for my future life.

The train stopped at Allahabad, the Mother's destination. I was about to bid her good-bye, when Didi told me that I was to break my journey at Allahabad. Without my knowledge or consent a lower berth from Allahabad to Calcutta had already been reserved for me on the Bombay mail, the next convenient train for Calcutta. I helplessly saw my luggage being carried to the platform by two bright-looking boys who had come from the city of Allahabad to receive the Mother at the Railway Station. I got off the train as instructed. Apparently I had no option in the matter. The Mother asked me to get into her car. I did so and sat by her side. Our destination was the famous Triveni, the confluence of the rivers Ganga, Jamuna and Saraswati. *Ardha Kumbha Mela*, a periodical congregation of saints and sages, was taking place there. The

"Ma Anandamayi Camp" consisting of a large number of tents, had been set up especially for the occasion under the supervision of Dr. Pannalal, I.C.S., since deceased.

I stayed at Allahabad as the Mother's guest for about eight hours. She introduced me to Dr. Pannalal, who treated me with paternal care, accommodated me in his own tent and told me in detail his rich experience at the feet of the Mother. Then he took me to the dining place for *prasāda*. The food served there was more delicious than any I had ever tasted. What added to its charm was the fact that the Mother served one of the items and smilingly told me that I should not feel shy nor hesitate to ask for more, if I wished. Her hospitality was unexcelled. It deeply touched my heart.

After *prasāda* Dr. Pannalal again took me to his tent. I asked him many questions regarding religion from a scientific point of view. He genuinely tried to be helpful to me. From his experience he warned me against a strictly

rationalistic approach and advised me that in the spiritual field there was no alternative to faith. Though not fully convinced by his argument, I was touched by the ring of sincerity in his words which seemed to carry conviction. His views were supported by some elderly devotees, benefited by their long association with the Mother, I was much impressed by the narration of the experience of these venerable persons as recipients of the Mother's grace. It set me thinking from a new point of view. My mind was thus being prepared for the climax yet to come.

The time for my departure was drawing nigh. The sun was sinking down to rest on Ganga-Jamuna's breast. Its mellowed rays were reflected on the Mother as she was proceeding from her tent to ours. Her face, as seen by me at dawn, was charming; at dusk majestic. The Mother came right up to me and blessed me by touching me. Then she uttered a few sentences which touched my soul. Her words, too sacred to be repeated and too personal to be disclosed, kind-

led in me a new type of spiritual aspiration and a new awareness of my duty as a human being. This was the beginning of a new chapter in my life.

“IF YOU MUST BE ANGRY, FOCUS
YOUR ANGER ON ME”—MA

In 1948 Ma's birthday was being celebrated in the garden of Dr. J. K. Sen's house at New Delhi.

One morning in the middle of a meeting of *satsanga* a weird-looking man entered the garden. He was dressed in a queer fashion and his face bore a look of insanity. He was obviously disturbed. He walked straight over to the women's side and spoke to each woman whose head was uncovered: "Cover your head, be a *Devi*!" No one heeded him. This seemed to annoy him intensely. He was obviously getting more and more desperate. Finally he approached Ma and repeated his request to her as well. She at once complied with his wish and motioned to the girls sitting near her to do likewise. Every woman in the assembly followed suit. The stranger was visibly pleased at his sudden success. With a triumphant smile he walked across to the men's side and sat down quietly. After some

time, however, he got up, announcing in a loud voice that he wanted to leave. Ma handed an orange to someone to give to him. This for some reason infuriated the stranger and he threw the fruit at Ma with violence. He aimed well, it hit her. A wave of indignation surged through the crowd. Two of Ma's devotees caught hold of the intruder and tried to lead him out of the garden. At the gate he freed himself from their grip and attempted to return to the *satsanga*. One of the devotees hit him and with difficulty the intruder was finally turned out into the street.

After the meeting Ma called the two young men who had dealt with the stranger. She wanted to know all the details. On hearing them, she said: "You are not to prevent anyone from coming to this body. Moreover, you must not beat anybody. To atone for what you have done, keep a fast tomorrow, and you who have hit the stranger may not even drink water." "But how could we allow him to throw the

orange at you?" protested the young men, "there was no knowing what he might have done next." Ma's peremptory reply was: "Never mind, he wanted to return to me, you should have let him do so." Thus, the well-meaning volunteers who had saved an awkward situation at considerable personal risk were reprimanded, whereas the aggressive offender, out for mischief, was treated with unmerited kindness. Strange indeed is *kheyāl*!

The next morning the stranger came again. This time he was decently dressed like everyone else. The insane look had vanished from his face. He did not concern himself with the women's bare heads, but straightaway sat down quietly with men and remained throughout the *satsanga*. When it was over, he went up to Ma and talked to her. She invited him for lunch and he stayed until after the meal. He was found to be an educated, cultured and amiable person. Afterwards it transpired that the throwing of the orange at Ma had caused the man such deep remorse that

he was healed of his mental disturbance. He had been unbalanced and was restored to normality by Ma's grace.

Ma sometimes says: "If you must be angry, be angry with me, for you will not be able to keep it up for long. If you focus your anger on me, it will soon evaporate."*

* *Diary Leaves* by Atmananda; *Ānanda Vārtā*, vol. II/2/186.

“CAN A MOTHER FORSAKE HER SICK
CHILD IN DISTRESS ?”—MA

In one of Ma's Ashrams there was, once upon a time, a young man aged about twenty—crazy, wayward, impulsive and ego-centric. He was suffering from incipient hysteria and was always prone to wrong-doing. On one occasion he behaved so disgracefully that all the inmates of the Ashram got annoyed. With great indignation and excitement they demanded that the boy be expelled from the Ashram. Some started hunger-strike by way of protest against his misconduct and sought Ma's immediate intervention. Ma readily responded. She sent for each of the inmates and enquired if he would like the erring youth to remain in the Ashram. Everybody said : 'No, Ma, he should not stay here'. Under the rules of Ashram administration and standard code of ethics, the boy deserved expulsion. But *kheyāl* is above rules and codes.

Ma, with her usual serenity and gracious looks

said compassionately : 'When nobody wants such a poor and hapless boy, don't you think that he needs me most ? Can a mother forsake her sick child in distress ? Will it do you and the world any good, if this perverse young man be allowed to rot in the mire ?' These words came from Ma's lips with so much tenderness and fervour that the hearts of all complainants were visibly moved. They had no answer to offer. They had to change their attitude and outlook on life.

And this young man is now grown up and is one of the Mother's ardent devotees. And all admire his wonderful transformation.*

* *A Call from Above* by Ganga Charan Dasgupta—*Mother as Seen by Her Devotees* published by Shree Shree Anandamayee Sangha (1967 ed.) p. 85.

MA'S CONSOLATION AT BEREAVEMENT

In summer of 1948, a lady from South India had come to Kishenpur with a party from Rishikesh. Seemingly absentminded and obviously deeply distressed, she told Ma: "First my husband passed away. I was upset, but I could bear it, because I had my only daughter, a lovely, talented child. When she was 12, she fell ill and died. Since then I cannot find peace of mind. She was all I had, so beautiful and promising. When she had hardly begun her life, she was torn away from me. Why did she have to leave me? I cannot understand. For some time I worked in an orphanage. I thought, if I have no child, let me at least serve motherless children. I got attached to those children and they to me. But my heart is still broken. My Guru says: 'Continue your sādhanā'. But I cannot concentrate. All the time I am pining for my darling. Nothing appeals to me. I want my child back. What am I to do?"

Ma: "First of all; sorrow comes from the sense of 'I' and 'mine'. You say: 'My daughter died' and so you grieve. But who are you? Find out who you are! She was the fruit of your body. As long as you are identified with the body, there must be pain. It is inevitable. So many boys and girls die, young and beautiful, yet it does not affect you deeply. You only *think* this one child was your own and you have lost her.

Then there is another thing to be learnt: all sorrow is due to the fact that one keeps apart from God. When you are with Him, all pain disappears. Let your thoughts dwell on Him. Remember that your daughter is now with Him. The more you think of God, the nearer will you be to her. If you must shed tears, cry for Him.

Just as some blossoms fall off without bearing fruit, so do some human beings die young. For a while God had entrusted the child to your care and then He took her back unto Himself. Now He himself is looking after her. One day you

will go there too. Until then keep your mind on God and you will also be with your child.

How do you know that your child is not much better off where she is now? How much trouble and distress life has brought you! Would you have desired a similar fate for her?

Then again, on the level where there is only one Self, there is no question of birth and death. Who is born? Who dies? All is one Self.

The same mind that identifies itself with the body can be turned towards the Eternal and then the pain the body experiences will be a matter of indifference. Since the body is bound to get hurt at times, there must be suffering as long as one is identified with it. This world oscillates endlessly between happiness and sorrow; there can be no security, no stability here. These are to be found in God alone. How can there be both, the world and the One? On the way there seem to be two, God and the world, but when the Goal has been reached, there is only One. What the worldly life is you have seen. Who is

yours? Only your Guru, your *Iṣṭa*. In Him you will find everything and everyone. I am your child."

Several months later the same lady came to Varanasi for Ma's *darśana*. She looked younger and happier. 'I have got over my grief', she said: "I am now reconciled to my fate. When Ma said, 'I am your child', her voice was my daughter's voice. My hair stood on end and I had a wonderful feeling which I cannot describe in words. From that moment the wound in my heart began to heal. I have gained an inner conviction that my child is happy where she is. I am finding peace and am able to attend to my meditation. Now I am planning to go on a pilgrimage to Badri and Kedarnath. I only wish all bereaved mothers could be comforted as I have been".*

* *Old Diary Leaves* by Atmananda, *Ānanda Vārtā*, vol. XIII/1/12.

MA'S CONGRATULATION ON BEREAVEMENT

Inscrutable are the ways of Ma's *kheyāl*. We have seen Ma's sweet role while offering solace to a South Indian lady torn with bereavement. But on another occasion her reaction was totally different. In fact, she greeted with laughter a devotee who had just suffered the loss of his wife. Naturally, the devotee was mortified at Ma's callous attitude and wondered what was the cause of her merriment. Ma's answer was : "*Pitāji !* there is one less barrier between you and God." We look upon death as an enemy. Ma does not. "The pilgrim on the path of Immortality", she has observed, "never contemplates death. By meditation on the Immortal the fear of death recedes far away ; remember this ! In the measure that your contemplation of the One becomes uninterrupted, you will advance towards full, unbroken Realization."

AILMENTS ARE MA'S GUESTS

It is common knowledge that Ma bestows her gracious benediction on all, including people of questionable ways of life who seemingly have no moral or spiritual moorings. Critics, ignorant of the universal nature of Ma's motherliness, often thoughtlessly, and in a detracting spirit wonder why this should be so. Ma's simple answer is given in the form of a question : "Should the doors of a hospital be banged shut against persons suffering from serious maladies ?" In fact, Ma is the refuge of the fallen and the saviour of the sinful. She is nothing less than a mother even to a moral leper. And a penitent moral leper enjoys priority in receiving her kind attention and special encouragement. "I want those very persons", she once said, "who have no prop to support them on their path to a good life."

Inscrutable are the ways of Ma. She seems to be full of sympathy not only for persons of questionable character, but even for "diseases" of

a virulent nature. In August 1976, Ma was taken seriously ill in Delhi. Very high temperature and other distressing symptoms shook her apparently frail frame. Naturally, there was concern and consternation among Ma's devotees. According to the physicians, Ma's body was passing through a crisis. We had no doubt that she must have been in the grip of excruciating pain. But there was no expression of suffering or discomfort on Ma's face. She assured me, in all seriousness, that she did not feel any pain whatsoever. She observed with a radiant smile and complete detachment that even "diseases" were her guests, enjoying *kirtana* centred on her body. I told her that it was our common belief that she could drive away all her ailments, if only she chose to do so. She said unequivocally that if there was *kheyāl* everything was possible and added that there was no such *kheyāl* at that particular moment. I enquired what was the point in not immediately putting an end to a malady so distressing and so undesirable. She

denied that the illness was distressing to her and would not admit that it was undesirable. The illness, she added, had not been invited by her and was not going to be driven away by her. She is never troubled by any sorrow nor has she any longing for pleasure, being above both.

Ma often repeats that "diseases" are beings with definite shapes like everyone of us. "I do not", she says, "send you away when you come to me, but welcome everybody and everything as forms of Him. Why should I make an exception in the case of those of His guises which are illnesses? It is all His play. He is in all forms, be they pleasing or painful. Everything is He alone. This body welcomes Him in whatever shapes He chooses to come. I can assure you that I feel no discomfort; all conditions are the same to me. I am always well."

Fortunately for us, Ma's ailments during Her short stay in Delhi this time disappeared one morning with a suddenness bordering on the miraculous. The same evening Ma left Delhi for

Kankhal, beaming with the glow of health. On her way she halted at Prabhu Dutt Brahmachariji's Ashram and behaved like a simple child that lightly draws its breath and finds its life in every limb.

Ma says : "When you all are happy and devoted to God, then this body is completely healthy." She also says : "I am so closely linked to you all that you are like parts of my body." What a great responsibility for each one of us, indeed ! How few of us realize this !

APPARENTLY UNREASONABLE KHEYAL LEADING TO THE HEALING OF SUFFERING

Vindhyachal, not far from Varanasi, is an ideal place for *Matri Sanga* in quietude. Our *Ashram*, situated on the top of the Astabhuja hill, commands a grand view—a vast expanse of open fields bordered by the Ganga flowing almost in a semi-circle. An ancient place of pilgrimage, Vindhyachal has something unique which makes Ma specially jolly and communicative to those who happen to be with her. Sometimes Ma has the *kheyāl* to go there with a large retinue and sometimes accompanied by a small group.

In winter 1955 an old devotee of many years' standing was fortunate enough to be one of the few to be chosen by Ma for a sojourn in Vindhyachal. Naturally, his joy knew no bounds at the prospect of *Matri Sanga* in quiet seclusion for an indefinite period. Ma and her party arrived at Vindhyachal from Varanasi about midday. The

old devotee was fixed up in the *Bhajanālaya* in the adjoining compound which is always put at the disposal of Ma's guests. After settling down in his room he returned to the Ashram, full of hope for a wonderful programme of *Matri Sanga* during the days to follow. "Mataji has gone", someone told him. "For a walk", the old devotee added, "she will return soon!" "No, she has left by train for Delhi." The gentleman was stunned. He had expected to spend a few pleasant days with Ma in delightful surroundings; but a couple of hours after arrival she had suddenly left. But why? Nobody knew. There was no conveyance at hand, so Ma had to walk to the Railway Station which was quite a distance. She was in a hurry and said she had to catch the next train to Delhi.

Nobody was allowed to accompany Ma to Delhi except a Brahmachari and Gopaler Ma, a naive, inexperienced lady, least fitted for Ma's personal service—she did not know how and when to arrange Ma's meals and she lacked

common sense. Ma's *kheyāl*, too, seemed devoid of sense or reason.

Actually as soon as Ma arrived in Delhi, some devotees were at hand who had much experience in looking after Ma. So, no inconvenience arose. As to Gopaler Ma, she had developed high fever and severe pain in the abdomen just before reaching Delhi. A doctor was called in and he declared that an immediate operation was necessary, which was performed successfully the next morning. Thus by Ma's *kheyāl* which seemed so crazy and erratic, Gopaler Ma's life was saved. There was no doctor at all in the wilderness of Vindhychal, not to speak of a surgeon and a hospital.

No sooner was the patient safe in hospital than *kheyāl* prompted Ma to leave Delhi—not for Vindhychal but for Amritsar where Hari Babaji had been suffering from a painful illness for some time. He had tried in vain to get cured by homoeopathic and ayurvedic treatment, but the only effective cure for his ailment was a

surgical operation. He would not, however, listen to anybody, not even to Ma's advice given in letters. So Ma went to Amritsar in person to take Hari Babaji to Dr. Sen's Nursing Home in Delhi. The great saint recovered completely and lived for fifteen more years. He was lost in *Mahāsamādhi* only in 1970 at the age of 86 in Ma's holy presence.

ERRATIC KHEYAL PROMPTING PARTIALITY TO SAVE A CALAMITY

Dr. P., a senior devotee and a man of commanding personality, has always been *persona grata* in Ma's circle. He was holding a religious function—probably a *Bhāgavata Saptaha*—at his residence in Delhi. Ma, then in Varanasi, was expected to leave for Hari Babaji's place, Bandh, in a couple of days. Dr. P. urgently requested Ma to halt at Delhi at least for a day and grace the function. Ma had not promised anything but left it open.

Suddenly Ma called a Brahmacharini at the Varanasi Ashram and asked her to leave for Delhi one day earlier and to go straight to the house of S., another devotee at Delhi and stay there. She was to inform S. that Ma would arrive by the same train the next night. It was not sure whether Ma would stop over-night in Delhi, but in any case S. should meet Ma at the

Station without fail. S. felt very happy but also puzzled, wondering why Ma had sent the Brahmacharini to him and not to Dr. P. In fact Ma had not even mentioned Dr. P. Elated beyond measure, S. at once arranged for a tent for Ma and a pandal for Satsanga in his garden in case Ma would break journey in Delhi. He also informed Dr. P. of Ma's arrival. At the appointed time S. went to the Station, accompanied by the Brahmacharini. Dr. P. also came to the station, hoping that Ma would allow him to take her to his place in his car. But man proposes and *kheyāl* disposes. Ma arrived and got into the car of S., to the disappointment of Dr. P.

It was probably after 10 P.M. S. was driving his car. Ma was sitting in the front seat. There was no heavy traffic. Suddenly in a fairly deserted street a horse came galloping in the darkness and collided with the car. S. pulled the brake abruptly. The glass pane in front was broken and Ma's forehead had been slightly hit. A policeman appeared in no time and S. had to get

down and reply to his questions. In the meantime Ma asked a Brahmacharini, sitting by her side, to get some water from Ma's thermos and Ma held a wet towel on the bump. Her companions felt alarmed, but Ma said there was nothing to worry about and the bump would be all right soon.

S. naturally felt extremely distressed and remorseful that Ma should get hurt when he was driving. He told Ma he would never forgive himself for this. Ma replied that what had happened was not his mistake at all. A very serious accident was destined for him at that time which had been averted by the very slight injury on Ma's forehead.

One can well imagine that Dr. P. who was the older and more important devotee, failed to understand why Ma had been so "partial" to S. and so unjust to him. Yet, it was not Ma's *kheyāl* to explain to Dr. P. her reasons for what she had been prompted by *kheyāl* to do.

A NON-DESCRIPT BLESSED WITH A PEARL NECKLACE

Unpredictable are the ways of Ma. On the occasion of Durgā Pūjā at Calcutta in 1960, the Agarpara Ashram witnessed a sweet *lilā* centred on a non-descript. There was a large gathering of ladies and gentlemen representing different sections of the society of Calcutta, including some persons occupying the highest positions in India. There was a long line of candidates for *praṇāma*, most of them longing for a glance from Ma and yearning for an opportunity to talk to her. The "big" brothers and sisters were waiting along with others for their respective turn for offering *praṇāma*. In the meantime, a non-descript, dark girl aged about twelve or thirteen, got her chance in due course. She arrested the attention of the whole audience when Ma asked her : "Are you not the girl who had asked for a *mālā* (necklace) the other day?" "Yes, Ma", said the girl, "it was me who had asked for a *mālā*." Then Ma

told her to sit on the dais by her side and the girl did so. A few minutes afterwards Ma gave her a precious pearl necklace, which had been presented to Ma by a Rani. Such special treatment received by so insignificant a creature roused the curiosity of Narayan Swamiji who wanted to know the secret behind this *lilā*. Ma said that this had something to do with the poor girl's previous birth.*

How little do we know about the records of the previous births of those who, to our surprise, often receive special grace from Ma to the exclusion of many who seem to be better qualified?

* *Santān Vatsalā Sri Sri Ma Anandamayi* by Swami Narayanānanda Tirtha, p. 297, (Bengali).

MA 'ARRESTED' BY THE POLICE IN NAVADWIP

Let me now narrate an event that took place at Navadwip, the birth-place of Lord Chaitanya Deva, illustrating the Mother's tenderness and sense of humour.

One day Ma called on Lalita Sakhi, an outstanding figure of this century among the Vaishnavas in Navadwip. Lalita Sakhi told Ma that somebody had informed him that Ma had left Navadwip without meeting him, adding that he had been in a pique on hearing this. Promptly did Ma reply : "It is because you had been in a pique that I have come to you !" Such was the pleasant prelude to a protracted *satsang* that followed in the presence of Ma and Lalita Sakhi. At Ma's suggestion, the audience placed before Lalita Sakhi a few questions on spiritual subjects. Lalita Sakhi gave short answers in simple, convincing language and concluded thus : "We have neither the will nor the capacity for *sādhana*.

The best course would be to seek refuge in Ma. She is like a mighty steamer. Any small boat attached to that 'steamer' will speedily reach the destination without any effort on its part."*

One day Ma suddenly entered the City Police Station at Navadwip. The Officer-in-charge, Naresh Banerjee, was surprised and welcomed her, overwhelmed with joy. Ma took her seat under a tree. A passerby saw Ma in the Police Station and exclaimed, "Look ! Anandamayi Ma and her people have been arrested by the Police." Ma remarked : "I had stolen the attention of the Police Officer for a few minutes ; this is why he has brought me here !" The meaning of Ma's remark was not clear until the Police Officer made the following statement ; "I heard that you visited Lalita Sakhi because he had wanted to have your *darśana*. I said to myself : 'I shall also pray silently and see whether Ma answers my prayer'. I am blessed indeed that you have

* *Sri Sri Ma Anandamayi Prasanga* by Amulya Kumar Dattagupta, vol. II, p. 41.

come".** Ma does "steal" the mind of many. But seldom does the urge for *darśana* arise as it did in the case of the Police Officer of Navadwip.

MAHATMA GANDHI DUBS HIS LITTLE DAUGHTER AS "THIEF AND ROBBER"

Mahatma Gandhi had heard about Ma from Kamla Nehru, wife of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru. He asked Jammalal Bajaj, his trusted associate and "a friend that sticketh faster than a brother", to pay his respects to Ma at Dehradun. Spiritually-minded himself, Sethji welcomed the opportunity. He had a warm reception from Ma and himself immensely profited by his association with her. One day he was going to refer to an event that had happened when he had been in prison. Before he could complete his sentence, Ma remarked :—

"*Pitāji!* you are still confined to a prison! Do you think you have won your freedom? Try to spare some time for the real deliverance—just a few minutes for Him. Service, if rendered in the spirit that His work is being done at His

** *Ānanda Vārtā*, vol. XX/1/16.

* *Sri Sri Ma Anandamayi*, by Sri Guripriya Devi, vol. VII, Part 2, p. 71, 121, 135.

instance, can never be a form of bondage ; otherwise it proves to be bondage in the shape of craving for praise and position."

Some time in August, 1940, Sethji came to Ma's Ashram for *darśana*, with the intention of spending the whole day there. He found *Matri Sanga* so very elevating that he continued his stay in the Ashram for a long period with the special permission of Mahatmaji, obtained through exchange of telegrams. Deeply impressed by the beneficial effects of Ashram life, he proposed to build a cottage in the Raipur Ashram and spend his life there. But Ma would not encourage such an ambitious project, involving so drastic a change in his life. "Look here", she said, "there is no certainty as to when one is going to breathe one's last. For the time being you better start *sādhanā* modestly in your own way."

Thus, Ma gave Sethji an indirect hint about his impending death and a warning that it was high time for him to get ready for the day of judgment. Sethji was wise enough to act accord-

ing to Ma's advice. He built a humble cottage at Gopuri (not far from Wardha, famous for its association with Mahatmaji) and lived there, keeping himself mostly occupied in spiritual pursuits. He once expressed his desire that Ma and Mahatmaji should meet some time.

Sethji breathed his last in February 1942. Ma hastened to Gopuri and offered consolation to Janakibai, the widow of the deceased, and to Kamalanayan, his son. Gandhiji, then at Wardha, sent a message to Ma inviting her to Wardha. Ma responded in her own way, with the following message :—

"Is there any need for an invitation? Invitation or no invitation, this little daughter will, in any event, go to Bapuji (Gandhiji) should there be *kheyāl*."

Mrs. Bajaj, due to go to Wardha, requested Ma to accompany her, but Ma would not. "There is no such *kheyāl* just now," she said, "You better proceed. I may follow on my own, should there be *kheyāl*."

Thereafter, Sri Vinoba Bhave came with a message that Bapuji wanted to meet Ma and was, though indisposed, ready to come to her in a car arranged to be sent from Gopuri for bringing him there. He implored Ma to postpone her proposed departure fixed for the morrow. Ma simply smiled and said—

“This girl has a screw loose and goes by her *kheyāl*, come what may !”

At last Vinoba Bhave took leave of Ma, apparently with a feeling of disappointment. Immediately after, Ma started for Wardha in the very car which was to be sent to Wardha to bring Gandhiji to Gopuri. Gandhiji gave her a most cordial welcome and Ma responded like a little girl. With his arms stretched out, Mahatmaji held Ma's head and placed it on his bosom and Ma remained in that position like a little daughter, with her hand resting on Gandhiji's bosom. Gandhiji began :

“You know, Mātāji, don't you, who sent Jamnalal to you ? It was me ! And who was it that

asked you to come ? Again, it was myself. Jamnalal told me frankly that he received from you what I had failed to give him—peace of mind. You know well how he was influenced by you and became God-intoxicated, don't you ?” Ma only nodded. “Do you know”, continued Gandhiji, “who first told me all about you ? Kamla Nehru. She made a special appeal to me that I should see you.” Addressing those present by his bedside, Mahatmaji said : “Kamla used to look upon her as Guru.” Ma promptly contradicted : “No, nothing of the kind, *Pitāji* ! I am nobody's Guru. I am simply a little child !” Gandhiji, in his turn, smilingly observed : “All right, all right !”

Hearing that Ma intended to leave Wardha that very day, Gandhiji said : “Look here ! Banish from your mind the idea of going away now. Do stay here for at least a couple of days. The settlement of Jamnalal's affairs will take two more days. And your presence will give them (Janakibai and Kamalanayan) peace and solace.”

But Ma remained adamant. “*Pitāji*” said she,

"this little girl is crazy and goes by *kheyāl*. She is not always able to oblige others. But what can I do? After all, this daughter has imbibed your traits!"

Baffled in his various attempts to persuade Ma to stay on, Mahatmaji pointed to the persons present and remarked: "These people will laugh. They will comment that I have failed to persuade my crazy daughter; how am I going to convince the Chief of the Chinese Army? Everybody will ridicule me."

Ma, in her turn laughed at his observation and indirectly ridiculed Gandhiji's apprehension and paid him the deserved compliment. "That's all right," she said. "If people feel amused and enjoy a loving laughter at my father's cost, let them. But I know *Bāpuji* does not pay the least heed to all this. He remains absolutely unperturbed." Gandhiji seemed to have accepted the compliment and said in reply, "Well, I happen to be the *Bāpuji* of so many. You also choose to call me so. That's very fine. In fact, it was my mistake to

have addressed you as Mataji to start with." Exchange of similar repartees went on between Ma and Gandhiji on the subject of extension of Ma's stay. But Ma would on no account agree to postpone her departure. At last Gandhiji gave an ultimatum somewhat like this: "You are a girl who seems to have specialised in outwitting others. But you cannot outwit me." Smartly came Ma's sweet reply:—"In a battle of wits one should counter wit with a rapier thrust of wit. Is it not right, Pitāji?" Then Ma clinched the issue by announcing: "I am sure Pitāji will comply and let me go tomorrow." Still Gandhiji would not yield. "Don't you take me for such a doting father," he said, "it won't be so easy to compel me to agree. I am also a hard nut to crack."

Ma repeated with her winsome smile: "I have no doubt that Pitāji will definitely oblige his little daughter." At last Gandhiji realised that it would not be possible to detain Ma any longer.

