

VOLUME I



AMULYA KUMAR DATTA GUPTA



In Association with Sri Sri
Ma Anandamayi

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Preface

True to the forecast contained in the Preface to Vol.III in English, Vol.I & Vol.II are being published now in English after translation from Bengali in a comparatively short time by a specialist engaged by the Publication Division.

It is hoped these two volumes will be followed by other volumes in Bengali, English and Hindi as well. We are particularly grateful to Miss Sati Datta Gupta — the daughter of the author now resident in Varanasi but for whose help and ungrudging co-operation this division could not have published the series.

The tremendous popularity of Prof. Datta Gupta's writings among all sections of Ma's devotees throughout the world have given an inspiration and impetus to our Publications Division to proceed with this hallowed work as expeditiously as possible, in the hope that our readers will appreciate the hitherto unknown revelations of Ma's Lila as SHE proceeded serenely along HER pre-destined course of life.

A copy of the preface published in Vol.III is also being printed in this volume to refresh the readers' memory on Prof. Datta Gupta.

Shree Panchami 1987.

Publisher.

Preface

Ananda-Varta was started in May 1952, and the first few years saw a single volume incorporating Bengali, English and Hindi articles.

Meanwhile, Prof. Amulya Datta Gupta had published his 2 volumes in Bengali from Dhaka, the first in 1938, and the second in 1940.

With the coming into being of Ananda-Varta, he naturally started publishing articles in Bengali in it. The first few articles were isolated, but important in their subject matter, while his 3rd vol. in Bengali first started appearing from the May 1954 issue.

The English translation of his illuminating articles commenced appearing from July '79. It is this series of articles in English up to date that are being published now in book form, naturally as Vol.III by Sri A. K. Datta Gupta, since it is hoped that Vol.I & Vol.II of his original books will be published in English in the near future.

In the English translations, more stress has been paid on Ma's actual spoken words than on mere reconstruction of events, but all important episode, such as Ma's Diksha, the passing away of Bhaiji or Baba Bholanath etc., have been translated in full.

It is hoped that the reader will gain an invaluable insight into Ma's wonderful life, particularly relating to those events which are not fully covered by Didi Gurupriya's faithful Biography in Bengali due to the writer's ill health or absence from site.

Calcutta
March 10, 1986.

Publisher.

**In Association with Sri Sri
Ma Anandamayi**

CHAPTER ONE

A Discourse on Sri Sri Ma Anandamayee

I met Ma for the first time in Ashar or Shraavan 1338 Bengali era. For a long time past I had been hearing different things about Sri Sri Ma Anandamayee. Some of my reporters were among her most intimate devotees, whereas some others did not stick at hurling indecent reproaches at her. These contradictory statements dissuaded me from taking a resolution to seek her presence, though a longing for meeting her was always there in my mind. As it is said, everything happens in the fulness of time; that may be the cause of the delay. In the meantime I came to know Shri Jagadish Chandra Bose.* He was one of Ma's devotees. The few words he told me in praise of Ma were mere platitudes, not calculated to whet up my eagerness for meeting her. But one day he said in passing, "If you want to meet Ma, I can conduct you to her." It was an opportunity which I did not like to miss. It was very unlikely for me to go out on my own to meet her, a woman. So I accepted Jagadish Babu's proposal and a day was decided upon. As far as I remember it was a Sunday. During the small hours of the night, there had been a good shower of rain. Even in the morning the sky was overcast with clouds, with the sun peeping through at intervals. The roads were almost bare of wayfarers; the Ramna meadow was virtually deserted.

* An employee in the Agricultural department.

I thought that we were all the better for the rain. Ma was expected to have fewer visitors, leaving us a better chance of talking to her. While conversing we got to the Ramna meadow. Jagadish Babu was a little surprised when I disclosed to him my ignorance of the Ashram's location. No wonder, for the temple rose sheer from the expensive green meadow with its uplifted red spire attracting all eyes. Yet I was so utterly lacking in curiosity that I was never bothered with the question of what temple was and by whom it was founded. Worse still, I was never inclined to visit it. However, we were at the Ashram in a short time.

The entrance to the Ashram was on the East. Just on entry one could see westwards a tin-roofed middle-sized music hall (Nat Mandir). Later I was told that its construction was provided for by Shri Binoy Bhushan Sen (Munsiff) in commemoration of his daughter and Ma had named it 'Nam Ghar': On festive occasions it was used for Kirtans etc. To its North, there was a brickbuilt structure like a small cave, with the lotus feet of Ma enshrined within. Attached to it on the North was the Ashram temple. The idols installed within it were of Vishnu, Annapurna and Kali placed in a block upon an altar. Below the altar was the photographed likeness of Babu, a different one. This too was worshipped along with the other idols. The original of this photograph was set in a cave underlying the altar and exposed to the viewers once a year,

during the birth anniversary celebrations of Ma. The rest of time, the cave-door remained closed.

To the North-west of this temple there was a neat straw hut. Its roof was composed of four parts and its floor and verandah were paved with brick. This was Ma's room. Getting to the Ashram we found Ma sitting at the North-east corner of the verandah of that room. An elderly widow sat by her. I thought she was a maid waiting on Ma. But later I was told that she too was a visitor like us.

Jagadish Babu touched her feet while I made my salutation from a little distance. At the sight of Jagadish Babu, Ma indulged in a serene immaculate smile and said, "Bawaji, you are well, I hope." Jagadish Babu said, "Yes Ma, not bad." Ma also enquired about the well-being of Jagadish Babu's daughters. Then a brief pause followed after which Jagadish Babu to make Ma talk, said, "Ma, I cannot take delight in anything." Ma said, "That is how it ought to be. You are all modelled on perfect joy. How can truncated joy satisfy you? You have within you a foretaste of pure joy. You see how it is. When someone is going to the market you direct him to bring certain vegetables. This is because you have already tasted them, the taste is retained in your palate and you want to have one more taste of them. In the same way all of you have a foretaste of Sat-chit-ananda and are looking for the same among worldly things, now in riches and then in position or children. That is how you are

running from pillar to post, but nothing gives you the joy that is inherent in Sat-chit-ananda. So you have no peace, no abiding satisfaction." Jagadish Babu said, "What should we do then?" Ma said, "Go on chanting the Name. Let it be a whole-time preoccupation with you, and you shall have all your desire. Peace, salvation and all else come from the Name."

I said, "If so, where does the Guru come in?"

So long Ma was facing Jagadish Babu while speaking. My question turned her towards me. She said, "Look here, if you think you can do without a guru, there is no harm. Recite the Name on your own, and you shall make it. Nothing on earth is random. Even a leaf falling from the tree has its own significance. You may be aware of it or not, it leaves an impression on you, may be, to be resurrected in the fulness of time. Likewise, the reciting of Name cannot fail to bring its reward. With this difference, though; a patient weakened and prostrated through a long spell of weakness is likely to think that if he had someone by his sickbed, he might have propped him up to a sitting posture, for he cannot sit up by himself. In the same way a person practising religious disciplines unaided, may at moments of weariness and despair feel the need of a guru to bear him farther along the path. A guru is needed as it is difficult to proceed without a prop; but that does not imply that a person cannot address himself to God directly without a guru." Ma said many other

things in the same way. They were ravishingly sweet. And there was always a smile on her face - a smile that every now and then spilt over all around like a torrent. It was a class apart from our smile, overshadowed by sorrow and despair. It was like the stream of Ganges gushing out from the Gomukhi, untainted and free. Body, mind and soul are all saturated by this sacred outflow.

For a long time after this I had no more meeting with Ma. Then we had Puja holidays, during which I went to Varanasi with my family for a change. Mahamahopadhyaya Gopinath Kaviraj, Principal of Varanasi Government Sanskrit College, was a renowned personality. Ever since I was a little child, he showered on me his brotherly affection. Apart from his profound erudition, he had a high degree of spiritual enlightenment. He was a disciple of Srimat Vishuddhananda Paramahansa. One day I discovered in his drawing room a few photographs of Sri Sri Anandamayee Ma, placed beside the photograph of his Gurudev. Wholly free from parochialism, Gopinath Babu held all great men in esteem. Referring to Ma's portraits, I told him, "Where did you get them? Do you know Ma?" He said, "Yes. While in Hardwar, Ma lived at my residence for about a week. Besides, I met her at Varanasi." I said, "Well, what do you make of Ma? To which stage does she belong?" Gopinath Babu mentioned a stage, but it was a philosophical term which meant nothing to me. When I confessed my

inability to grasp him, he said, "Why then did you enquire about the stage?" I was a little abashed at my having arrogated to a speech befitting the wise, despite my ignorance, though I had no occasion for it; for, nothing was farther from my mind than to make a parade of my learning before a person of Gopinath Babu's stature. I told him, "I would ask you to state Ma's spiritual level in common parlance for my benefit." Gopinath Babu said, "Ma is one of those who have perfect knowledge. I have arrived at this conclusion by referring Ma's speeches and her hearings to records in the scriptures." Not that I understood it either, but I realised that Ma was one of the ancient seers who had once proclaimed with full-throated self-assurance --

Vedahanetam purusham mahantam
adityavarnam tamasah parastat.

(I know this supreme purusha, the colour of the sun and beyond the zone of darkness).

On my return to Dhaka after the Puja holidays, I started visiting Ma both morning and evening. In the morning I used to spend with her an hour or two after my college works; in the evening my wife and daughters also went with me. The morning visits were specially delightful as then she had few visitors. I could hear many topics from her blessed mouth. Sometimes she referred to the events of her life; sometimes upon she would come out with her instructions. On some days while talking she seemed to have

passed under a divine inspiration - her face flushed crimson, eyes bright, radiant and fixed but not set on some earthly object. Words of high moment would be coming out of her mouth with an unlaboured ease like the gushing out of a fountain - their potency was self-evident. Her transfiguration on such occasion cannot be put into words - one must be on the spot with an eye on her to realise it. In the evening Ma was generally surrounded by women and we could not reach out to her. Yet sometimes when she settled down on the meadow with the ladies on one side, we could take our position on the other and listen to her.

One morning among other topics, Ma passed on to the events of her life. She said, "There was a time when I was the housewife of a family believing in women's seclusion (Purdah). I had to cover up the whole body and hide my face behind about a cubit-long veil. The doors and windows of my room were closed to shut out any prying pair of eyes. I kept my room neat and clean with not so much as a straw lying around. At the end of cooking and supper, when I entered my bed room, I was perfectly clean, with my hands and feet thoroughly washed. And now? No longer shy, I speak to one and all and do not bother a whit for physical cleanliness. A pretty mess I have changed into! Then we were putting up at Shahbag. During my stay there, I occasionally visualised the picture of a place while cooking. It was just the picture

of Siddheswari temple of Dhaka. But I did not know it then. But as often as I saw it, I had a feeling that it represented Siddheswari-tala. Sometimes I asked Bholanath* about the location of Siddheswari-tala in Dhaka, but he had no idea. One day he took me to a place, thinking it might be Siddheswari-tala, but it did not tally with my vision.

At this time Baul Babu (Baul Chandra Basak) frequently came to Bholanath. He also was asked about the place, but he too was no wiser. In the evening we used to go to Ramna Kalihari to be present at the arati. With the arati going on before me, I fell into a trance-like state and lost all count of time. When a few days passed in this way, the Poojari said to Bholanath, "Your staying here till late in the night is inconvenient for us. We cannot close up the temple and attend to our other works." After this I would not overstay the arati but went back home. Baul Babu who used to be with us, sometimes set out towards the East, as we left for home. In those days the East was a fearful

*Husband of Sri Sri Ma Anandamayee. His family name was Ramani Mohan Chakravarty. Ma had named him Bholanath. In the upcountry he was known as "Rama Pagla." He too was a saint by his own right. He had practised austerities at Dhaka, Siddheswari, Tarapeeth, Uttarkashi, Jwalamukhi and other places and had covered all the holy places of India. He may rightly be called an incarnation of kindness. People oppressed by disease and grief have been known to seek Baba Bholanath for succour.

woodland, but Baul Babu was a brave man, and he picked his way through the dark forest fearlessly. One day Bholanath asked him where he went through the forest so late at night. At that he said that it was to the Siddheswari's place. Hearing that I said, "Siddheswari's place - here?" He said, "Yes, it is here. I shall one day conduct you there." Then one night he took us to the Siddheswari's place. The moment I was there, I found it tallied with my vision to the minutest detail - the selfsame temple and the banyan tree. I went up to the tree and took my stand nestling against it. The visit over, we returned to Shahbag.

"One day at noon I was tucking up my belongings as if in readiness for an outing. The journey's end was not yet clear to me, but I was putting in order the things to be left in the house while the others I wanted to take with me were tied into a bundle. At this time Bholanath came up and said, "What is it now? I said "Let us go to the Siddheswari's place." Bholanath made no objection. It was afternoon when we reached there, and just then I had an idea: I must live there for a week. When I disclosed it to Bholanath he said, "How can it be? I shall not be able to stay with you. How can you stay alone?"

At that time Bholanath was acting as a caretaker of the Shahbag garden. He had to give directions to the labourers right in the morning. So it was not possible for him to stay away from the garden at night. But I said, "Why

I cannot stay alone? I shall be with Ma.* What is there to fear?" So Bholanath gave in. He would go to Shahbag in the evening, left directions for the morning work of the labourers and slept at night in the "Bhoga Room" of Siddheswari Bari. I stayed in the small room behind Ma's image in the temple. Do not think that I practised austerities during my stay here. Nothing of the kind. I would just lie in the room. But my days and nights passed in an ecstasy the nature of which was not clear to me.

When Baul Babu heard that I was to have a week-long stay at the Siddheswari temple, he had the pre-sentiment of something supernatural going to occur there. So he posted himself at the temple gate to keep vigil like Nandi, so as to miss nothing happening there. Thus passed six days and six nights. On the seventh night it suddenly struck me that I must leave the temple. I rose and came out. The day was dawning. Strangely enough, Baul Babu, who had been keeping whole night vigils so long, was fast asleep at the moment. There had been a downpour towards the early morning and it was still raining a little. Not a soul except Bholanath was awake. I hinted at him to follow me and he did so. Coming out of the temple, I made my way

*The idol of Kali enshrined in the Siddheswari temple. It was a very desolate place, with a five head seat (Panchamundi Asana for occult practices of Tantriks). Its celebrity as a Siddhapeeth dated back to a long past.

through the jungle behind the temple. A little way onwards, I changed upon a clearing. I walked round it and then set upon the spot. By then the rain had stopped. Seated as I was, I began to press the ground with my right hand. The soil was firm enough but the more I pressed it, the more it yielded till my whole arm passed underground. At this Bholanath was frightened and said, "Come now, let us move away from here.* Hearing this I took out my hand at once a broad stream of water gushed out like a fountain from the dent, the pressure of my hand had made. It was not rain water, for it was warm and stained red. It reddened my conch-shell bangles. The stain remained for about seven days. Bholanath was the sole witness of the whole thing. A Bhairabi had seen us after sitting in the woodland in the early morning. She thought that we had discovered a hidden treasure. Coming closer she found out her mistake and went away.

When this story was being told, Khukuni didi** was present. I said to her, "Did not you ask Ma why she had chosen the spot as her seat and how it was that a hot spring took its rise there?"

* I heard it related by Baba Bholanath as well. According to his version, "When I saw her about to enter the earth like Sita, I hurriedly went up to her and holding her said, 'We must not wait here any longer. Let us go elsewhere.'"

** Daughter of Sri Shashanka Mohan Mukherjee. From her very childhood, she was religiously inclined and unattached to worldly things. But her parents could not understand her and

Debi said, "Do you suppose one can elicit facts from Ma through lawyer-like cross examination? She does not share her secrets with anyone. All she did was to direct that the place should be fenced off, and there was an end to it."

The spot remained fenced off for a while. Sri Pran Gopal Bose (D.P.M.G. of Dhaka and disciple of Balananda Swami of Baidyanath Dham) had paid for the fence construction. Later Sri Shashanka Mohan Mukherjee (now Akhandanandaji) acquired it on lease and built there an ashram.

That was Ma's first ashram at Dhaka. I heard that even after the construction of ashram, the

inspite of her strong protests married her off to a rich and well-placed family. The marriage proved to be a failure, since after her marriage, she was taken of her father-in-laws house, she could not even for a day lead a normal conjugal life. Her bitter cries and with that the abnormal functioning of her heart made the doctors fear that it might lead to her death and doing anything against her will was forbidden. From then on she lived at her father's house and served her parents, heart and soul. That may be the end all of her life. On Sri Sri Anandamayee Ma's arrival at Dhaka, Shashanka Babu took her to Ma. At the very first meeting Ma behaved with her as if she were ever known to her as her intimate companion. Ever since, she became Ma's chief lady in waiting. A survey of her biography convinces one that she had so far been waiting for Ma. Her religious life was personally moulded by Ma. Though a daughter of Brahmin, Ma authorised her to wear the holy thread and named her Gurupriya. She wrote a biography of Sri Sri Ma.

site of the 'depression' was left intact and Ma used to sit there frequently engrossed with Divine inspiration. Now an image of Siva has been enshrined there. The spot is wholly sequestered and favourable for religious practices. Those who are acquainted with the past history of this place, will perhaps be able to have an idea of the significance of the spot and also of the unusual behaviour of Ma on getting here. The sequence of the strange events beginning from the vision of this place flashing across Ma's mind's eye, her leaving the temple at the dead of night and resorting to the wood-land in foul weather—all would make no sense except in context of Ma's being in some way specially related to this place. These cannot be dismissed merely as just passing whims as they clearly point to a past nexus, though it is beyond us to ascertain it definitely. As for Ma, she preferred not to be communicative.

One day in the morning, I was on my way to Ma, when I found her at the Grand-Ma's (the mother of Sri Sri Ma) house and made by obeisance there. After some rest, Ma set out for Shahbag and I followed her. On the way I saw a man dragging along a kid towards the Dhakeswari Bari, with a rope tied to its neck. The kid was bleating its head off. Ma eyed at it for a while and said, "You will not have to bleat for much longer." I asked her, "Ma, is not Debi worship valid without animal sacrifice?" Ma said, "Why not?" I said, "Then why is this custom of sacrifice? Ma

briefly said, "How few are there to understand it."

In the course of our talks we reached Shahbag.

Shahbag was once the luxury apartment of the Nawabs of Dhaka, located on an extensive piece of land to the west of the Ramna ground, it abounded with fruit and flower trees. It enclosed a number of brick-built structures of different sizes. The dancing hall paved with stone, was specially attractive. Adjoining to it was an extensive pond, encircled by a charming garden growing both indigenous and exotic flowers. In addition to this there was a fully laid out pond for the bath of the Begums; it was mechanically filled with water and provided with an aquaduct for draining away the water. High walls surrounded the pond. The garden was quite extensive and most of it was marred by rank growth of bushes for lack of proper maintenance. Only a small portion was being carefully tended by the people of the Nawab's lineage. At the time it was under the care of a muslim employee. It was not open to the public, but Ma had a free access to it. She was held in high esteem by all who knew her, whether Hindu or Muslim. As followers of Ma, we too had no difficulty in gaining admittance. Ma showed me around the place. Once when Baba Bholanath was in charge of the garden, Ma used to reside here. She pointed over to me the room she had been staying, the place where Kirtans were arranged and also the section where Kalipuja was performed. The Kalipuja had a

history behind it, as related to me by Ma some other day.

The Shahbag had within it the tomb of a Muslim fakir. Ma showed it to me. The tomb was in a room, secured by a lock from outside, but the lattice-works at intervals permitted a glimpse within. About the fakir, Ma said, "I saw the fakir for the first time when I was at Bajitpur and saw him again when I came over to Shahbag. His appearance of Bajitpur seems to have been motivated to drag me here." The fakir had been dead long before the time Ma was speaking of; So Ma's meetings with him must have been at a non-coporeal level. Ma continued, "At the first meeting, he seemed to me to be an Arab Saint, though at the time I had no idea of a country called Arabia and its location. When I said to Bholanath about my vision of an Arab Saint, he was somewhat surprised and said, "You should have been visualizing Hindu deities instead; what vision is this? It makes no sense." When later, on my coming to Shahbag I saw the tomb, I learnt on enquiry that an Arab fakir had been here for a while and then gave up the ghost. The members of the Nawab's family had high regards for him and so he was buried within the garden. On both occasions when I saw him, he was attended by a disciple. I asked her, "How many times did you see him at Dhaka?" She said, 'only once' and pointed out to the spot. Besides, she showed me a bush and said, "At times, scent of incense used

to come out of this bush." From what I saw and heard I concluded that Shahbag though planned as a resort of luxury and dissipation, was yet a frequenting place of saints, as the scent of incense without a material cause implied proximity of Supermen. Be that as it may, Ma standing by the fakir's tomb, told me a story as follows:

"One day Kirtan was on in the dancing hall, when I fell into a trance and got out of the room. Finding a Muslim standing a little way off, I signed to him to follow me and he did so without a word. I came with him to the tomb. He helped me unlock the door and once I stood on the South of the tomb while he took his stand on the North. Thus positioned I lost all power of voluntary movement and my body spontaneously broke into various postures that the Muslims make when at Namaz and out of my mouth sounds streamed out; I had no knowledge what they meant. After a time, all these came to an end and I left the room. Some days after when this event got into circulation, Princess Paribanu's son, daughter-in-law, daughter and son-in-law came from the Nawab's palace and insisted on my showing them perform the Namaz. I told them that I did nothing voluntarily, all that happened was spontaneous. I shall not be able to repeat them. But they did not leave it at that, and accompanied me to the tomb. I fell into a trance again and the gestures and the sounds were repeated. Listening to them Paribanu's daughter-in-law said, "These are

Quoranic texts that she is uttering."

The story over, Ma conducted me to show the grave of the saint's disciple. This grave was not marked by a structure erected over it. It lay under a number of trees which seemed to be guarding its sanctity with care. I respectfully made my bows to the graves of the preceptor and the disciple, after which we walked out of the garden. Now I feel that Ma had deliberately entered into the garden to favour me by showing me round those sacred places. Her visiting the place at that time cannot otherwise be accounted for.

Another day Ma started telling me, unasked, about the image of Kali installed in the cave. I do not remember the whole of it distinctly, but it was somewhat to this effect :

Even during Ma's stay at Shahbag devotees started seeking her by ones and twos. Different people said different things about her at the time. Sri Jogesh Chandra Ghosh, as the manager of the part of the estate owned by Begum Paribanu and Sri Bhudeb Chandra Bose, his son-in-law, looked after Shahbag along with the rest of her property. It was by then that Baba Bholanath had been appointed caretaker of the garden. At that time, many people known as well as unknown to Bholanath went to Shahbag, met Ma and took part in Kirtans and the rest. The garden was not open to all, but even though aware of the ingress and egress of the mass in disregard of prohibition, Jogesh Babu made no special

efforts to stop it. One day Sri Prafulla Chandra Ghosh, son of Jogesh Babu, finding an assembly of people in the garden, complained to his father of the unrestricted entry of the noisy crowd, roughly handling the trees. Under the circumstances, his suggestion was that the man appointed as caretaker, should be discharged. Prafulla Babu is said to have even accused Bholanath who was so enraged that he would have resigned but for Ma's request to the contrary. Ma said, "Let us see which way the wind blows; resignation will keep." After Prafulla Babu's complaint, one day Jogesh Babu and Bhudeb Babu came to the garden for enquiry. Jogesh Babu told Bholanath that he wanted to take Ma to his house and asked if he had any objection. Consulting Ma Bholanath said that he had none. At that Jogesh Babu took Ma to his house and asked various questions. Her answers satisfied him to such an extent that from that time on, he too became one of her devotees. After this no objection was raised against Kirtans etc. in Shahbag. In the meantime Prafulla Babu's services in the Nawab's state were terminated. That very day he said to Ma, "Now that I am out of employment, what should I do?" Ma said, "You are down on your luck now." Prafulla Babu said, "When will it change for the better?" Ma answered, "After eight months." Surely enough, exactly eight months afterwards, Prafulla Babu found an appointment with Comilla Court of Wards. This added to his devotion for and confidence in Ma and

later both the families of Jogesh Babu and Bhudeb Babu came to be counted as marked devotees of Ma. Ma too has been found to be favourably inclined to these families.

However, after the question of unrestricted entry to the Shahbag was settled, some devotees were encouraged to make a proposal for the performance of Kali Puja. It was perhaps on the occasion of Deepanwita festival. Ma's consent was sought and obtained. Four days before the Kali Puja, Ma being invited was going in a car to the house of Sri Shashanka Mohan Mukherjee. In the car Ma was attended by Bholanath, Shashanka Babu and his daughter Khukuni didi. As the car got near the pond in front of the Nawab's garden in the parade ground, Ma was found to be looking at something with her uplifted face turned towards the pond. One of her palms was on her eyes as of one trying to locate something in the sky. She did not bat her eyelids, while there was a divine radiance on her face. After sometime, she was her Self again. But to the question about her vision in the sky, she made no answer. When later she was seated down to meal at Shashanka Babu's house, she suddenly raised up her left hand and kept gazing at the void with fixed eyes, while all eyes were turned towards her with speechless amazement. After the trance had worn off, she was importunately besought to disclose what she had been looking at both the times. But that time also Ma spoke nothing. It is reported that Ma

came out with it a few days later and said that on both the occasions she had visualized an image of Kali taking a dive down the space. The image of Kali placed beside the idol of Annapurna on the altar of the Ashram is said to have been modelled after Ma's vision. It has also been poised on the air with no traditional Siiva displayed under the feet.

However, on Ma's return to Shahbag after her meal at Shashanka Babu's house, she fell into a trance with the Kali Puja only a few days off, and no direction coming from Ma in her present state of Superconsciousness, as to the size of the idol to be constructed, the devotees were worried. At this juncture, Baba Bholanath had a brain wave. He said, "Well, the other day when she was in trance was she not sitting with one of her hands uplifted? We can cause her to be seated in the same posture and the measure taken may serve for the size of the idol." Acting upon this idea the devotees resettled Ma, still entranced into the posture, as on the earlier occasion, looking upwards at a fixed gaze while one of her hands was held up. A measure was taken with a stick from her wrist to the top of her finger. But an idol of that size made to order, would not be ready for worship by the fixed date. Then a search party was out to see if an image of the required size could be found on sale in the market as many readymade images were sold in the market on the occasion of Deepanwita. After ransacking

the image stalls, the searchers discovered a shop with eight images one of which answered the size. Instead of being the usual deep dark colour, it was a mixture of green and blue. The modeller was known to have made the image extra big according to his fancy. All the other images had been sold out, but for that particular one there had been as yet no taker. It was bought and carried to Shahbag. Some say that the incidents relating to the puja revealed many wonder-working powers of Ma, but I desist from recording them as I do not have Ma's words for them. The image did not have the usual after-puja immersion, and the sacrificial fire kindled on the occasion had not been put out. The image followed Ma to her 'Tikatuli', Uttamakutir and Siddheswari Ashram and after the Ramna Ashram had been set up, it was installed here. The Ashram of the time consisted of a straw-hut for Ma and a tin-made lean-to for the image. During this time the ornaments of the image were stolen with Ma away at Cox Bazar. It is told the despoiling of the image of ornaments was synchronized by the shouts of Ma at Cox Bazar complaining that her hand had been broken. I have heard this story from more than one authorities and I mention it here though I do not have Ma's collaboration for it as I do not entertain the slightest doubt about its truth. On her return to Dhaka, Ma got the image refurbished and after the present temple had been constructed, enshrined it within the cave

underlying the altar.

Another day, going to the Ramna Ashram from the college, I found Ma conversing with a number of devotees who were present. As I was listening to Ma, it was rather late when a devotee, in passing, hinted at a snake incident. Unable to make out the reference, I asked it of Ma. Ma said, "There are quite a number of incidents with snakes figuring in. But I shall tell them another day. Today it is late. Go home."

One morning, on Saturday when I went to see Ma at the Siddheswari Ashram, she came out with the snake stories, of her own accord. She said, in the horoscope of one of Kunja Babu's* sons, it was recorded that he would die from injury caused by teeth. Kunja Babu brought the boy and wanted to leave him with me. I told him that it was not needed -- the boy should rather be staying with his parents. A few days after, there was a talk of our going abroad; Bholanath was specially eager for this journey. I made an agreement with him that if we should meet an acquaintance on our way to the station, then the journey would be cancelled and we would be back to Shahbag. One morning I set with Bholanath as my sole companion. It turned out that on that particular day, we met no

known face. Those who worked at the garden in the morning, were absent. Jyotish Babu* had been lying ill in a rented house near Shahbag. He used to pace up and down every morning on the verandah. We went past the house, but Jyotish Babu was not to be seen. Thus without leaving a message for anyone, we went to Vindh-yachal from Dhaka. At that time Kunja Babu was at Vindh-yachal with his family. One day I went out to see the temples of Vindh-yachal with his wife, children and Bholanath. We were climbing up a hill along a very narrow set of steps, with I leading. I was followed by Bholanath while Kunja Babu's wife and her children brought up the rear. I was climbing up absent-mindedly, heedless of what I was treading on. It is always like that when I am out on a hill. Proceeding in this way I trampled upon a snake. The cold touch made me move away my foot at once and I stood up on the next step. No sooner than my foot was up, the snake bit under it

* Jyotish Chandra Roy (Bhaiji), a special devotee of Sri Sri Ma. He was a personal assistant to the Director of Agriculture. At the time referred to, he had an attack of T.B. and was staying at Ramna. It is a common knowledge that he was saved from that fell disease only through Ma's grace. In 1344 (Bengali era) Jyotish Babu went to Kailash with Ma and Babu Bholanath and on the way back, he fell ill and died at Almura. He was the writer of 'Sad Vani', 'Matridarshan' and other books. In the latter-named book, published posthumously, he described his experiences regarding Ma.

* Shri Kunja Bihari Mukherjee, brother to Shri Shashanka Mohan Mukherjee: He is also an ascetic man, named Swami Lutananda by Ma. Now-a-days, he mostly lives in Puridham.

and staying where it was, it raised up its hood and kept looking at me. I also stared back at it. In the meantime, all shouted out, 'Snake, Snake' and all eyes were on the snake. Bholanath was behind me and the snake. Much concerned, he asked me if the snake had bitten me and whether he should kill it. I said, 'No, don't.' When Bholanath asked me about killing the snake it turned aside its head, looked at his face for a while and then slithered up the hill-face into the woods. At this time Kunja Babu's younger son abruptly said to his mother, 'You see, mother, it is the snake-bite meant for Dada. Ma has taken it for him.' It was very strange that such a categorical utterance should come from him — a very little boy.

After that we wandered to different places before we came back to the house. On that day a dish of Kedgerree (Khichri) had been cooked for all. But I ate up the whole, so the cooking had to be done over again for the others. In the afternoon, led by an impulse I roamed about with Kunja Babu's sons and went down to the foot of the hill. While resting the eye, I observed under the thumb of my right foot two blue marks like pricks of a needle. The snake was a cobra, and after the bite I had experienced the working of poison for a while. On my return to the house in the evening, I indulged in a pun to Kunja Babu's son, 'The snake ate (a Bengali pun for bit) me, and I ate rice.'

A few days after we returned to Shahbag.

One day while relating the snake story to Baul Babu and others, I fell weeping at the snake's having gone away like that, but comforted myself saying that I would meet it again.

After this event we once went to Vidyakul. When after staying there for a few days, we were to set out for the station in a boat, I was again seized by a fit of tears. At the time of departure, I fell at the neck of the neighbours present and started weeping. It was like the weeping of a married woman at the time of leaving her father's house for her father-in-laws. I myself was not quite definite about why I was weeping. It was certainly not for my parents, for they were with me. Those who had come to see us off, also began to weep to see me in tears. However, we got into the boat. I was accompanied by my parents, Shashanka Babu, Khukuni and her elder Brother.* When our boat was plying through a canal, I found a snake coming in the direction of our boat with distended hood. Strangely, the snake all the time kept up with our boat, maintaining a distance of ten cubits or so. It never shot ahead of the boat or fell behind it. I kept gazing at it fixedly and could not take my eyes off. I was sandwiched between Khukuni and her elder brother. So long the snake was moving alongside of us, but nobody else had marked it. At last when it approached

* Sri Birendra Nath Mukherjee, a professor of Agra College. Later, I heard the same story from him.

the boat and raised its hood right before my face, the boatman saw it and tried to kill it with the oar. But the oar missed it, and it shunk away. The oar raised a volley of water which almost bathed me. Asked to change my clothes, I said, no, it should rather be dried on the body. Then they pressed me for revealing the identity of the snake. I said, 'It is the snake of Vindhyaçal — a great saint, with a disciple following him.'

At this time I interrupted her with, 'But, Ma did not you speak of only one Snake? How comes this disciple then?'

Ma said, 'I saw a disciple behind the saint. The high-souled one seldom move about without disciples. Even at birth they are attended by their disciples. However, you may wonder at a snake of Vindhyaçal appearing in Vidyakut.'

I said, 'No, I have no difficulty on that score. But if it is a saint why did it bite you?'

Ma said, 'Bite me? Well it did not. Don't you fondle little children holding them by the feet? It was just like that. You see, I am a girl spoiling for being fondled — so the Baba gave a caressing touch to my foot. Ever since he is with me. Then I said, 'Ma, a Siva temple planned by you lies on a tomb.* Is not it the tomb

* Behind the Annapurna temple in the Ramna Ashram there was a small cemented space. When I first visited the Ashram I found it in the same state and on my enquiry to other devotees I came to know that it marked out a saint's tomb. Later Ma had a Siva temple built over it and at her direction the steeple was entwined by a snake.

of this very saint? Why else should you direct the other day for the modelling of a snake on the steeple of the temple?' At this Ma burst into an uncontrollable laughter and said, 'I cannot answer all your questions.'

Ma continued, 'Another day a kirtan was going on at the house of Niranjana Babu.* I was lying in a room on the first floor. They came to me asking me to join the kirtan. But at that time I felt obsessed and could not rise and walk up to the spot. After a while there was a shout, 'Snake, Snake.' At that I stood up, ready to go downstairs. The people were looking for the snake in the rooms. I was staggering down the stairs when one of my feet came down on the snake. The snake was writhing under my toes in a bid to get away. Bholanath was behind me. I pushed him aside and raised my foot from the snake which moved to the foot of the staircase and lay still lengthwise. It was slender and black. Some asked for my permission to kill it. I said, 'Kill it if you can.' They tried to stike the snake with a stick but in the meanwhile it had disappeared nobody knew where. No one could think out how the snake could have managed to make good its escape in the midst of a houseful of lights and quite a multitude of people.'

* Late Niranjana Roy, friend of late Jyotish Babu. He was Assistant Commissioner of Income Tax. Both the friends were among Ma's top-ranking devotees.

Another day I asked Ma, 'I heard it said, Ma that you used to feed snakes on milk and banana on the spot you chose as a site for your Ramna Ashram. Is it true?' Ma said, 'Snakes are still offered milk and banana. Before the Ashram was set up, the spot was overgrown with forest infested with foxes, snakes and many other wild animals. There was also a small dilapidated temple here. As you know, I never do anything on my own. One day I had a passing fancy of leaving milk and banana there. Returning there at night, I did the same. A week later I was pressed by the desire to find out the result of the experiment. Accompanied by Bholanath and some other persons, I went there with a lantern. I saw that the milk and banana were still there as they had been left -- quite untouched, though the place was teeming with animals. What was more, not a straw had settled down on the surface of the milk, which seemed to have been covered up by a lid, just lifted up at the time. At this I said, 'Come, let us share it as a prasad.' But those with me objected. They said, 'We had better not taste the milk, for it may contain poison, killing the one tasting it.' I said, 'I shall be the first to take it,' and pouring a little on the palm, I drank it. The others followed me. Some milk still remained and I left it there. When I went there back the next morning, I found the whole lapped up clean. Evidently they had been waiting for us so long. Later the spot was taken on lease and

after the forest was cleared, the Ashram was set up. The spot had been praised by Ma on many occasions. Once she had said, 'The site of many sacrifices, there is nothing unholy here. Even the dust particles of this place are sanctified. Another day she had said, 'The Ashram here has been prompted by the saints, who in former times practised sadhana here.' Ma always advised the devotees to visit the Ashram and recount Names and practise Japas.

(2)

When Ma was staying at Shahbag and Siddheswari Ashram, many saw her wonder-working powers directly. But by the time I started paying her visits, she had withdrawn all her supernatural attributes into an untroubled oceanic personality. I have never witnessed any of her miracles. Before that many had listened to Sanskrit couplets issuing from her mouth when in a trance. She herself alluded to these couplets to me as if it were a great fun. She said, 'What was strange about it was that while these couplets came out, my tongue was automatically shifted to the proper positions knocking out the correct pronunciations of the words.'

Hearing this one day I said to her, 'Ma, how I would like to listen to a Sanskrit couplet recited by you.' Ma said, 'I cannot recite them of my own accord. Sometimes they come out of me by themselves -- I have no control over them.'

One day I said to her, 'Ma, it is said that you have revealed before some of your devotees your

'Dasamahavidya' forms. Ma laughed and said, 'I revealed nothing. They claim to have seen them.' She made similar answer when I asked her about her effecting cure through touch. She said, 'It is none of my willing. God wills and it happens. I have noticed that when some patient approaches me, my hand automatically touches his body and he is cured. On the other hand, in the case of some other patients, I never felt like touching them. While in Shahbag, a patient was brought to me with the request that I should bring him round. I pleaded my inability to cure a patient and advised them to consult a medical practitioner. But Bholanath was importunate and said, 'You must cure him or I shall give you no rest.' So saying he made room for the patient in Shahbag. For the moment I said nothing. In the afternoon when the kirtan was started, I felt inspired and said, 'Let the patient roll himself on the ground of the kirtan.' The patient came to the spot, but try as he would, he could not roll himself. Yet he was not too weak to do it unaided, for he had come to the Ashram on foot. What was strange was that his attendants too did not force him to lie down there. Later I came to know that he had died on his way back. So I say, nothing can be done except at the will of God.'

Another day -- was it Siva Chaturdasi? -- I went to the Ashram in the morning, and saw many devotees chanting the holy name. After the kirtan had gone on for a while, I fell talking to

Ma. I said, 'Ma, can you divine the character and thoughts of a person, by merely looking at his face?' Ma said smilingly, 'No, nothing of the kind.' The reply did not satisfy me and I again said, 'Ma, I have heard that Yogis can tell everything about a man -- his appearance, his character, where and how he lives -- by looking at his face or even seeing or touching articles used by him.' Ma said, 'I also can do the same. But, you see, if I start telling about your character it would put you to shame.' I laughed and said, 'But I did not ask you to describe my character. I only asked you if you had the ability. Why then did you put me off at first by a denial?' Ma merely smiled and said nothing.

That day something mentionable happened, which bore testimony to Ma's unusual power, which some might call supernatural. It was about 11 or 11.15 A.M. The sun was oppressive. At this time some women came to the Ashram. Suddenly Ma turned to one of them and said, 'These earrings in your ears--they are very elegant. Such earrings are in fashion now, I suppose.' She kept repeating it. Up to that time I had not even for a time looked at the target of Ma's remark--I had not thought it necessary. I had my eyes fixed on Ma's face lit up with smile, eager to catch her way of being witty. Her manners gave her away as a guileless little girl, beaming over with joy over a mere trifle. At this time Ma said to the woman, 'And your eyes -- how beautiful they are! Lucky I had a sight of those things!

of beauty—your earrings.' This made me curious and I looked at the woman. What I saw staggered me. The woman was in her mid-thirties. Very dark-complexioned, her face was devoid of charms and her eyes were big, red-shot and abnormally dilated. The way she looked was the stare of one in fright on seeing an apparition. Looking at Ma she began to groan and then fell down unconscious. I was greatly frightened and unable to decide what to do. There were marks of worries on every face. As I looked at Ma, I found her eying me convulsed with a fit of merriment. I was struck dumb at two simultaneous events, both equally absurd. I could not account for the unnatural mirth of Ma. Then I thought that perhaps Ma had something to do with what happened to the woman. The way she was looking at Ma bespoke that she had visualized in her something, which shocked her into unconsciousness; and judging by the merriment of Ma, there was nothing to worry. Surely, Ma could not be so cruel as to laugh to scorn a tragic probability, if there was a threat to the woman's life. On the other hand, the companions of the woman were perplexed over her. Ma suddenly stopped her laughter and said, 'Seeing that she is conscious, you had better leave her at the Ashram and go away. She will leave when she comes to.' They did not like the suggestion. From the way of their companions it appeared that they blamed Ma for the unhappy turn and their faces betrayed

annoyance. One of them declared that the woman used to have similar fainting fits occasionally. Ma said, 'Well, if she suffers from such ailment, why do you object to leaving her here?' While these verbal exchanges were on, the woman came to, and leaning upon one of the companions walked out of the Ashram. But she kept looking at Ma wide-eyed and without batting an eyelid, so long as she was not out of our sight. After she had gone, one of the devotees — Pramatha Babu* said, 'Ma, it is your doing.' Ma said, 'What did I do? I only praised her eyes. Did not you hear her companions say that she had such fits occasionally?'

It was not clear whether Ma had something to do with the woman's unconsciousness or whether it was the effect of a hysteria-type disease from which she had been suffering. What was to be considered was how Ma picked her up from so many women. She had nothing special about her. Even her earrings which started the whole thing were also quite plain, frequently used by rustic women. A little before the event I had asked Ma whether she could read a man's character from his appearance. I wonder if Ma gave me an inkling of her power through this incident.

Yet I must say that I never observed in Ma an instance of what is commonly described as

*Sri Pramathanath Bose. One of Ma's old devotees and a legal practitioner at Dhaka.

yogic miracle. What I always observed instead was that she at once came to know my thoughts the moment they arose in the depths of my mind. The other devotees are likely to have similar experiences.

In the Ashram, the devotees used to sing to the tune of 'Ma' 'Ma'. When I started frequenting Ma, I found one of the devotees repeating 'Ma', 'Ma' in an unbroken sequence from sunrise to sunset on each Saturday. Now too the sequence is maintained. Only the time has been changed — it is now from sunset to sunrise. 'Ma' is not the name of a deity and before that I had never heard a kirtan being sung to that tune. So the incessant cry of the devotees — 'Ma', 'Ma' — inclined me to laughter, as they appeared to me to be mewling like cats. But I never expressed my feelings to anyone. Nor was it fit to be expressed; it was rather indicative of my mean inclination. One morning I went to the Ashram and found a devotee singing 'Ma', 'Ma'. There was no one else with Ma. I made my obeisance to Ma and sat listening to the song. Ma suddenly said, 'Look here, do not hold in contempt these people (i.e. the devotees residing in the Ashram) because their holy name does not resemble yours. All are God's name. You may repeat any name you choose, you shall be calling Him.' I was ashamed to know that the baseness of my feeling was not hidden from her. Ma then started talking of other things.

Once my wife while bowing down to Ma,

presented to her a Tussoore Saree. It was her desire that Ma should use the cloth at least for a day. But it happened that she would not touch it with a pair of tongs. Khukuni Didi put away the cloth and instead, gave to Ma a new cloth already used by her. Finding the cloth presented by us, thus ignored by Ma, we could not help feeling a sort of sorrow. But there was nothing we could do. Two or three months after this, the celebration of Ma's birth-day anniversary started. It was an occasion for all to present Ma with clothes. The wife of late Bibhucharan Guha, lawyer of Dhaka offered Ma a red cloth. But unlike others, she did not rest content by offering it; she got Ma put it on. Naturally, a deity-like in form, Ma, clad in red, shone like Bhagawati Herself. In a corner far from the place where Ma was seated dressed in red, my wife was sitting. Seeing Ma in her red cloth, she was thinking within herself, 'Ah, Blessed indeed is she who presented the cloth to Ma. She has deigned to wear it. As for the one I offered her, she would not even touch it.' As soon as the thought flitted across her mind, Ma turned to her and said, 'I wore your cloth too; then I passed it to one who was destined to have it.' Hearing this my wife was ashamed and wonder-struck.

In 1339 (Bengali era) Annapurna Puja was celebrated with great pomp on the occasion of Ma's birth anniversary. The 'Bhog' offered to Annapurna consisted of 108 items of food.

In connection with this, some of the devotees were directed to contribute some articles. The direction came through Baba Bholanath at the instance of Ma. Those at the receiving end of the direction were required to observe secrecy about it. But it leaked all the same and after the Annapurna Puja, I came to know of it from a few. I cannot vouch for all, but the two who had received such orders, were both honest and pious in my estimation. I thought that Ma had appealed to the worthy ones for providing materials for the worship of the goddess. I was smarting under a sense of inferiority and thought that Ma's order had not come to me perhaps because she deemed me impure of heart and lacking in piety. But I did not share my thoughts with anybody. However, on the eve of my departure for Calcutta after the end of celebration, I went to the Ashram to render my parting bow to Ma. Ma said to my wife, 'Tell the Babaji to procure some good sandalwood from Calcutta and offer it to worship at the temple. Hearing it from my wife, I at once realized the meaning of the order. Ma was thereby removing from my mind the pains of not being able to offer anything towards the worship of the goddess. As I boarded the train, my head was bowed with hundreds of devoted salutations to Ma arising in my mind. When two months afterwards I came with sandalwood for the Ashram, I found there was no dearth of it there.

Another day in the morning, I set out for the

Siddheswari Ashram to meet Ma and sit with her for a while recounting the name of God. On the way, I met Ganesh Babu.* He also was going to the Siddheswari Ashram. Seeing him I thought that perhaps the object I had in view in going to Ma was not to be fulfilled. For with me alone, Ma was not likely to indulge in talking. She seldom ever talked unless plied with questions. But Ganesh Babu was not the one to keep quiet. He was in the habit of driving Ma into frenzy with the unending volley of his questions. However, we arrived at the Siddheswari Ashram. Scarcely had we got to our seats after making obeisance to Ma, when she said, 'Babaji you just wait a little while, I have a spell of sleep.' So saying, she lay down while Khukuni Didi fanned her. We were four in the room but all silent. Shashanka Babu was engrossed in meditation, Ma was pretending or wooing sleep and Khukuni Didi was dozing off, while fanning Ma. Neither I nor Ganesh Babu could make bold to speak, disturbing the deep-settled silence of the room. So we just kept chanting the Name mentally. Two whole hours passed by. The day advanced and I was eager to get back home. But Ma had fallen asleep directing us to wait; how could I leave without informing her? As soon as I had entered into this phase of my thought, Ma sat up and said, 'Babaji, it is late in the day, will you not go home?' Without any

* Shri Ganesh Chandra Sen, B.A., B.T. A teacher of Nabakumar School, Dhaka.

more word, we bowed down to her and departed. On my way back, I kept saying mentally, 'My Ma is a reader of hearts -- she does not require to be told anything in so many words but knows all from mental prayers.' I have witnessed many such incidents, both trivial and significant which suggest that Ma can clearly reach out to the workings of our minds, even the most deeply concealed ones.

(3)

I have already said, that my college works over, I used to go to Ma all alone. Whatever talks we had, were in the morning. It was not either that we had talks everyday. During my earlier visits, I put many questions to Ma, without keeping to any particular line. With the process of time, my desire of asking questions withered away of itself. There were days when I just sat silently before her and then left.

One morning going to the Ashram, I found Ma sitting all alone in the Northern verandah of her cottage. I bowed down and kept standing. Ma also sat out a whole hour speechlessly. Then she took the initiative with a question, 'Babaji, have you ever seen a mango tree shedding honey?' I said, 'Yes, Ma, I have. But why does the honey drip?' Ma gave a trivial answer, 'The mango trees bears blossoms. These blossoms have honey within them. That may be the cause of honey shower. I referred to a honey shower from a mango tree in the Gendaria Ashram of the late Bijoy Krishna Goswami. The respectable

Goswami was known to have said that if a saint practised meditations and other holy exercises for a long time under a tree, the tree was transfigured and acquired Sattva guna (a human trend of the highest order), and the tree thus activated, shed honey. Ma said, 'It is quite probable.' The tree also is animated. If a human character is edified by good company, why should it not be true of trees?' Next Ma pointed to a mango tree to the North of her cottage and said that once drops of honey came down from it like rain drops. Some honey was collected by placing a platter under it.

I said to Ma, 'Ma, Goswamiji is reported to have said that midnight is an ideal time for religious exercises, for the saints, being then on their passage to and fro, come to the aid of the devotees found engaged in japa or practice of austerities.' Ma did not deny it but said something to the effect - 'Everytime of the day has a dominant spirit of its own and it acts on the basis of the personal equation. The one in the morning is different from that in the evening when the mind is generally evacuated and inclined to a state of quietude. So 'Namjapa' is recommended for this time. In the same time similarly the dominating ambience at midnight is in favour of deeper religious practices (Sadhan-Bhajan). Besides, the appearance of these presences can also be experienced. The proximity of saints or their beneficial inspirations can be noticed, stemming from joy one feels in some special smell. Sometimes it so happens, that when an aspirant is asleep with his

children, the latter start up all of a sudden at the appearance of saints. But the aspirant has no cause for alarm, for if he is mentally disposed to be panicky, the saints never reveal themselves to him. The dispensation of the world is so admirable that the bowl of Divine Grace is always uncovered and the grace is transmitted to a 'vessel' according to its capacity. One gets as much as he deserves.'

I again asked Ma, 'Ma, my gurudev sometimes instructed his disciples that telling of a rosary is also a sort of bondage. When one ventures out to the realm of 'Sadhan', he should not step into a bondage. But I cannot understand how the working of beads could lead to bondage.' Ma said, 'That instruction is not for all. Instructions take different forms according to the worthiness of the instructed. Once one starts telling a rosary, he cannot drop out of it, for then the rosary is 'tamished'; he has to keep it up. It is in this sense that rosary is a bondage.' She also said, 'A person had asked me about rosary taking his stand on the very spot where you were standing while putting the same question to me. This suggests that the spot is in some sense sanctified.' So saying she burst into a laugh and told me a story related to rosary.

Ma said, 'Once I had been to Nabadwip. There Jyotish Babu*, pressed me hard to sanctify a

* Jyotish Chandra Guha, a pleader at Calcutta High Court and an old devotee of Ma.

rosary of Tulasi wood. I said, 'I do not know how to do it.' At that he said, 'Well, if you would not sanctify it, you can at least touch it.' I took it in my hand, and at once I had an idea that it was probably not of Tulasi wood. But I did not express my thoughts. Then we went to Puri. There Bholanath bought a sandal-wood rosary and asked me to touch it. When I took it in my hand, I was again assailed by doubts, even though the rosary was giving out the fragrance of sandal. Then in order to get sure I tore the thread and separated the beads and found that it was of an ordinary wood, only scented with sandal. After that we passed on to Vindhyachal via Kashi. There a disciple of Tripurlinga Babaji of Dolaiganj Ashram of Dhaka gave me a real Tulasi wood rosary, saying that he had himself made it from a dried up Tulasi plant. But being a Sannyasi, he had no need for it. That was why he offered it to me. I gave it to Jyotish, so that in his simple faith, he might not go on telling the rosary, which I had known by my touch as fake. It was God who thus provided for him a true Tulasi-wood rosary.

I said, 'Now I see that one could have a real stuff, by getting his thing touched by you.'

Ma smiled and said, 'These are the rewards of simple faith. It holds good of initiation too. When a child duns the mother for a new object, she places in its hand anything that comes handy and comforts it by telling lies. The child rejoices thinking it has what it was longing for. But the mother is not satisfied. Later, when she gets at

the real thing, she passes it to the child and is contented. In the same way, if a person repeats any mantra in simple faith, God Himself so arranges that the devotee attains the true mantra, by way of rewarding simple faith.'

Another day I said to Ma, 'Ma, we are householders, if being obsessed by God, we abstain ourselves from all worldly affairs, what will happen to our families? Who will earn or bring up our children?' Ma said, 'He does everything. You see, when I was at Bajitpur, since then I do not know what came over me, I could not do anything by myself. Yet there was no one else except a twelve-year old Char-maid who fetched and carried for me. She worked at other households also. Lest the others should come to know that she did more work at our house, she would come during the small hours of the night and did the extra work, leaving the routine works to be done later when it was day. Nobody asked her to put in an extra labour -- she did it of her own accord. Besides she scoured the utensils so well that they shone. One day it so happened that the utensils scoured by her were not well-cleaned, and I took it into my hand to reclean them. So I sat down to scour them again. Seeing that, she thought that the way she cleaned the utensils was not to my liking. Ever since then she scoured them with extra care. Then suddenly she was married off and strangely enough by the will of God, we moved to Dhaka within a few days of her taking

leave of us. So you see, if you leave everything to God, He gets you through somehow or other.'

I said, 'Ma, your case is different. It may not be the same with us.' Ma said, 'When somebody comes to a state when he is rapt up with God-consciousness, he is lost to all sense of the world. You know when Chaitanya renounced the world, he had his old mother and wife. Did he care for them? You go on repeating his name, all your works will get done by themselves. But never leave something deliberately undone to put God to the test. If you do so nothing will be done. Entrust him with everything and He would bear your burden.'

I never put any question about Ma's religious practices — her Sadhana. But from what little she said about herself, I understand, it all happened to her spontaneously. It was as if an invisible super power had moulded her under its direct influence. There was a time when Ma refrained from speaking — but that too was not deliberate. Ma said, 'I had been rendered speechless, so I could not speak. I spoke by gestures all of which were easily understood. So much so, that I could even give directions by gestures for what should be done the next day. The naming of God, on which Ma laid so much stress, had also come to her effortlessly. She said, 'Repeating the name was with me a natural process requiring no effort. It went on within me all the time. When I had to give an urgent direction to someone, there was a temporary

break — the process was resumed; as soon as I had done.' Ma had completely placed herself at the disposal of divine will. She was completely devoid of egoistic perception. She felt herself as a tool in the hand of God. She occasionally said, 'Bhaga (God) is playing no end of games with this body.' When answering a question she said, 'I do not make an answer. It merely comes out of my mouth. The answer is as much yours as the question.' One day I said to Ma, 'Ma, according to the Scripture, people are born out of desire. You frequently say that you have been devoid of desires even from your childhood. Why were you then born at all or set up these temples and Ashrams?' Ma smiled and said, 'At last you have come out with a million dollar question.' But she deigned no reply to it.'

One day, in course of conversation, Ma said, 'I did not pass through the ritual of initiation as the rest of you. I had only a glimpse of it.' I put no question about the nature of the glimpse and how she had it. It seemed to me to be an impropriety to be nosy about such esoteric experiences like intrusion into holy precincts of a temple.

Ma's instructions to the general body of people may be summed up as, 'Go out reciting the name, and you will see everything disclosing itself as a matter of course. I can assert it with such authority as it happened to me. Asan, Mudra, Pranayam — all these stem from reciting the name. Have you not noticed that when

you think of something intensely, your breathing is suspended automatically? Then you leave a long sigh and realise that your breath had been in suspension. The respiratory process is linked with thought. A person repeating the name comes to a state when Pranayam comes into operation as a natural sequence. No separate efforts are needed for it.'

Ma did not lay stress on some special name. She said, 'One can attain his goal by constantly repeating the name that appeals to him. This word 'appeal' is probably suggestive, though Ma never elucidated it. Many times Ma said, 'No one approaches anybody without a previous relationship. A person seeks the company of another to the extent of their relationship. That is why when somebody comes to the Ashram I neither tell him to sit nor to go away. I know that those alone will come here who were associated with this Ashram in their previous birth, and one will frequent it in proportion to the intensity of this relationship. Some, coming once will perhaps never come back again. Some will leave after a few visits while some, having come once, will not feel like going away. These comings and goings are determined by the relationship in the previous birth. It is not that they would repeat their visits or drop out at my dictate.' What Ma said about the visitors to the Ashram seem to be equally applicable to the name one repeats. One is likely to be mentally pre-disposed to the name repeated in

the previous births. Perhaps that is why Ma did not suggest any particular name, but stressed on the choice of the repeater.

Ma was not explicit on initiation or the cult of guru. I could not elicit from her any definite answer on these matters even on questioning. Her main instruction was that one should repeat the name. She said, 'Nothing goes in vain. Everything has its use. Suppose you are going somewhere by train. You come to Dhaka in a boat to catch the train, getting out of the boat you lean on a stick and get into a horse-drawn carriage. While you mainly intend a journey by train, you cannot regard the boat, the stick and the carriage as useless. In the same way whatever you have done to attain God, have uses of their own. Nothing is wasted. One can gain his objective by calling God by any name. What is needed is an unbroken recital of name.'

One day I asked Ma, 'While I recite the name, the mind is never at rest. Is repeating the name with this restless mind any good?' Ma said, 'It is and no mistake. Constant repetition of the name steadies the mind.'

Many among the disciples spoke to Ma about grace, attaching little importance to self-assertion, practice etc. One day a devotee said, 'Ma, where does self-assertion come in? All can be achieved through your Grace. Jagai and Madhai, great sinner and drunkard as they were, were emancipated through the grace of Chaitanyadev.' Ma said, 'There were other great sinners at

that time at Nabadwip, like Jagai and Madhai. Yet Chaitanyadev did not deliver them. Why did he single out Jagai and Madhai for bestowing his grace? The only answer to this must be that they had attained merits in their previous birth.' Ma sometimes said laughingly, 'If someone directs you about where to look for Rasogollas, you are not inclined to try and collect them. You just wait for somebody to drop them right into your mouth.'

One day I said, 'Ma, the Gurudev who has initiated me has taken into his keeping my whole affairs. It is his responsibility to see me emancipated. Why should I then assert myself?' Ma said, 'Quite true. The guru does everything. You keep depending on him and all will be well with you. But the trouble is that you cannot depend.'

Ma spoke of complete self-surrender to God in many ways. One day she said, 'Those committing theft or other sinful acts can get emancipation as much as those living honest life. In fact, there is neither honest or dishonest. What is needed is to get immersed.' From Ma's words I understood that our egotism is at the root of all our sufferings. Emancipation comes when the I-ness is extinct and the sense of being the doer is completely eradicated.

Once a 10/12 year old daughter of one of my friends was drowned to death in a pond. The night I received this news, I did not have a wink of sleep. Next morning I conducted my bereaved friend to Ma. Ma was pacing up and

down the verandah of her cottage. Going to Ma I introduced my friend to her, told her about the accident and asked her to comfort with a word or two. Addressing him Ma said, 'Well, you have courted ill sufferings by arrogating yourself to the position of a doer. You should have no cause for affliction, if you had not been tied to such sentiments as "my son" "my daughter" and could instead have regarded son, wife etc. as treasures entrusted by God. We never mourn over returning another's goods to their rightful owner; on the contrary, we feel peace of mind at being relieved of the trust. If you really love your daughter, do not wail for her, but pray to God for her good disposal in the other world. Whenever you mourn for your daughter, she will seek to come to you; but she cannot do so, it being not in her power to throw asunder the screen which now separates her from you. The attempt can only make her suffer. Your grievings for your daughter will only add to her sorrows. This is not real love. So pray to God for her spiritual bliss and peace.' She said many other things in this train. I said, 'Ma, the girl was sinless. Why then did she have to suffer this violent death? Ma said, 'The sins of parents are sometimes visited upon their children. Besides many are born just to make up the arrears of the duration of life. Take the case of Uma,* she too was a little

* The daughter of Sri Binoy Bhushan Sen. She died very young. Binoy Babu had raised to her memory, the 'Nam Ghar' in the Ashram.

girl, innocent as flower. Why did she then die suddenly? The answer is that she had those few days to live out and she did that.'

Ma often gave moral and spiritual instructions basing on simple incidents. The instructions were highly impressive by virtue of their significance and suavity. One day I was sitting in the Ashram in the morning when halters were taken off from the necks of two Ashram cows and they went towards the pasture bounding with joy. Seeing the joyful frisking of the cows, Ma smilingly said, 'The jivas are gladdened like this when freed from bondage.'

Another day, Pramatha Babu, Nagen Babu*, Baba Bholanath and I were sitting in the Ashram with Ma, when a vendor of puffed rice (Muri) came in. A sack of muri, though large in size, is comparatively light. So the vendor, with the burden on head, was cheerfully having a look around. At this Ma said, 'You should bear the burden of the worldly life the way the muriwala is carrying his. See, how he is smilingly observing all the things even with that huge burden on his head. You too should carry along your shares of the burden light-heartedly.'

Connected with this vendor, something happened and I mention it here. At the sight of the muriwala, Ma said to Pramatha Babu, 'Baba, do buy me some muri.' Pramatha Babu said, 'All right, what is the worry? Eat your fill of muri.'

* Sri Nagendra Chandra Roy, a contractor.

Ma said, 'Buy the whole sackful.' The man agreed to sell the lot for two or two-and-a-half rupees. Pramatha Babu was going to take out the money from his handkerchief, when Ma said, 'Do not pay the whole. Go halves with Nagen Babu.' Besides these two I were the third man in the party. I felt relieved at heart that Ma left me out, as I did not have a copper coin on me. If asked to contribute a share of the price, I would have been put to shame. But as they say danger comes where it is most feared. Nagen Babu said, 'Ma, you asked us two to pay the price. How is it that you left Amulya Babu out of the reckoning?' Ma said, 'Well, let all the three pay. Why should I object to it?' Then looked towards me and spoke to Nagan Babu with a smile, 'You suggested that Amulya Babu too pay a part of the price, but ask him if he has any money with him.' So long Baba Bholanath was silent. Perhaps he had an idea that I could not possibly have come literally empty-handed. He thought that he would prove Ma in the wrong and it would be a great fun. So he asked me with a high measure of self-confidence, 'So, you have no changes on you?' 'None', I said. Bholanath again said, 'Then you have rupees I suppose?' I said, 'No, nothing.' Ma was already convulsed with laughter and when I said that I had no coin to bless my soul with, all present burst into a laugh. Except Baba Bholanath, who fell back into silence, a little discomfited.

Another day when I went to the Ashram I found a gentleman sitting near Ma with his wife and a widowed daughter. Ma was looking at the daughter who was about 15-16 years old. I was much pained at the sight of the child widow. There was a tragic expression in her eyes that was enough to make one's heart cry out at once. Ma was saying something to her and she was slightly smiling. But the smile was so warm that it had but a slender grip on her mouth. I went up to Ma and made my obeisance, at which she looked at me and said, 'I am greatly rejoiced at the dress of this girl.' Her remark puzzled me for the girl was unadorned, clothed in a thin-bordered dhoti with a plaintive listlessness about her face. The sight was likely to give rise to a feeling quite opposite to that of joy. Unable to divine her thought, I said, 'I cannot understand what you mean.' Ma said, 'Why, do you not see her widow's garb? God has freed her from the attachments and afflictions of the world and got her gracefully dressed as a Yogini. She will no longer have to care for her husband, children or the domestic life. Freeing her from all the bonds of the world, God has made her entirely His own. Does not this dress of a Yogini make one rejoice?' I at last understood the drive of Ma's words and was silent.

Ma often tried to explain the profound mysteries of spiritual life, through commonplace instances. One day I said to her, 'Ma, what

is Brahmi Sthiti?' Ma jokingly said, 'What have we to do with it?' The way she spoke made me laugh in spite of myself but I was put to shame at the same time. I was yet to cross the threshold of the realm of sadhana and still asked for elucidation of a very intricate concept. Ma understood that I was abashed. So she said, 'Well, Baba, suppose an M.A. comes to teach the beginners, does it lead to a diminution of his learning or what?' I understood that Ma was explaining Brahmi Sthiti. Just as an M.A. giving lessons to little children, has his learning intact in his words and thoughts — it neither decreases nor increases — in the same way, once a man has got his anchorage in Brahma, he is not dislodged from his position even slightly, though he may attend to worldly pursuits. Listening to her question, I said to Ma, 'Ma, this is Brahmi Sthiti. I have understood it.' Ma said, 'Yes, you have understood only so far as it is possible through words. That implied that Brahmi Sthiti is something to be realized — it cannot be imparted through words; only a very remote idea can be conveyed that way.'

Ma took many occasions to suggest that spiritual experiences cannot be expressed through words. Even what we describe as Brahmananda is not, we were told, Ananda or joy in the true sense of the term. Ma said, 'Joy is always correlated with sorrow. The experience of Brahma is beyond both joy and sorrow. As observing a wet pitcher from the distance you

conclude that it is filled with water, for generally a water-filled pitcher appears wet, in the same way, the ways and manners of one conscious of Brahma, betrays something akin to joy, but it is not joy. What it is, lies beyond the range of words.'

Another day I said, 'Ma, does one need to pass through a separate discipline to be a Jatismar, or does it come as a bye-product to one proceeding along the path leading to Brahma?' Ma said, 'Who is a Jatismar?' I said, 'Jatismars are those who have memories of their previous births.' Ma said, 'All religious practices (Sadhan-bhajan) aim at knowing oneself. To know himself perfectly a man has to know all -- what he was, what he has become and what he will be afterwards.' Through religious practices, one attains this Self-knowledge. So the memories of previous births or being a Jatismar -- all come through the repetition of name. No separate efforts are required.'

Ma further said, 'While repeating names one gets acquainted with many miraculous experiences and attains them. These are the landmarks along the path of sadhana. As they appear, one should be content merely by turning cursory looks at them. Once the aspirant starts toying with them, he cannot reach his goal, but gets way-bound. Suppose you are going to the railway station from this Ashram. On the way you will find houses, the college and many things else. If you pass on without heeding to

them, you will be able to reach the station. But if you take into your head to go into the college and see what it is like, then you will get stuck to the college and there will be no knowing when and if at all you will get to the station.

Though while giving instructions or explaining a profound theory, Ma picked up examples from the everyday incidents of our life, yet many times it so happened that I could not realise well what she meant. One day she said, 'That seeing is worthy of being so called, which once seen, removes the desire of seeing it for ever. That hearing is the ideal one which once heard, leaves behind no desire for hearing it.' At that I said, 'Ma, why should it be so? We have heard it said that God sometimes reveals Himself momentarily to an aspirant in order to encourage him and whet his desire to see Him. Should we not regard such sights as worthy?' Ma said, 'I told you just now that what once seen leaves nothing to be seen any more with even the desire of seeing extinguished, is a sight par excellence.' What she said now was only a repetition of her earlier statement. But she did not enter into further explanation.

I often told Ma about my Gurudev. One day in the context of some talk, Ma said, 'You are not a disciple, but only trying to be one.' I said, 'Why Ma, I was duly initiated by a guru. What then is wanting in my being a disciple?' Ma gave a new interpretation of the word 'disciple', which was beyond my comprehension.

One day while talking to the celebrated Ram Thakur, I came to understand the hidden meaning of Ma's statement. When I asked Ram Thakur about Guru-disciple relationship, he at first made an answer which I could not grasp. Then in order to have a simpler explanation, I said, 'Baba, I could not follow you. What I want to know is, if somebody approaches you seeking a 'name' (ista-mantra) and if you desire to initiate him into one, how would he be related to you? Is not he your disciple?' He said, 'Not yet. The disciple is one who obeys his guru with all his heart and soul. Do you not know the story of Aruni? The guru ordered him to stem the water flowing into the field. Aruni tried the whole day long to keep the water out but having failed, laid himself down across the inlet. Then the guru appeared and bade him rise up. You cannot be a 'Shisya' (disciple) unless you lay yourself down like Aruni.' So at last I understood what Ma meant when she said, 'You are not a disciple, but only trying to be one.' The hall-mark of a disciple is a complete Self-surrender to guru. So long as there is no such Self-surrender, an impulse for seeking protection does not arise and he is not purged of the last vestige of initiative, a disciple is not entitled to being so called.

Ma often said, 'It is not I who answer the questions you put to me. The answers are as much yours as the questions, except that they

come out of my lips.' Such a statement appears to be a riddle. Yet, there is no disbelieving Ma. She said more than once, 'What I say cannot be false, for I say nothing.' It is He who makes me say whatever it is.' The way she said all these admitted of no doubts. She had effected a complete dissolution of her individuality and her limited personal consciousness and existed in indistinguishable communion with the unique Super Consciousness; so it was beyond us to trace back her inspiration to its root or to comprehend her statements in their entirety.

Many times I had an idea that Ma answered the same question of her devotees differently, so as to suit their mental proclivities. One day Ganesh Babu and I were sitting near Ma in the Ashram, when Ganesh Babu said, 'Ma, are not a disciple and a devotee the same?' Ma said, 'Yes.' I said, 'Ma, perhaps there is a difference between them. The devotee seeks the hand of the guru, while the guru never lets go the hand of the disciple.' Ma said, 'Quite so.' She satisfied both of us.

Only a negligible little of Ma's instructions have been reproduced here and that too in a skeletal form, denuded of flesh and blood. Those who heard Ma's instructions from her lips can alone bear testimony to their supreme sweetness. The inimitable style of Ma's speeches cannot be reproduced in words. Besides, the whole gamut of expressions flashing across Ma's face and eyes would baffle all attempts

of analysis. Sometimes she gave one the impression of a marmoreal structure, unattached, uninvolved, and beyond the reach of weals and woes. Another moment she figured as the mother of the universe, the remover of sufferings, the purifier of the world — and embodiment of pity.

It was the day after Siva Chaturdashi in 1338 (Bengali era). Ma was sitting outside the Ashram in the morning.

I approached her and sat near her. A little afterwards, Khukuni Didi, Baby Didi and another woman came to Ma. They had come to make their obeisance to Ma. They said, after having repeated the name all throughout the previous night at the Siddheswari Ashram they made their bows to Ma. Baby Didi said smilingly with a childlike insistence, 'Ma, now that we have kept a nightlong vigil, repeating the name, you will love us all the more, Won't you?' Ma made no answer but kept looking at the meadow, with a smile on her lips. After they left I said, 'Ma, when Baby Didi asked you if you would love her more, I felt like saying that Ma could neither love or hate anybody. To make an appeal to Ma was the same as to a stone idol in a temple.' Hearing this, Ms laughed and said, 'Yes, it is true that I can neither love nor hate. But it is equally true that nobody can love as much as I.' A message of hope indeed!

In 1339, just before the celebration of Ma's birthday, there was a talk of a tubewell being

constructed in the Ashram. In connection with that Tarak Babu,* and Prafulla Babu,** had come to the Ashram one day at noon. When Prafulla Babu asked Ma about the site of the tubewell, Ma said, 'What do I know? I am your daughter. You shall offer me water and I shall drink it. I shall accept whatever you offer. If you give me muddy water, I have to clean it for you.'

What Ma said spelt a great hope for the people sinking in the whirlpool of filthy worldly pursuits. We also say, 'Let it be so Ma, may our hearts contaminated by lust be rendered fit for Service to God at your sanctifying touch.'

* Dr. Tarak Chandra Dutta. He was Asst. Superintendent of the Dhaka Medical School.

** Sri Prafulla Chandra Ghosh, son of Sri Jogesh Chandra Ghosh, referred to before.

Meeting Ma at Dehradun

After her birthday celebrations in 1339, Ma suddenly left Dhaka for indefinite period with the late Jyotish Babu and Baba Bholanath. It was not Ma's nature to do anything in a pre-arranged way like the people in general. She was not swayed by decisional hesitancy. Resolutions appeared from time to time in her mental firmament like breakers on the sea to be at once converted into actions. That was how Ma's conducts were enigmatic on the one hand and irresistible on the other. On the last day of the celebrations, people thoroughly worn out were taking rest at Ashram. It was ten O'clock at night. Ma suddenly said that she would depart from Dhaka that very night. Jyotish Babu was at once summoned from his house and Ma left by the 12 O'clock train. Jyotish Babu had no time to collect a cloth to change into, and even to take leave of his wife and son. They arrived at Dehradun via Gorakhpur, Lucknow and other places. Later they all had their abode in a desolate Siva temple in the village Raipur at a distance of 4/5 miles from Dehradun. Here Baba Bholanath went into his austerities. He took the vow of silence and spent days and nights in religious practices within the temple. Jyotish Babu stayed with them for a while and then went back to Dhaka where he was in service. But he too could not be in the service for much longer. He took

premature retirement from the service and went to join Ma. Having stayed at Raipur for sometime, Baba Bholanath moved over to Uttar Kashi and there engaged himself in severe asceticism. As for Ma, she was touring past Mussoorie, Dehradun, Hardwar and other places accompanied by Jyotish Babu.

After about two-year-long austerities at Uttar Kashi, Baba Bholanath had a temple constructed there and enshrined idols in it. On the occasion of the foundation of that temple, many devotees assembled from Dhaka and Calcutta and Ma went to Uttar Kashi along with them. After the foundation of the temple, Baba Bholanath went to places at random for a while and then went to Jwalamukhi where he resumed his austerities. At this time Ma went to Baidyanath and other places with Jyotish Babu and at last went back to Dehradun to settle there.

About three years had passed since Ma left Dehradun. Not having seen her even for a while during this long time, I became somewhat restless. In 1342 during the Puja vacation, I left for Dehradun to see Ma.

On 25th Ashwin, I set out with my wife and my youngest daughter, Sati, for Hardwar by Dehradun Express. Jyotish Babu had written to me in a letter, that in case we went to Dehradun via Hardwar, then we should seek Nanki Bai's Dharamsala for informations of Ma. We booked for Hardwar, instead of for Dehradun, in case Ma should be staying at Hardwar. We

reached Hardwar on the 27th Ashwin, and not finding Ma there, left for Dehradun that very day by the nine O'clock train. Arriving at Dehradun at 12 O'clock, we found ourselves in a fresh difficulty. Jyotish Babu had given me Ma's address at Hardwar but not where she stayed at Dehradun. So we went out in search of Ma in a tonga. After a long search we found her at House No.59, Raipur Road. The house was fairly large. In one part of it the householders dwelt, while the other part at some distance was used as an abode for the ascetics. This other part was named Krishnashram and it was here that Ma was staying at the time.

On entering the house we found Ma lying in the Western verandah, covered all over with clothes. We mentally offered her bows just as she was and had to go out in search of a dwelling place. Jyotish Babu had arranged a quarter for us, but we found it inconvenient in many respects. Jyoti Babu* acted as our guide. At his direction we went to the Tajmahal Hotel and rented a room at a rupee and a half per day. After taking bath and lunch there, we again set out for Ma.

It was about half past three or four P.M. This time we found Ma seated on a chair in the Eastern verandah. As soon as I made my obeisance, she laughed aloud and said, 'On

* Sri Narasingha Chatterjee, M.A. then a lecturer at the Mathura College. Ma had named him 'Jyoti'.

my waking I was saying, so, the Babaji left me while I was lying.'

I : Ma, we had no place to put up at, previously arranged. So I had gone to fix up a quarter and could not wait.

Ma : I have been informed of it.

As Sati bowed down to her, Ma said, 'So my locks of hair has come. Two days before I was thinking, I am here, but my hair is somewhere else.'

I : Ma, what does it mean?

Ma: Do you hear it for the first time that her (i.e. Sati's) hair is my hair?

I : No, I heard it before. But what does it mean?

Ma made no reply — She only giggled and said, 'Babaji has a misgiving.' Then she asked for the recent news of those at Dhaka.

I : Why do you ask me? As if you did not know them yourself?

Ma again broke into one of her world-enchanting smiles. Then she said, 'But I must have something to say.'

I : So you then ask those questions merely to keep up the dialogue?

Ma had another outburst of laugh. Swami Shankarananda said, 'Why should it be so? On your return to Dhaka, will not they want to know whom Ma asked you about? If they are told that Ma had enquired about them, how happy would they feel at heart.'

Ma: Well, Babaji, cornered, are not you?

I : Yes, but you too have been forced to admit that you can know everything about us without the asking.

Repeating the name — deliberate and spontaneous

Next I spoke of one of my brothers by initiation (Gurubhai). I said, 'Ma, you say that one can attain everything — peace, emancipation and the rest, through repeating the name. But I have a Gurubhai, who has repeated name for 22 hours a day out of 24. Once he had said to me, 'Look here, whether I read a book or talk to you, naming is going on within me all the time. It never stops for a moment.' But now he is an atheist.'

Ma: An atheist, is he?

I : Not exactly, but he says that there may be God for all we know, but it is impossible for a man to have knowledge about Him. If it is not atheism, literally speaking, it is a variant of it. Besides, he is not now much devoted to Guru, does not believe in the existence of deities and declares Scriptures to be false. He is now writing a book in which he intends to show that whatever has been recorded in Scriptures so far are all false and aims at proving that there is no way of knowing God. If this is what comes out of repeating the name, how can a man be inclined to the name and have faith in it?

Ma: From what you have told me, I presume that the Babaji is at a very high stage of spiritual

attainment. It is a natural phase of spiritual strivings, associated with disbelief in everything. Besides, there is nothing wrong in what the Babaji says. If he had told me so, I would have said, 'Babaji, what you say is truth itself (pointing to herself). This body has passed through no end of stages, so I understand to which stage the Babaji is referring. In one sense, the deities and the scriptures are all false. Any attempt to confine in words what is inexpressible is bound to falsify it. It is in this sense that Scriptures are false and so are the deities. The book the Babaji is writing will be of great use to those attaining his stage. But you may ask him why after declaring Scriptures as false, he himself is building up another falsehood. For, what does his writing amount to but a form of Scripture? As for repeating the name you were speaking of, remember, it can never come to nothing. The Babaji has come to where he has by virtue of his name-reciting. Besides, the recital of name and the name taking an effective form are different. The Babaji got stuck to the former, but never reached out to the latter.

I : I understand reciting the name. But how does the name become effective? How can we know when it comes to that?

Ma: When you find that the recital of the name is going on within you, despite yourself, when you see that your business requires your going elsewhere, but the name would not let you

go, when you discover that the name has crowded out your desire and ability to act, then you are to know that in your case, the name has become effective. In the same way, in the case of meditation also, 'doing' is different from 'being'. People merely try to meditate; but when meditation really emanates from within him, he understands what a world of difference is between these two.

I : When my gurubhai used to meditate, he heard sweet chime of a bell and the note of a flute. And saw a radiance too, he said. I asked him if he knew where the sound came from. He said, 'I only heard the sound, but have no idea about its origin.' Ma, what are these sounds?

Ma : I tell you what. When the energy locked up within the spinal coil (Kundalini Shakti) is activated, all the knots at the naval root start being untied. At the rupture of these knots, various sounds are heard, and radiances are seen. When it is a sound, it is called Anahata Dhvani (Unstruck sound). It is always in the air, but cannot be heard, until the mind has been stabilized. It is a composite form of all the sounds in the world. Conch-Shells, bells, cymbals has each distinctive sounds of their own, but when they are sounded in unison, all merge in each other producing altogether a different note. The 'Anahata Dhvani' is like that. No earthly sound can compare with it; yet all earthly sounds are derived from it. Similarly when some other knot is dissolved, a radiance

becomes visible. This radiance also is supramundane, not comparable with any light seen on earth. The same thing holds good of forms. With the dissolution of knots, the aspirants see different forms according to their instructive bias. Again, all forms merge in one. All things of the universe are derived from one fundamental substance. All these can be realised when the knots are dissolved. The cause of creation, conservation and dissolution is revealed only to the one, all whose knots are dissolved. But the cosmic mysteries are concealed from one who has attained this ideal state only partially. That is why the Babaji said that he did not know the origin of sounds. He could only hear them.

I : Ma, even being so much advanced in spiritual attainment (Sadhana), he calls his guru stupid. We know that there is little hope of reaching the spiritual goal, unless one has an absolute devotion for his guru.

Ma: The Babaji is now at the stage of demolition. He is cutting in to pieces everything that comes his way. Have you not noticed, that some men while clearing a garden, root out gourd, pumpkin and valuable fruit trees along with the weeds? It is the same with the Babaji. He is freeing himself from the pre-conceived ideas through reasoning. At this stage neither the deities nor the guru can stand the test, for what is guru any more than the deities -- an idealistic fixation? Only those who are at the stage

of the Babaji can get away with censuring the guru. It would be an unworthy act for such as you.

After we had passed on to another topic, I said, 'Ma, at the time of the foundation of the temple I had a great desire for going to Uttar Kashi, but you would not allow me to do so. You forced me to stay on at Dhaka by setting up obstacles on all sides. Then I abused you to my heart's content.'

Ma (Smiling) : Can you go the whole length while abusing me? See, there are two ways for entering a room -- by breaking the door or by laying oneself before the door, that is, breaking one's self against the door.

While we were talking, it was evening. Ma went out for a walk. When we were on the road, there was noon in the sky. The Mussoorie hill looked splendid, decorated with festoon of light. It appeared as if someone had put on the great mountain a necklace of diamond. Above gleamed the clear sky overlaid with moonlight. Below Ma of the universe was on the move, swaying in a swan-like gait. We were following her at a leisurely gait. I thought, if we could always tread the path of life, with Ma before us, in our sleep and working and through the tumults of worldly activities, then there would be nothing left to be desired.

Siva puja by Bhramar

After walking for sometime, Ma came back.

Immediately after her return, she was conducted to an underground cell or a cave. In the portion of the house occupied by Ma, I had noticed two caves. We also followed Ma into the cave. On entry we found that the cave, though not large, was not very small either. 15-20 persons could sit in it side by side. It was perfumed with incense. In it, Bhramar and Lakshmi Bai were busy making arrangements for a puja. A branch of a Bel tree had been fixed into a bottle; it served as a miniature Bel tree. In one corner of the cave, one hundred and eight candles had been set in a row on a wooden stand. Flowers, raw food offering (Naibedya) were all ready. Seeing this I said, 'Ma, what are they for?' Ma said, 'Bhramar has been worshipping Siva for the last three years. So long she was worshipping in her own way. On the last Lakshmi Purnima, she performed her first worship as prescribed by the Scripture. Today also she will worship in due form.

That was the first time that I saw Bhramar. Her face betrayed a combination of firmness and simplicity, which was really very uncommon. I liked her very much. When dressed in a holy robe, she set herself on a seat, free from contamination, an idea came to me perforce that it was no other than Parvati engaged in worshipping Siva. Ma sat by her side, taking everything in and speaking a word or two, which indicated her profound knowledge in worldly affairs. A Brahmin Pundit came as a mediator of the puja. He

was Jyoti's father and appeared to be a dedicated Brahmin. The first question he asked was whether it would be a general puja or one with a purpose (Sankalpa). Ma said, 'Let it be one with a purpose.' It gave me a misgiving. The general puja ('Nitya') is a part of Sadhana — why then did Ma rule it out in favour of a motivated ('Naimittik') puja? However, I attended to the puja for an hour. The whole day's labour had weakened me a little. Sati too was drowsing. So Ma asked us to retire and we left making our obeisance.

Next day (28th Ashwin-15.10.35), after leaving bed in the morning, I went to Ma. There I found that Ma was being fed. Those days, Ma took her meals on alternate days. She had observed fast on the previous day. So it was her meal day, and right from the morning, people were coming in with something or other in hand — whether it was grapes and apples, milk and bread or even merely condiments taken after the meal. All were getting the fruits etc., made prasad by Ma and directly the prasad was being passed on to us. Ma smilingly said to me, 'Today my 'daptar' (office) has opened.' She added, 'I have acquired quite a number of names — 'Kalikho', 'Appealeshwari', 'Manush Kali', etc.' A deity named Kalikho is reported to be in Vindhya-chal, with an idol which is agape. Those who go there as her visitors, drop something or other into her gaping mouth. Similarly, those who went to see Ma on her meal days insisted on

feeding her. That was how she got the title 'Kalikho'. I asked her, 'But why Appealeshwari?' Ma said, 'It has come to me from Bholanath. While I was at Dhaka, the people came to consult me on any disputable matter for final decision. So Bholanath called me 'Appealeshwari'.

'Jiva' does not want to know his future

Today I found a vermilion streak along the parting of Bhramar's hair. It surprised me as I knew her to be a maid. Later I heard that on the previous night after the Siva puja, Ma got her married to Siva.

I : Ma, is it true that you gave Bhramar in marriage to Siva ?

Ma: Where did you hear of it ?

I : Here. I had a misgiving when last night you directed that the puja should be with a purpose. I wondered why such a direction came from you.

Ma: She had such an idea ingrained in her. She was not aware of it even when she sat on the puja. But as soon as the puja was over, the idea surfaced, and I got her married to Siva. In the same way I married Sharada to Narayan. I shall tell you about it some other day. After the marriage I said to Bhramar, 'If you have an instinct for marriage, you shall be married afterwards.' At this Bhramar said, 'Ma, give me your word that you shall never ask me to marry.' I said, 'All right. After this, Bhramar requested me to put vermilion streak on the parting of

her hair. She said, 'Ma, the vermilion mark on my hair is not the one to be wiped out -- why then don't you lay it there?' There is history behind this request of Bhramar. When this body figured as a wife, it used to discharge all the duties of a housewife. If a woman came to see me, I would offer her betel and put vermilion on her hair-parting. Housewives have to do them for the luck of the house. One day Shyamaia* came to see me. After offering her betel when I was about to put the vermilion mark on her parting, she made a condition that I could do so only if I assured her that her vermilion mark would be ineffacable -- that is, only if she might die with it intact. I said, 'Well let it be so. But if you force me to do it, I shall henceforth apply the vermilion mark only to those who would predecease their husbands, and not to the others whom I find destined for widow-hood. Once you make me take a line of action, there is no changing it, for any amount of weeping and wailing. If after this a woman with her husband alive comes to me and I do not put the vermilion mark on her, knowing that she was going to be widowed, who will take the responsibility for the grief blazing up within her heart? If you commit yourself to this burden, I shall do as you say.' Hearing this, the others cried out, 'No, No, we do not want it to be done. You go on putting the vermilion mark on all, as

* Wife of Shri Panditchandra Das, a lawyer at Dhaka.

you have been doing.' So you see, the worldly people shy away from their future. I was on the point of revealing the future, but did you dare to face it? The worldly men (jiva) would rather hung on to their ignorance, as a swine regales on faeces.

Obeisance by touching the feet and that from a distance

I : Ma, some make their bows to you by touching your feet and some other from a distance. What is the difference between these two modes?

Ma said to Shankarananda Swami, 'Babaji, you just tell us the difference.' Shankaranandaji said, 'If an obeisance is made by touch of feet, it hurts the object, — it means a loss of energy due to the touch.' Ma did not quite approve of this explanation. She said, 'Well Babaji, if the right hand touches the left hand, is the left hand affected in any way?'

Did Ma's statement boil down to a declaration that she was not isolated from those who bowed down to her — that the whole living world was a part of her all-embracing Cosmic Self? Whatever it might be Ma admitted that the one bowing down to her by touching her feet acquired some merit due to contact with the pure.

I : Then it would be better to touch you while bowing down, at least for the purifying effect of your touch, if for nothing else.

Ma: Contact is not essential for obtaining

Grace. It can be obtained even from the distance.

In the context of these talks, Ma further said, 'I have no will of my own for doing a thing or refraining from it. So I often tell Jyotish that if he wanted anything to be done by me, he should remind me of it from time to time. If one expresses a desire before me, who knows that I might be disposed to action according to the desire.'

I : Do you really mean it, Ma? Do you act merely from the will of others, even if it does not happen to match with your own? Action comes out of you when somebody's will agrees with yours. You may remember that once in the Ashram of Ramna, Dinesh Babu* implored you ever so much to touch his head, but did you do so? Perhaps you would not touch him as you were aware of his impending death.

* Dinesh Chandra Roy. A resident of Dashra village in the district of Dhaka. He was one of Ma's old devotees. While he was a Subjudge at Mymensingh he had an attack of Catalepsy resulting in paralysis of the lower half of his body. At that, Dinesh Chandra went to Dhaka on leave and stayed there for a time. One morning he said to Ma at the Ashram, 'Ma, one day in Tangail I asked you to touch my head. If you had done so at the time, I would not have come to this state. Will you now touch my head for once?' Ma heard, but said nothing. Dinesh Babu again said, 'Ma, if you consent to touch my head, I may come to you.' So saying he tried to raise himself from the chair. Ma said in a soft but stern voice, 'No, don't! I have never again found such stern attitude in Ma.'

Ma (Smiling): Would his death be averted by my touch? I have touched even a person on the point of death.

So saying she gave an account of the death of Nirmal Babu (the Son-in-law of Swami Akhandanandaji).

The Death of Nirmal Babu

Ma: When Bholanath had come to Mussoorie from Uttar Kashi Nirmal Babu came to me with his wife. There was no room for him in the Dharamsala in which we were putting up, so he lodged himself in another house nearby. At Mussoorie Nirmal Babu fell ill. Even at the early stage of the illness, I suggested that he should be under the treatment of a skilled physician; for, if one dies of illness, his relatives regretfully say that if treated by a good doctor, he might not have died. Jyotish said, 'He has fallen ill only today and a homoeopathic doctor has been consulted. How can we call in another doctor before waiting for the effect of his treatment?' At that, I said nothing more. Nirmal Babu's condition began to worsen. Blood had shot up to his head. The whole face was suffused with red. He insisted on seeing me. His wife also began to send for me repeatedly. I do not know what came over me, but I could not go. I did not simply feel like going there. After 3-4 days, I had an idea that if somebody asked me to go Nirmal Babu at that time, I might do so. At that time Bholanath came up and asked

me to go to Nirmal Babu and I at once accompanied him there. So long Nirmal Babu was delirious and in coma. He had regained his consciousness a little before my arrival, and was speaking a word or two. I sat there for a while and also spoke to him. Before I left, my hand, of itself, touched Nirmal Babu's head. But nobody noticed it. Nirmal Babu was all along against being treated with an injection. But, as the disease had taken a serious turn, an injection was applied to him, and soon after he died.

Hearing it I said to myself that Nirmal Babu was very fortunate. He received the benign touch of Ma on the eve of his death, and was freed from the cycle of birth and death. I also said in so many words, 'Ma, Nirmal Babu was very fortunate, was not he?'

Ma: Yes, just on the upper floor of the room in which Nirmal Babu died, the 'Grantha Saheb' of the Sikhs had been installed. In a sense he died with the Grantha Saheb above his head.

Sri Sri Ma and Sri Ram Thakur

After my arrival at Dehradun I heard Ma uttering 'Narayan', 'Narayan' at interval and said, 'Ma, at Dhaka I had never heard you uttering 'Narayan', 'Narayan'. I hear it here for the first time.

Ma: Here, when somebody makes his obeisance to a Sannyasi, he utters 'Narayan', 'Narayan'. By way of imitation, I also have learnt to utter the name of Narayan. Being what I am, a little

girl, I repeat whatever I hear. Formerly I could not do anything in imitation of others. One day Ram Thakur came and made his bow to me. You have seen that he is an old man and an ascetic. He bowed down to me, but I kept sitting stiff. One day Prankumar Babu said to me, 'Ma, Ram Thakur bowed to you but you did not pay him back the compliments. His disciples may have taken it ill.' I said to him 'Tell everyone that the Babaji's (i.e. Ram Thakur's) feet are always on my head.'

The relation between Guru and Disciple

I : Ma, I have heard it told that an initiating Guru cannot attain salvation, until his disciple has attained it. Bijoy Krishna Goswami has explained it by means of a simile. Just as a cowherd, having got his cows across a river one by one, crosses it holding on to the tail of the last cow, similarly, a guru also sees his disciples delivered one by one and works out his own salvation the last of all.

Ma: This is very true. The relationship between guru and disciple is also a bond. The guru himself, as a well-wisher of his disciple, forges this bond. He has at last to free himself from this bond and this cannot be done until the disciple is emancipated. But this does not hold good of the Mukta Purusha. You must have read that in ancient times, people used to go to the Rishis to attain Brahma vidya -- the knowledge of Brahma. The Rishis imparted instructions

according to the calibres of the seekers and this over, they were through with it. They would not enter into any ties with their disciples beyond this.

I : Did not they then animate their disciples with energy ?

Ma : I have already told you that they imparted their instructions according to the deserts of the disciples. The instructions themselves proved energizing.

I : Ma, supposing one having delivered mantra from the guru does not practise japa, tapa, etc., is it impossible for him ever to be emancipated ?

Ma : Self-exertion is necessary. You see fire is in flint, but it is not revealed except through friction.

I : But we may look at it from another point of view. Fire is in wood as much as in flint and it can be obtained when two pieces of wood are rubbed together. But if one of the pieces is set ablaze, rubbing is no longer required--blazing wood can set the other aglow. In the same way if the guru instils the power of his Mantra into the disciple, why should the latter's self-assertion be necessary ? He can be freed through that power, can't he ?

Ma : So long as Karma is outstanding, the power of guru remains inoperative. So self-assertion is necessary to wear out Karma. It is a case of Karma (action) to end Karma*.

* Karma in the latter sense is a sort of destiny. It can be freely translated as - 'predisposition to action' - Translator's Note.

Is Niranjan Babu* reborn ?

I : Is it true that you have said, Niranjan Babu has been reborn as the son of Hari Ram Joshi ?

Ma : No, I have not said so. But one day Jyotish sitting here was speaking of Niranjan Babu. Hari Ram too was then present here. Hearing the words of Jyotish he reckoned and said, that a son was born to him just when Niranjan Babu died. Perhaps the son was Niranjan Babu reborn.

I : Is he really so ?

Ma : There was a talk to that effect.

I : But what do you say ?

Ma (smiling) : Babaji wants to make everything confirmed.

I could not elicit the word from Ma. But I had an idea that there might be some truth in it.

Dependence on Guru, shunyabad (agnosticism)

I : How can one come to depend on the guru? Once it comes, the worldly life becomes quite smooth, one no longer has any fear.

Ma : Dependence on the guru comes with the concentration of mind. It comes when one constantly thinks of Him, is always engaged in

* Niranjan Roy. He was Deputy Commissioner of Income Tax. He was an intimate friend of Jyotish Babu and both of them were among the most intimate devotees of Ma. Niranjan Babu was the first to take the initiative of setting up the Ramna Ashram, but it remained unfinished on account of his premature death. Jyotish Babu, in his book entitled 'Matri Darshan' mentioned Niranjan Babu's name and antecedents among Ma's devotees, now dead.

meditation, japa, repetition of the name etc. and is saturated through and through with that one thought.

I : I would have nothing to do with the dependence that comes through deliberate efforts. It would appear like a pathological condition of the mind. I want to have it without taking any thought on it. Can it not be derived from the power inherent in the name? My gurubhai bears testimony to the fact that whatever is achieved through personal efforts, cogitations etc. is not genuine. He was under the impression that he had attained Nirvikalpa Samadhi*; but it was not the real thing. Yet he would not believe it, if he is told that the real samadhi has eluded him.

Ma : You see, the unidirectional state is the normal state of the mind. Restlessness and diffusiveness are abnormality. And your gurubhai is not really so fallen as you make him out to be. A lot of merit is needed for a man to attain this state. It is a fairly high state.

I : This state does not appeal to me. I cannot regard as great the person who dismisses the Scriptures as false, calls his guru stupid and cannot maintain full consistency in his talks.

Ma : To maintain consistency in everything one speaks of calls for a very rare level of existence attained through a very large accumulation of merits. Even so, the state in which the

* A supreme yogic state in which the mind loses itself absolutely in Brahma - Translator's Note.

Babaji has found himself is also a very fortunate one. As I told you yesterday, he is at a stage of demolition. Refuting all preconceived ideas mercilessly, he has made himself unidirectional. You regard him as being disrespectful to his guru, but I tell you, it is neither anger or disrespect but a sign of attachment and devotion. The essence is now his only guru, and he has no patience for anyone denouncing it. It cannot be clear to one who is not at the same stage.

I : But he is an agnostic, not believing in god or anything else.

Ma : Agnosticism is also one of the isms. Many great men have found peace proceeding along it. Why should we then turn up our nose at it?

I : I shall have nothing to do with such nothingness.

Ma : What would you have, then?

That gave me the pause. I wondered what I sought. After a silence I said, 'I want to know all cosmic mysteries relating to creation and continuation.'

Ma : An absolute nothingness is a threshold leading to all that. Nothingness may be absolute or relative. The Babaji (i.e. my guru-bhrata) is now at the stage of relative nothingness. No mystery of the universe is hidden from one who has attained absolute nothingness.

Yogic miracles—their relation with religion

Ma : I told you yesterday that with the

activation of Kundalini power, knots* start disintegrating and with that the seeker not only visualizes different forms but also acquires many miraculous powers. But these powers have to be guarded with strict secrecy. If divulged, they effectively prevent any further advance along the spiritual path and the powers themselves vanish into thin air.

I : Is it necessarily so? Bishuddhananda Paramhansa Deb of Varanasi has been demonstrating his yogic miracles for the last thirty years, but no sign of the waning of his power is in evidence.

Ma: It is different with the Babaji. What wearing out can there be for his power?

I described some of the miracles I had seen performed by Baba Bishuddhananda. Ma heard and said, 'What good will it do to you to see the working of those miracles? Do not ask the Babaji to demonstrate them to you. Rather ask him to give a fillip to your religious career.'

I : Why should I ask it of the Baba? Why don't you do it for me? A son has more demand on the mother's affection. But what are you doing for me?

Ma (smiling) : I wish I had the power to do these things, but I have not. I have no natural drive at all within me. If I had the drive I could have done them. But the Babaji has it and the power too.

* These are psycho-somatic complexes, hindering knowledge, and located in the body in the form of deep-seated ganglia. Translator's note.

After this I said no more. It was not the first time I heard such avowals from Ma. She had a way of repeating that she had neither will nor non-will*. What was destined to happen would work itself out through her body. Most people cannot understand this position and think that she said so to avoid compliance with requests.

I : Well, Ma, how is religion related to miracles ?

Ma : You study to acquire worldly knowledge. When educated, you can sometimes write poems or deliver speeches, though you have never read them in your text books. As writing a poem or delivering a speech is indicative of learning so when one has the knowledge of Brahma, some confirmatory signs show themselves. The miracles are such signs. Once knowledge is attained, power of miracles cannot fail to show up. The expressions of miracles are of three types—benign, indifferent and malignant. If the wonder-working power passes into nature, it is its benign expression. To be stabilized in miracles is its indifferent expression. Besides, there is another expression—malignant.

It was 28th Ashwin - Ma's meal day. We were invited to partake of prasad. At noon I went to the hotel for bath etc. and was back. Chintaharan Babu* offered Bhog to Ma. When we

* It is a state of volitional neutrality - Translator's note.

** Sri Chintaharan Samaddar, resident of Barisal. He served in the Police department. He was on leave and accompanied with his wife was touring with Ma. One of Ma's old disciples.

sat down to the prasad-taking, Ma also sat on a chair smilingly to see us eating. On the one hand, she was affectionate in the extreme, while on the other she was wholly unattached.

The meal over, we sat by Ma. Talks on different things were on. A little afterwards somebody came and said that Chintaharan Babu's wife was weeping. Ma said, 'Weeping? But why?' Shankarananda Swamiji said, 'You had told her that she was no good at work so that Chintaharan Babu had to attend to household works besides doing his official works. Jyotish Babu having fun of her over this, she broke into tears.' Ma said, 'So this is Jyotish's doing. He is never tired of having a fling at others.' This sent Jyotish Babu and the rest of us into a fit of laughter. Chintaharan Babu also chimed in. Ma said, 'Bring her (Chintaharan Babu's wife) to me.' Somebody dragged her in. Ma said, 'My darling, why do you weep?' She repeated the question but Chintaharan Babu's wife gave no reply but went on weeping all the more. Seeing that it boded ill, Ma said, 'Somebody bring her a glass of cold water. She may faint away. But before the water could be brought, she raised the tone of her weeping to a crescendo, and fell fainting by Ma's side. Ma placed her hand on her head. While all these things happened, there was no trace of worry on anybody's face. All kept sitting as before. With Ma around, all had a sense of ease like this.

Ma spoke highly of the simplicity of Chintaharan Babu's wife. Being victim of a chronic

illness, she could not perform the household chores. But Chintaharan Babu was a Jack of all Trades. He took everything in his strides. His wife had this thought weighing on her mind, that she could not serve her husband well, but was forced, instead, to accept his services. A talk went on in this strain.

Education should suit the natural bent.

In connection with Chintaharan Babu's wife's suffering from hysteria, Ma said, 'She has come to this, as her predispositions, which were quite good, could not find a natural outlet. Many children have religious bent of mind, but their parents, unable to understand this, try to direct them forcefully along another channel. The result is not always good. Such children may develop difficult diseases or even end up in insanity. Children should be imparted religious instructions even from their early years. You take pains to get them educated, so that they may earn money when they grow up. But they are denied religious instructions. The other day a professor was regretting the lack of morality and discipline at the present time. I told him that these were due to the drift of the time. Nothing is unnatural. Formerly, the life of a Hindu was divided into four Ashrams. Nothing of the old system now remains. Due to the decay of Brahmacharyashram, the basis of all others, the rest have fallen into disarray. Lack of continence in parents have been transmitted to their children.

What good is it now to regret for their indisciplined ways? What is the need of, the moment is religious instruction. The money-oriented education is already there, but it should be supplemented by religious education. (To Chintaharan Babu) You have a way of doing everything methodically. If this trait had been directed along religious channel in your childhood, you could have made a good provision in religious matters. But it had been directed wholly along the worldly channel. So you are well set up in worldly affairs. (Referring to me) The Babaji had also a quiet and serious bent of mind. Given religious orientation, he could have settled down to a peaceful temperament in this field. Now the very mention of religion makes the parents panicky. They are afraid that, given religious instructions, their children would renounce the world and step out as monks. What they fail to realise is how few are cut out for asceticism, and how fewer are actually renouncing the world. One predisposed to asceticism will renounce the world inspite of all the efforts to keep him tied down to family life.

The early life of Labanya, imparting of energy at the mere touch.

While speaking of instruction adapted to the natural bent of mind, Ma referred to a niece of Baba Bholanath. She said, 'Bholanath had a niece (brother's daughter). Her name was Labanya. She was very devoted to me right from her

childhood. She did not like her mother doing up her hair. She would undo it and come to me to get it done up again. She longed for being with me all the time; but her mother did not approve of such intimacy. Labanya used to say, 'I would fain call you mother.' When she expressed the same feeling to her mother, she snubbed her saying, "Whoever has heard an aunt being called mother?" However, she was married off. She met me a long time after her marriage. Then I was altogether in a different state. Listening to a kirtan induced strange transformations on this body, it swayed this way and that, ready to fall from emotional excess. One day a kirtan was on in the Siddheswari temple. I was standing unsteadied by the upsurge of emotion, threatening to topple down from time to time. Seeing this Labanya was afraid lest I should be dashed to the ground and hurt; so she hurried to hold me up. But the moment she touched me she was in a strange predicament. She started repeating 'Haribol' (Say Hari) and rolling on the ground. Then no one was there to take note of her, all were busy with me. In the meanwhile under the obsession, I had moved on from the Ashram to the Siddheswari Bari with all following me. Labanya lay there alone rolling on the ground and uttering "Haribol". Having rolled for a long time, she had her body besmeared with dust and sand so completely that a cursory looker-on would not recognize her for what she was — a human being. In the meantime Akhandananda (Shashanka Babu)

had gone to the Ashram for some business. There was no one there and yet she heard the repeated sound of "Haribol" coming from somewhere. The sound was quite faint, so he found it difficult to locate its origin. After a close observation for a while, he had an idea that it was coming out from a mound of earth. Going near he saw it was not a mound of earth but a human being, looking like that for being covered up with dust and mud. When washed with water, it was found to be no other than our Labanya. By that time I was myself again, but Labanya was still obsessed. She was uttering "Haribol" unremittingly. She remained in that state for 2-3 days. At that her mother was much worried and angry with me. She said, 'That is why I do not let her go to you. Now, see what has become of her. You must cure her of it.' I said, 'Nothing ill has happened to her. She is repeating the name of Hari.' This angered her still more and she said, 'Don't tell me. She has her family to look after. How can she afford to go on like that? Bring her back to the normal state.'

Hearing the story I said, 'Ma, I have read it in Srichaitanya Mahaprabhu's life that when he was in trance, a fisherman touching him had come to that state.'

Ma : It can happen to all irrespective of high or low.

I : Ma, is it not called induction of energy ?

Ma gave no answer to this.

Shashanka Babu's adoption of Sannyasa

Among other topics, the one of Shashanka Babu's adoption of Sannyasa was also raised. He had a bent for it all the time. Besides, before his initiation into Sannyasa, Ma had a vision of him in the garb of an ascetic so she summoned him from Vindhyaçal to Hardwar and bade him take to Sannyasa within a short time. No arrangements had been made for it, nor was it fixed who would officiate at the function. Ma only said, 'It shall take place by this particular date or not at all. Now you try for it.' Shankaranandaji, the man of action, went out in search of a guru. The one decided upon at first was discarded for being too young and at last the celebrated Mangal Giri Maharaj of Kankhal was selected as the guru and from him Shashanka Babu duly adopted Sannyasa. Since then he came to be known as Akhandananda Giri. Ma said 'It is well. The Babaji belongs to the Giri Community. The Ashram of Dhaka also is under the Giri community.'

Pure sentiment is the best Bhog (food offering)

In passing, Ma said to my wife, 'Ma, what have you brought for me?' This was an enquiry if we had brought from Calcutta anything for Ma's bhog. At this time the talk had turned to who had brought what to offer Ma as bhog. My wife said, 'I have brought nothing Ma.' Ma said, 'I am contented with the pure sentiment with which you have come. Whatever else you will offer me as food will be excreted. Your pure

sentiments and pure thoughts please me most.'

Sati's Siva puja

29th Ashwin; 16.10.35. It was the day fixed for the Siva puja by Sati. My daughter Bhramar's Siva puja inspired her to do the same, though she was only eight years old. When Ma was told about it, she made the necessary arrangements for the puja. On the previous day it was settled that today Swami Shankaranandaji would teach Sati the method of Siva puja along with Chintaharan Babu's daughter. Flowers, leaves of Bel tree — would all be procured from here. I would not have to bestir myself on that account. In the morning my wife and Sati bathed in hot water in the hotel. Here even in the months of Ashwin and Kartik, it is almost too cold for one to bathe in cold water.

A little time after we were with Ma, Chintaharan Babu's wife came up with her daughter. The women made arrangements for the puja and called Ma at the time of the puja. With Ma we went into the cave, where Bhramar had performed Siva puja. Akhandanandaji got ready to direct them in performing the puja. Ma took her seat exactly on the spot as on the day of Bhramar's puja, and her instructions too were similar. I noticed that Ma was far more observant on these matters than the aged Swamiji with all his grey hair. Sati was ready for the puja with her frock on. Ma said, 'Puja is not allowed in a tailor made dress.' She directed Bhramar to get a

sari for Sati. Bhramar led Sati away and in a short time brought her back dressed in a Sari. Swamiji was going to start the puja but Ma again said, 'Puja in a single piece of cloth is not valid. Give them a chadar apiece.' She also said where to look for the chadars. As I noticed all these I had an idea, 'Perfection must needs be all-directional.' To Ma all things carried equal weight, whether temporal or spiritual. That was why Ma instructed a devotee named Vijay Vyas, 'Whenever you do a thing, do it heart and soul.' Nothing should be done carelessly or inattentively.' It was against Ma's principle to make variations in efforts in matters differing in significance. Ma had told me about these things while at Dhaka. Now that I had the opportunity of observing how she put into practice those instructions, they seemed to have been invested with life.

Slowly, the puja of the girls proceeded, while we sat watching. Local women came to see Ma in ones or twos. Two well-favoured men were also among the visitors. Lakshmi Bai went up and stood nestling her head on the breast of the older of the two. I thought that he was her husband and that the women of this part were not shy of expressing such blandishments of love for their husbands in public. Ma, understanding the train of my thought said, 'He is Lakshmi's elder brother. It was an example of a very sweet relationship between brother and sister.

Many women flocked to the place at this time. I went out of the cave, for fear of overcrowding.

Ma told us to prepare rotis there and take our meal. But finding it inconvenient, we left for the hotel, with Ma's permission. We left Sati behind, for Bhramar had selected her for her maiden-worship (Kumari puja).

Satya Yug is on the way.

At the hotel we had our bath and meals, and then went back to Ma. There we heard that while the puja was on, Ma seeing an infant in the arms of one of the assembled women, had named him Batuk Bhairab. I asked her if it was true.

Ma (smiling) : When the girls were on with their puja, I marked the infant at arms and said, 'Batuk Bhairab has arrived to accept the maiden's puja.'

I : You are naming the new born children after gods and goddesses. Does not this imply that the deities have started being reborn ?

Ma : The deities are here all the time. Their being reborn does not make sense.

I : I have heard it said that we are at the Satya Yug once more. If that is true, what wonder that the deities would be reborn ?

Ma : The Satya Yug has not yet arrived, but it is on the way. It is just before us, and we can feel its proximity in our persons.

I : What are the marks that we feel it ?

Ma : You will find that a thirst for truth is in evidence everywhere. Now-a-days, young men have begun to ask such questions as whether there is anything in religion or of what good is the

investiture with holy thread. They augur well.

Ma's statement reminded me of a contention of C. F. Andrews. In his book 'What I owe to Christ', he has written that in course of his wide travels, he has observed a general curiosity about whether there is any abiding truth in Christianity. He said, 'There are very many men and women in all countries, among the new generations who are seeking to find a sure foundation for their Christian faith amid conflicting currents of modern thought. They fully understand the impossibility of building up the future structure of society on a purely material basis, and they have a deep reverence for the great spiritual achievements of the past. But at the same time they are unable any longer to bow down to traditional authority either in practice or belief. Their own conscience commands them to prove all things and hold fast that which is good. They feel the need, almost desperately at times, of a personal guide to lead them on their ways, and they are ready to offer devoted allegiance to one who is truly their Lord and Master. Yet they hesitate in honest intellectual bewilderment to surrender their heart to Christ.'

If the Satya Yug comes, it must come everywhere. That accounts for this new curiosity for knowing the Truth.

Initiation, Beej and Name

On my arrival at Ma's place I also heard that she had recommended for Sati a name to be

repeated as japa, morning and evening. I asked her if it was true.

Ma : Yes, I have recommended a name but it does not amount to initiation.

I : What is initiation ?

Ma : Initiation consists in transmission of a Beej* by the Guru.

I : Why do you link up Beej with initiation? Is not name sufficient for it ?

Ma : If a disciple has an inborn inclination for Beej, the guru uses Beej during initiation.

I made no further enquiry about initiation. But I was curious to know what she had imparted to Sati. I believed that if it was a name, that would be as good as initiation. But so far as I knew, Ma had not up to that time recommended a particular name to anybody. So I said to her, 'Well, if I direct her to repeat a name, and you bid her repeat another -- will it not make a difference between these two? Your words are far more potent.'

Ma : There will certainly be a difference. But don't think I have selected a name for her. After the puja was over, Shankarananda asked them to repeat names. Then I said, 'Repeat these names both times every day.'

I found that my guess was a correct one. Ma was not the one to give a name. I said to Ma,

* Literally seed. It is the quintessential form of a mantra, apparently meaningless; but rich in vibrational energy and highly potent - Translator's Note.

'You do not do anything before you have your exit line secure.' Ma feel a giggling and said, 'The Babaji has a way of asking searching questions.'

I : Can one do with a name, in the absence of a Beej?

Ma : Yes, the name alone does it. You may have seen that very little children cannot say 'Ma'. When they cry, the mother understands that they are calling her. But this does not hold good of a grown up son. In the same way, so long as we are ignorant, we can call God by any name and he will understand us.

Children should be helped along the path of religion.

After that Ma began to speak of Sati. She said, 'You were not present at the Kumari Puja, or you would have observed a strange sight. When Bhramar performed their puja, then I noticed a divine expression on her (i.e. Sati's) face. This was no doubt the effect of the puja.'

If somebody is worshipped with a particular emotional orientation, the face of the worshipped one will show the expression adequate to it. When the puja was over, she was highly delighted and similingly asked me, 'Ma, what do you say to my worshipping Siva every Sunday?' At Dhaka, she never spoke to me and only looked at me through her hair now and then but today after the puja, she got over her shyness and put the question to me. I said, 'You may, if you feel inclined to it. But Monday is the proper day of the week for Siva Puja. Seeing that you have to go to

school, you may perform your puja on Sunday and on Monday, if it happens to be a holiday.

I : Now that she will have to perform the puja, had I not better buy for her a Banlinga from Varanasi? I shall have to go to Varanasi anyway.

Ma : No, do nothing of the kind. A Banlinga in the house must be worshipped everyday. There is no question of her doing the puja everyday. Make arrangement for the puja when she feels inclined for it. Nothing should be forced. What is needed is to provide the proper climate for a spontaneous all-round development. You must have noticed that the fruit that has burst open from ripeness on the tree, is the sweetest to eat. In the same way the good propensities of children should be allowed to develop by themselves. It is the duty of the parents to help their development, not to stand in their way. Yesterday you asked about her Siva puja. I told you then to wait and see till the puja was over. Now you see, she herself is making her own enquiries about the puja.

'My will is inobstructible'

We had talks on many more things. In a certain context I said to Ma, 'Ma, you sometimes ask a person to do what is beyond his power.'

Ma : What makes you say so?

I : In the Dhaka Ashram you one day bade a Coolie to repeat the name till sunset under a Jack-fruit tree; did not you know that he would not be able to do so? When you were at Nalhati,

you had asked Atal Babu* to come over and stay with you. Did not you know then that Atal Babu had no power to tear himself apart from his family?

Ma (smiling) : You say so, because you do not know the whole truth. If I bid a person to do a thing, he is bound to do it. It is beyond his power to negate it. My will is inobstructible. The Coolie you speak of, was pestering me for a command. So I told him, 'Go, repeat the name till sunset sitting under the tree. When bidding, I already knew that he would not be able to carry it out. As for Atal Babu, did you not hear the whole story?'

I : I have heard it. But I want to hear it from you.

Ma : Atal had been telling me for a long time, 'Ma, I am tired of everything. I wish I could resign the service and retire to a solitary place.' Sometimes again he said, 'Ma, at your bidding, I can surely live a life of a Brahmachari.' In this way he repeatedly pressed me for an order. He asked for my order for resigning his service a year before the festival of 1339 (Bengali era). Then I told him to wait for a year. When he came to Dhaka to attend the 1339 festival, he again said to me, 'Ma, is not, the one year you spoke of, over?' I said, 'No, not yet.' Year, month make no difference. Until a man is inwardly prepared, the

* Sri Atal Behari Bhattacharya, M.A. A Professor of Rajshahi College and a very old disciple of Ma.

right time never comes. However, after the festival of that year we left Dhaka. After travelling around for a while, we reached Nalhati. Then I directed Bholanath to send a telegram to Atal bidding him come to Nalhati, so that he could have no time to make an objection. He was then on leave. On receiving the telegram, he came, but I found that he had only dragged along his body, leaving behind the rest — his mind and soul. On coming he said, 'Why have I been summoned at this time? Is it a plot against me? You must be knowing that your 'Bouma' has not been keeping good health. How can I be here at this hour, with her languishing there?' I made no replies to these queries but collected informations about his wife's illness and came to know that she was at the time at her father's house. I said, 'Ma is now at her father's house. She is well.' But Atal was not comforted. He repeatedly asked me why he had been brought there. I only briefly said, 'You shall see it soon.'

Now, Bholanath had a desire to go to Bakreshwar for a time for religious practices. Accordingly, it was decided that Bholanath and Kamalakanta would go to Bakreshwar and stay there. As Atal heard these, he became more restless. He had an idea that if Kamalakanta went with Bholanath, perhaps he would be the only one left to keep me company and must follow me in my rambling tours. So thinking, he one day said to me, 'Ma, I shall not be able to stay with you.' So long he had not been asked to stay. He himself

admitted that it would not be possible for him to do so. So you see, I did not bid Atal stay with me. But the situation made him realise that he was yet incapable of the renunciation, he had been talking about so much. I asked him to come here during this Puja also. His reply was, 'Unfortunate that I am, do not call me any more. I am all right.'

I : Calling Atal Babu to Nalhati, you dashed his pride to the ground. That was why you had called him, was it not ?'

Ma smiled and admitted it with a nod.

Only eminent great men can understand people's predispositions

After some more talks Ma spoke of Shogi Baba. There is a place near Dehra Dun where an ascetic lived. He was called Shogi Baba after the place where he lived. He had a fair amount of celebrity there and many devotees. Many of Ma's devotees wished that she should pay the sadhu a visit. Ma said, 'At their insistence, I one day set out to see the sadhu. But some were in great concern, fearing that the sadhu might insult me as I was going to meet him, without informing him before-hand. One of them preceded us to inform the sadhu. We arrived just as he was speaking to the sadhu. I saw that he was an old man suffering from a disease of the leg. A devotee was applying ointment to his leg. Seeing us arrived, the sadhu directed somebody to offer me a seat. When I was seated he crawled up to me

and his very first question was, 'Why did you abandon your husband?' I said, 'But Baba, I did not abandon him. We set out together from Dhaka. Now he has gone elsewhere on his business, and I am happily wandering about alone.' We had many other talks. When we were leaving, the Babaji pointed to a stick and said, 'I have much affection for you, or I would have beaten you with this stick and driven you away.'

I : Ma, what did you make him out to be ?

Ma : Quite good. He was carrying on his sadhana with an undivided mind.

I : But his question does not bespeak of a man of a high spiritual eminence. He could not understand the level you are at.

Ma : It requires a very rare order of human excellence to be able to size up a person by merely seeing him or listening to his words.

Next Ma spoke of another person. He had been initiated by a family guru, and had been performing Siva puja for ten years or more at his direction. But when he could discover no appreciable improvement in himself even at the end of this long period, he became disrespectful of it all and one day spoke out his problem to Ram Thakur. Ram Thakur gave him a 'name' and asked him to give up the puja and repeat the name instead. Then the man was in a religious dilemma. He thought that if obeying Ram Thakur he gave up the puja, then he would have to go to hell for disobeying his guru. And if he did not give up the puja, it would be disregarding

the injunction of a saint and expose him to dire consequences. What should he do then. Thus swaying between two extremes he came to be in a sad predicament. He was off his feed and sleep, and almost out of his minds, one day he came to Ma at her Dhaka Ashram. Hearing his story, Ma said, 'You see, if the Babaji (i.e. Ram Thakur) had really ordered you to give up the puja, all these doubts would never have appeared in your mind and you could have given up the puja directly at his order. Your doubts prove that no such order had been given. I would advise you to continue your puja and also repeat the name given by the Babaji. By so doing you will be infringing nobody's order.' At Ma's advice, the man was at the end of his worries and he went back home, light-hearted.

Sri Sri Ma's Bhog

It was decided on 30th Ashwin, Thursday (17-10-35) by consultation with Jyotish Babu that I should offer Bhog to Ma, the next day. With this in mind, I had brought a seer of Moong Dal from Calcutta, the other things could be procured from Dehradun. Jyotish Babu arranged for the milk, kedgerree, cauli-flower curry, labra (a vegetable hotch potch), ambal (sour) and payas (rice boiled in milk and sweetened) were on the card. A seer of rice and a seer of pulse went into the preparation of kedgerree and the other items were proportionate to it in amount. The food was utterly inadequate for so many of us, yet incredibly

enough, it satisfied all. Two seers weight of kedgerree could not feed to the full 13/14 people, but that was what it did. It was strange too that nobody except I marked this incongruity. What made me observe it was that Ma sitting down to her meal, repeatedly said, 'Why, I have eaten up the whole. What would the others eat?' This remark of Ma drew my attention to the inadequacy of the preparations.

After Ma's Bhog-offering was over, I had gone for marketing in the morning. Having finished it in a little while, I went back to Ma. But on my return I found her lying in the cave. I took my seat in the Western verandah. I was disappointed not being able to see Ma. I thought that if I could have no opportunity to talk with Ma on that day — my last at Dehradun, it would be painful beyond measure. I was so musing, when Sri Sri Ma appeared. It was a great joy to me and I made my obeisance with great devotion.

At that time there was no one else but I around Ma. Jyotish Babu had gone to see Sreemati Sharada Sharma. On my arrival at Dehradun, I had heard about her being seriously ill of dysentery. Swami Shankarananda had nursed her for a whole night. Jyotish Babu had been visiting her once or twice everyday. The women were busy with cooking the Bhog. Finding Ma alone, I asked her questions on diverse topics.

In what sense, does the guru stay along with the disciple

I : Ma, our gurudev sometimes said in answer to his disciple's questions, 'I am always with you.' Baba Bisuddhananda also says the same thing to his disciples. You, too, are reported to say so. What does it mean? In what sense is the gurudev keeping me company?

Ma : Why did you not ask the Babaji?

I : At my initiation, I was a mere boy. Besides, the Baba never told it to me; So I had no occasion to ask him the meaning.

Ma : It can be said in more senses than one. I am telling you. First, look at the matter in its all comprehensive aspect. The guru pervades the atoms and molecules of the universe. In this sense, he is with you. Again, on discrimination, it is seen that there is only one real substance in the universe. The guru as well as the disciple must come under it. They are inseparable. In this sense he is with you. Besides, guru is with you in the form of mantra. Lastly, considering discretely (Khanda), the yogis, by their yogic power, can be in many different places at the same time. For the benefit of his disciples, the guru, by his yogic power can separately stay with all his disciples, at all times. In this sense also the statement is true.

Ma's self-revelation

In connection with Ma's use of the terms 'Khanda'* and 'Akhanda', I asked, 'Ma, when

* 'Khanda' can be translated as 'discrete', 'finite' and 'Akhanda' as 'All-comprehensive', 'infinite' - Translator's note.

you are in your all-comprehensive form, can you have cognizance of us?'

The question made Ma subside into a fairly solemn mien. She said, 'These are the matters that I do not divulge to all. They do not come out of my lips in the presence of all. But I shall tell you. You have asked the question and the answer is coming out of my lips. It is so perhaps because you shall understand it.

I am neither Khanda nor Akhanda, you spoke of, but I take in my strides both these aspects. I am neither limitless nor confined to limits. I am simultaneously both. To call me Khanda is to circumscribe me, and if you call me Akhanda, you do the very same thing. But I have no limits, no bonds. On the other hand, I exhibit all the bonds. I am Khanda and finite in so far I eat and sleep. At the same time I am infinite for I have no need of these things.

When children come to me, I joke with them and become one of them. Again when the great men come to me, I speak with them at their own level. Many souls — I do not speak of good souls only — many bad souls also approach me and I meet them on their own terms and fulfil their need. I am the universe in its infinitude, including the ephemeral worms and insects. You ask me whether you are within my ken when I am in my all-comprehensive self. My answer is, not only you, even those who have never seen me or heard of me, swim into my vision the moment they need me. And I do the needful for them.

I : Then you can see us when we think of you.

Ma : Yes, when you think of me, your form flash across my vision just as objects become visible when the torch-light is focussed on them. You see, Jyotish is now predominantly at his rational attitude.

I : Ma, Jyotish Babu's devotion is also very intense.

Ma : Rationality, devotion, action and knowledge are inseparable. Nature is determined by the predominance of one of them. A devotee is so called because though he has in him the other three qualities, he has devotion in excess. Now, Jyotish is predominantly rational. He is always putting me to the test. The other day they conducted me to a house at Karampur to attend a kirtan. As I listened to the kirtan, I was a bit transfigured — not really so, but Jyotish found me different from my usual Self. The others could not notice it. After the kirtan was over, on our way back, Jyotish said to me, 'If you are really infinite why are you affected by kirtan?'

I : Ma, it was not well-reasoned. If you were affected, every time you listened to a kirtan, then one might reasonably say that you were conditioned by kirtan. But when it is not so, how can kirtan be regarded as a limiting factor to you?

Ma (Satisfied) : Quite so, but Jyotish could not understand it. Times have been when I was knocked all over during a kirtan. Again on other occasions, a kirtan even at its hottest, left me cold. So I said to Jyotish, 'I sleep, eat,

speak — are these not indicative of my finiteness? What can you speak of which cannot be regarded as finite?'

Another day, I and Jyotish were wandering about when Jyotish said, 'I was all right before; I ate, travelled, did service and could do good to others, if I wished. What did I gain trailing behind you? Who are you? Why should people feed you, clothe you, move about with you?' He went on in this key.

I : What did you say in reply?

Ma : Nothing. I simply smiled and was silent.

I : Ma, I had talk with Jyotish Babu in connection with the writing of your biography. From what he said then and what I heard from you today I infer that he has not yet a proper perception of you. I had said to him, 'You see, it is imperative that a biography of Ma should be written. You are her constant associate. Besides being intensely devoted, you have a remarkable gift of penmanship. Considering all these, you are the one to undertake writing her biography.' At that Jyotish Babu said, 'Nothing can be done unless Ma wills. Besides, I think that Ma would soon reveal herself. For, it is seen that Ma often seems poised for revealing herself, then suddenly stops short and says that the time is not yet. I believe, her biography will be published when she wills it.' Hearing this, I did not think anything at the time. But when I put it in the context of what I just now heard from you, I am inclined to think that Jyotish Babu finds it difficult to size you up.'

Ma : What do you make of me ?

I : Judging by your words, you are self-revealed, the real essence. There was no time when you did not exist, and never a time will come, when you will cease to be. Now, if it is said, that you are Mahamaya, Kali or Durga incarnated as a human being, it would be unduly investing you with a limit. It would not be your real identity. For you are at once finite and infinite. How can one who is self-revealed have a revelation? How can such a one be defined either? Is it not so, Ma ?

Ma smilingly said with a fair amount of emphasis, 'What you have understood is the Truth itself.'

Hearing Ma, a pulsation of joy shot across my mind and I was overpowered by a feeling I could not identify. I thought merit accumulated over myriads of successive births must have gone into bringing me in contact with her, giving me the rare fortune of calling her 'Ma'. Ma's description of herself seemed to be in some sense akin to Sri Krishna's self-revelation to Arjun. In this connection, I said, 'Ma, is it not 'Purushottama Bhaba' — the one you spoke of?'

Ma said, 'That is for you to judge.'

On my return to Varanasi I told the whole thing to Gopinath Kaviraj and said, 'Do they not refer to 'Purushottama Bhaba?'

Gopinath Babu said, 'What else but Purushottama?'

However, Ma again said, 'I told these to

you, because you put searching questions or perhaps because you shall be able to grasp them.'

I : Ma, it would be wrong to claim that I understood all you said. But it is true that they seem to enable me to have a glimmering of your self.

Ma : Yes, so it is.

At this time others came up and our discourse came to a stop. That day I could no longer look upon Ma as her old, accustomed self. My mind repeatedly reverted to the Gita. I wondered how I should accept her and pay my regards to her, seeing that she pervaded my ins and outs — the universe in its entirety. Even considered as discrete, she was all-comprehensive, though appearing near, she was so far, so utterly remote. She was knowledge, fit to be known (jneya) and attainable through knowledge (jnan-gamyā); what remained of myself to the exclusion of her? I sat thus absorbed in brown study. I felt repentant at heart, thinking how I talked with her in jocular veins.

A crawling shame! How I had been underestimating her so long while she was 'Purushottama' all the time. And even now — was I able to realise her for what she was? Being what I was, a mere drop, how could I have the perception of an ocean! How I longed to repeat like Arjuna —

'Namah purastadatha prishthataste

Namah astute sarbata eba sarba.'

(I bow to thee on the front, I bow to thee on the back, Oh All-in-all, I bow to thee on all sides).

A lot of time passed like this. I had not so long noticed what the others were talking about to Ma. Then when the crowd thinned away, I resumed my talk with Ma. This time we talked about the Khalishpura's Ma of Varanasi. Hearing about her from me, Ma said, 'She is at a very high stage.' Then addressing my wife, she said, 'Do not think women cannot make much progress along the path of religion. We hear of so many Ma's these days.' At this time Swami Shankarananda came and called Ma to lunch. We also sat by Ma and saw her eat. After she had taken her meals, we had prasad.

Sharada's Marriage

When after the lunch I again sat by Ma, I said to her, 'Ma, I have not yet heard you tell about Sharada's Marriage.' Ma said, 'Well, I am telling you about it.' At this time three or four women came to see Ma. At this, I stood up, withdrew to the middle hall and started pacing up and down. A little later I heard Ma saying, 'Call the Babaji, I am going to speak about Seba.' Ma called Sharada, 'Seba' — that was how she had re-named her. Perhaps the name was symbolic, as I had heard from Ma that Sreemati Sharada Sharma took special delight in serving others. Whenever she heard that someone needed help, she would at once rush out for it unmindful of food and sleep. Even in the midst of an intimate talk with Ma when Ma perhaps was treating her audience to some very amusing anecdotes, if somebody came at this point

with the news that a woman was in labour, she would throw up the talks summarily and run post-haste to the woman. Her instinct for service was so strong. Perhaps that was why Ma had named her 'Seba' (Service). Ma was great at naming. Swami Shankarananda had quite a number of names from her, 'Vashishtha', 'Narada', 'Durbasa'. However, hearing Ma's words, I went to her before somebody was there to call me. Ma set out on her story of Sharada Debi.

Sharada Sharma was a lady doctor living with her sister at Dehra Dun. They frequently came to Ma and were greatly devoted to her. Ma said, 'Sharada is a very good girl. A Brahmacharini, in the best sense of the term. Though in the early thirties, she had not been for a moment assailed by lustful inclinations.' Very simple, she was not specially inclined to deities or religion before coming in contact with Ma. But she had such cardinal virtues as truthfulness, dutifulness etc. to a marked degree. When these two girls came to Ma, a Bengali girl named Shakti used to say to her, 'Ma, would you get them married off.' And Ma would say smilingly, 'Why, I am looking for the bridegrooms.' Ma said, 'I had many times asked Seba if she would marry but in reply she used to say that she could not be definite about it; for, if she said that she would not marry and afterwards got married by chance, she would be guilty of a false statement. Again, she sometimes said by herself, 'Ma, I have longing for a son. If I had one I would get him highly educated.'

Such statements evoked no maiden coyness in her, which was alien to her nature. She talked even with her father about her marriage.

One day Sharada and her sister were sitting with me when Shakti again said to me, 'Ma, would you not get Sharada married?' At that I said to Sharada, 'What, do you not want to marry?' That day she suddenly spoke out, 'Ma, you know all. I shall do what you bid me do.' I said, 'If I ask you to marry a scavenger, will you do so?' She said, 'I shall do your bidding.' When I put the same question to Sharada's sister, she kept sitting making no reply.

One day I gave Sharada and Prakashji's daughter a bouquet of flowers each directing them to bring them when coming to me next day. Sharada carried the bouquet home carefully and keeping it in a room put it under lock and key. Prakashji's daughter also did the same but she did not lock the room where she put the bouquet. Next day before coming to me, Sharada went to look for the bouquet but it was not there. All the other things in the room were in their places and the lock had not been tampered with, but the bouquet was missing. It was the same with Prakashji's daughter. Neither the one nor the other could understand how the bouquets had disappeared. Coming to me, Sharada said sorrowfully that she had lost the bouquet.

That morning, the poojari of Ananda Chowk*

* During this incident Ma had been staying at Ananda Chowk.

temple was saying in his sermon something about the instincts brought forward by jivas. Sharada was listening to him very attentively. The poojari was saying, a jiva can have no emancipation so long as these instincts persist. He has to be born over and over again to live down the instincts. As Sharada listened, the prospect seemed frightening to her. If she had an instinct for marriage, then even after a whole life of religious practices she would be forced to be born again only to wear out the instinct. Sharada waited, eager to disburden herself of this misgiving. That morning Shakti was also among my visitors. She said, 'Ma, I have great desire to do up Sharada's hair.' Permitted by me, she did up her hair very carefully, combing out a parting at the middle. It was a hair-style distinctive of married women in this region. At this time Prakashji's mother came with a garland of flowers, though it was not her way to come to me in the morning. Thus, arrangements for a marriage were getting forward. With the day advancing, when all the others went home, finding me alone Sharada said, 'Ma, the poojari was saying that the instincts of a jiva never wear out except through actualization. If I pass the whole life in religious practices (Sadhan-bhajan) and yet have an instinct of marriage lurking in me, will that cause me to be reborn, merely to get rid of that instinct?' I said,

in Dehradun. On her return from Uttar Kashi, she had changed her residence from Ananda Chowk to Krishnashram on Rajpur Road.

'Yes, of course.' This left Sharada heavy-hearted. In order to ease her mind of sorrow, I said, 'Come on, I shall get out married to Narayan in this very birth, so that you shall not have to go into household life and yet your instinct for marriage will be worn out.' With this I said to her, 'Go, and before everything else, bow down to Shakti, for in this marriage, she had taken the main incentive.'

I : You spoke only of the marriage. You did not get her married, did you ?

Ma : Well, after I said so to Sharada, something happened -- you need not hear about it. Then Sharada went to make her pranam to Shakti and the moment she did it, Shakti brought some vermillion from the room and laid it along the parting of her hair. She would not be able to say why she did it, for up to that time nobody else but myself and Sharada knew anything about her marriage. Afterwards, when the news of Sharada's marriage spread out, some said that she had been married to a boy named Narayan, while the others protested. 'Heavens, no! This Narayan is no other than God Himself.' Again some came to me and said, 'Ma, let us have a look at Sharada's husband.' I said to them, 'See, even when having a glimpse of a human bridegroom, you have to crane your necks or make similar efforts, being cut out by the crowd -- in order to see Sharada's husband, you must take pains and go through religious austerities. If you do so, you shall surely see Him. Sharada's husband is also your husband, for He is the only master (husband) of the universe.'

Sharada's having a son.

After the tale of Sharada's marriage was over, Ma proceeded to tell how she had a son. Ma said, 'One day Sharada, Hariram, Lakshmi and others were sitting with me when Sharada and Hariram broke into a controversy over something. Jyotish and Lakshmi put in a word or two at intervals which served to stoke up the quarrel. I was listening silently to their bandy of words. At this time someone said, 'For shame! You are quarrelling in the presence of Ma.' At that all fell into silence. Next day I said to Hariram, 'You, Sharada and Lakshmi had exchanged hot words yesterday. You must atone for it by undertaking a Kumari puja.' Hearing this Sharada and others joyfully began to make preparations for Kumari puja. Many including Jyoti were present at this puja. Jyoti had not been invited by anybody to attend. He had come to Dehra Dun from Allahabad only a short while ago, after passing his M.A. After the puja was over, I said, 'You have worshipped Bhagawati, now pray to her for boons.' Before anybody could say anything, I said to Lakshmi, 'The Debi's boon is that from this day on, I become your daughter.' And holding Jyoti by the hand I said to Sharada, 'Here is your son, an M.A.' At this time somebody proposed that a group photo of all should be taken. I said, 'Each should be photographed with the Kumari he or she has worshipped.' Then three photos were taken. They contained respectively Hariram and his Kumari, Lakshmi and her Kumari and Sharada

and her Kumari and I was included in each of them. Two days after, the photographer came to say that two of the prints had come out well, but in the one with Sharada, her Kumari and myself, the form of the Kumari had become blurred. He suggested that he should scrape out the Kumari before delivering it. I told him not to tamper with it but deliver it as it is. He did the same. It was seen that in the photo the form of a child had appeared overlaying the Kumari. Nobody had the slightest idea about where the child was from.

I : Ma, was it not by any chance, the form of Jyoti as a child?

Ma (smiling) : You are the first person to say so. So far nobody else has made the guess. (To Bhramar) Mark what the Babaji says. Ma called others also and told them about my guess. It seemed to me that Ma took this opportunity of disclosing the identity of the child through my mouth.

In course of these talks, the day wore on to 4 p.m. At that time a photographer came. Bhramar got herself photographed with her Sivalinga and Ma. The Sivalinga (Banlinga) was Ma's gift to Bhramar. It had a peculiarity of its own. Its colour was gradually changing and in image like that of Ma was taking shape by degrees. Two photos were taken. In one Ma appeared with her arm thrown round Bhramar's neck, in the other Bhramar was shown sitting on Ma's lap. Ma called Bhramar 'Bara Ma.' Ma seemed to be favourably to her beyond measure.

I went back to the hotel a little before the evening. Perhaps Ma was not going out for walk that day. On my going back to Ma after the evening I found her surrounded by many ladies, Kashmiri as well as Bengalee. She stood out as radiant among these beautiful ladies as the moon surrounded by the stars. It seemed I had never seen him in the form in which she appeared to me at the time. Quiet but smiling, with the radiance of the face surging out, seeking all directions. She had a wrapper of endi thrown around her body. An embodiment, per excellence, of quiet beauty and whiteness. The girls were singing Bhajan to Ma. On being pressed by all, Ma also sang one. Words cannot express its sweetness and divine quality. She sang swaying this way and that in a very sweet tone and with eyes intoxicated by emotion —

Hari Bol, Hari Bol, Hari Hari Bol

Keshab Madhab Gobinda Bol.

(Say Hari ... Say Keshab, Madhab and Gobinda).

The girls also joined in. It seemed as if the deities, leaving behind their celestial abode en masse, had clustered around to listen to the song. So long as Ma was singing, we kept listening spell-bound, as it were. Perhaps if one could sing the name of God like that, he can no longer remain in concealment. The memory of that song was never to be effaced.

Ma did not sing for long. But the girls continued. We were due to depart the next day, we did not linger till late but went back to the hotel.

I urewell to Dehradun

1st Kartick, Friday 1342 (18-10-35). It was our day of departure for Hardwar. I rose up during the small hours of the night and went to see Ma, with the object of taking leave of her at the time. We were leaving in the morning by the 9 O'clock train. So there was hardly any time for a second visit.

A little before sunrise, I was with Ma. It was still dark. I found Jyotish Babu, Swami Shankarananda, Mouni Ma,* Lakshmi Bai, Bhramar and two local women sitting with Ma. The last mentioned two were mother and daughter. The daughter was studying B.A. at the Banaras University. They used to come everyday at 4 A.M. to sing Bhajan to Ma. As soon as they came and started singing, Ma sat up. As Bhramar slept with Ma, she had also to get up from bed. It meant a bit of hardship to her. Ma one day said laughingly, 'Bhramar one day said to me, Ma, why do you sit up as they start singing? You may as well keep lying a little longer, then I too can sleep on. It is too early to rise, is it not?' I said, 'I cannot keep lying even after their arrival.' We too have observed that with a visitor coming to her with eagerness, Ma could not help responding. At other time she might be found quietly lying wrapped up in the midst of a room full of people.

* She was the wife of Sri Abani Mohan Basu. Even with husband and son alive, she was leading the life of a recluse. Her real name was Monorama Basu. Ma called her 'Mouni Ma'.

She was quite indifferent to external affairs. It was the mind alone that mattered to her.

On going I found Jyotish Babu singing a self-composed song in an undertone. I liked the song very much. After that a Bhajan was sung in chorus. It also had to be heard to appreciate its sweetness. A dim light was breaking out through the darkness. A few birds were twittering at interval on the yonder tree. Ma seemed to be stead-fastly looking at the Mussoorie hills, apparently like a yogini in meditation. In the mist-bestrewn world poised between night and day, streaks of light seemed to be shooting out to the rhythmic beat of the music. The music was such as induced one spontaneously to prostrate himself, heart and soul, at the feet of the mother of the universe. And I had to go tearing myself away from that heaven of bliss. Tears stood out at my eyes as I thought of bidding farewell to the living incarnation of the mother of the universe. Restraining them with difficulty, I began to repeat the name. The sun rose. Jyotish Babu went away from Ma. But the song continued. I also mentally took leave of Ma, and making my obeisance, stood up. Next, I left with my wife and daughter. Getting out of the room, I found Jyotish Babu sitting in the Eastern verandah. I made my salutation to him. He embraced me with an emotional vigour. He was so affectionate to all the devotees of Ma due to his whole-hearted love for Ma. With difficulty I spoke to him a word or two, and set out turning my face aside to conceal

my tears. Bhramar accompanied us to the outer gate.

Back to the hotel, I had just some breakfast and was making preparations for departure when Jyotish Babu appeared. He said, 'You are going today, are not you?'

I : Yes.

Jyotish : Would not you go to meet Ma?

I : I met Ma in the morning and took leave of her.

Jyoti : Why then did Ma send me here?

I also seemed to hear him saying, 'Ma has asked you to meet her. I sent him away saying, 'I shall be there immediately.' I could not understand why Ma sent for me even after I had bidden her farewell. However, we all set out again in a tonga for Ma. Before leaving I directed the manager of the hotel to get ready my bill.

Very soon we were with Ma. I found her standing in the front verandah, as if waiting for us. I said to her, 'Ma, why did you send for me?'

Ma (smiling) : Well, I did not. Jyoti told you I did?

I : Yes.

But to my surprise Jyoti Babu denied having made the statement.

Ma : After you left in the morning, I asked Jyotish if you were going today. Jyotish said, 'Yes, Amulya Babu has gone bidding farewell.' At that I said no more. But I visualized the Babaji (i.e. I) as having coming back. A little later Jyoti came up and enquired after you. When I said that you

were leaving today, he was disturbed and said, 'Shall I go and meet him, then?' I said, 'You may, if you like.' You know what happened after that. You have come back because that was how you appeared in my vision.

So saying Ma began to laugh. All joined in. I realised that Ma's will was instrumental to my coming back. As Ma is reported to have said to Jyotish Babu once, 'Who has it in his power to come to me unless I draw him along?'

I stood on in silence.

Ma said, 'Both of you are under the protecting wings of a Sadguru. You should help each other in keeping to the path of religion. If husband and wife take to different paths, it leads to various obstructions. May you advance along the path of virtue helped by each other.

And when you go to Dhaka Ashram, tell them I will go there the very day they take me back.' With tearful eyes I said, 'Ma, I do not know how to take you. You must go there through condescension.'

Ma further said, 'Tell everyone, the days that pass by can never be recalled. So willingly or unwillingly, all should devote a little more time to repeating the name. This is my prayer.'

I made my obeisance to Ma. When my wife did the same, she fondled her touching her cheek. At this time seeing Gopalji* I was about to bow down

* Shri Dwarakanath Raina. A lawyer at Dehradun and a resident of Ananda Chawk. The name Gopalji came from Ma. He and his wife were both highly devoted to Ma.

to him. I very much came to like this old man, the paragon of devotees. He would not let me bow down to him, but taking me by the hand, locked me in a close embrace and said, 'By the grace of Ma, we are all one.' Ah! How simple and sweet are the devotees of Ma here. Seeing us held in embrace, Ma said, 'It is not his (i.e. Gopalji's) usual custom to stay here so far into the day. Perhaps he has been staying on today in anticipation of this meeting.'

I bowed down to the others present and get into the tonga. No one but the person having a direct experience of it would understand what a heart-rending affair can such a leave-taking prove. In an auspicious moment must I have set out from Dhaka, so I could pass these four days with great delight in the company of Ma.



In the photo the form of a child had appeared
overlaying the Kumari

CHAPTER THREE

Ma's arrival at Dhaka

25th Agrahayan, Wednesday 1342 (11-12-35). At 12 A.M. Sri Bhupati Nath Mitra came with a telegram in hand and informed us that on 27th Agrahayan, Friday (13-12-35), Sri Sri Ma would be arriving at Dhaka with Baba Bholanath. It delighted us very much. For the next two days, there was only one talk in the air — Ma was coming. All lips were full of smile. All were beside themselves with joy. The smile on their lips bore ample testimony to the eagerness with which they were looking forward to meeting with Ma.

We went to Narainganj to welcome Ma back. The steamer arrived at 1-10 P.M. As soon as Ma and Baba Bholanath got down from the steamer, Bhupati Babu garlanded them. We took the train to Dhaka. This time Bhramar had also accompanied Ma. In the train, Ma sat silent for long. Next when she spoke, her speech was inarticulate. I had never heard her speak like that before. I was told that she had begun to speak inarticulately on the way back from Dehradun. She seemed to be half in trance. I was afraid that she might lapse into silence.

However, the train arrived at Dhaka at 2.30 P.M. Many devotees were waiting also at the Dhaka station. They welcomed Ma and Baba with a joy of triumph. Ma and Baba were conducted from the station to the Ashram in Sri Sachindra Chandra Ghosh's car. We went to the Ashram on foot. On

reaching there we found Ma so completely encircled by the ladies that our access to her was almost barred. We reached to the meadow and waited.

A little later Ma and Baba Bholanath set out for the late Ishwar Ghosh's garden to meet the grandpa (Sri Sri Ma's father Sri Bipin Bihari Bhattacharya). We also followed. Reaching there Ma bowed down to the grandpa and sat on the landing place of the pond. Swami Shankaranda said to Ma, 'You bowed down to the grandpa — why did you leave out the grandma?' With a smile Ma said, 'I wholly forgot it.' Later, she bowed down to the grandma. With her head to the ground, she bowed to us. She even put her head to her own feet to make a pranam to herself. The Swamiji said 'Ma, the pranam is almost complete, except for a small detail.' Ma said, 'Where am I amiss?'

Swamiji : 'You have excluded Bholanath.' Ma went back to Bholanath and made her bow to him. She went through the whole process smilingly, as if play-acting. I kept looking at her, speechless with wonder. Looking at us, Ma broke into a profuse laughter.

Back to the Ashram from the grandma's house, Ma took her seat in the meadow, with the ladies seated on her one side and we on the other. Many women came and made their pranam to Ma one by one and left. A 3/4 year old boy appeared with cap on in front of Ma and made his pranam with folded hands. We laughed at the way

he made his pranam. Ma also had a good laugh and said, 'You are an Englishman, are you? Yes, through-and-through an Englishman.'

Long life is a mark of virtue.

At this time the wife of Sri Jogesh Chandra Ghosh came with her husband. Both were very old. Jogesh Babu's wife sat by Ma and drawing Ma's hands into her own, said, 'How long yet have I to live (and suffer)? I was on the point of death, but survived. Tell me how longer have I to grind on.'

Ma : A long life is a mark of virtue. The longer one lives, the more are the sufferings in store for his are worn out. Death-wish should be avoided, rather think that you are wearing out your quota of sufferings.

Jogesh Babu's wife : I had fallen seriously ill. (Pointing to Bhudeb Babu's wife) This daughter of mine and another girl have nursed me well.

Ma : It is the duty of women to serve. They are not born for their own happiness.

Jogesh Babu's wife (Pointing to Jogesh Babu) : I am now preoccupied with him. See, how I have decked him up.

Jogesh Babu sat not far off. He was dressed in a coat, trousers and a cap.

Ma : Look upon him as your Gopal and decorate him like this.

Conversation was going on in this manner. The darkness of evening was gathering fast. Ma was talking in that half-light. At the time Bhramar

came and led Ma inside. The Arati was on in the temple. After it was over we went into the Ashram for our shares of the prasad. Ma was then in the Namghar and the boys were singing a kirtan. The kirtan was fairly delightful. Yet I thought that they had rather stopped the kirtan and let Ma take her much-needed rest. Ma set out from Tarapochh the day before and arrived at Dhaka that very day. She had no rest the whole day and night. Worse still, she was on fast. She badly needed some rest.

Ma's unwillingness to sleep indoors.

However, when at the end of the kirtan she was requested to turn in, she said that she would sleep on the verandah of the Annapurna temple. Akhandanandaji objected saying, 'The Brahma-charis will sleep there.'

Ma : Let them. There would still be room enough for me. When once I have said so, I shall stay here.

A little later Akhandanandaji came back with the news that Bholanath wanted to speak to Ma. Ma went to the cottage. We also followed her. There we found that the matter had taken a serious turn. Baba Bholanath was arguing with Ma that as there was nothing wrong with the room, there was no point in her lying outside. In a soft but firm voice Ma expressed her resolution of lying on the verandah. But she gave no reason for it. Baba Bholanath was under a vow of silence; so he gave his answer in writing — that was why

he had been objecting to coming to Dhaka. He had a presentiment of something going wrong connected with their coming to Dhaka and the start could already be seen in Ma's insistence on sleeping on the temple verandah. (He seemed to have an idea that Ma would not enter into a room any more but wander about in hills as a recluse). He went so far as to declare in a huff that if Ma spent the night on the verandah, he would go away wherever his fancy took him. Hearing this Ma became a bit serious and said, 'Why should you go away? If you like you too may go to the verandah and sleep there; otherwise, sleep in the room. You know all about my whims. When I have taken it into my head to stay on the verandah, I must do that. It is not always that reasons come out of my lips. Only know that I have a special reason for wishing to stay there. (To us) You persuade Bholanath to permit me to sleep on the verandah.

Pramatha Babu : Why should we get the permission out of him? You just make Bholanath give his consent. But Bholanath would not relent; nor would Ma yield. At this time Ganesh Babu said, 'Ma, do Hara and Parvati quarrel like this in Kailas?

Ma (Gravely) : Have you seen Hara and Parvati?

Ganesh Babu : No. I have heard of them.

Ma (Gravely as before) : Do not rely on hearsays. First see Hara Parvati, then you can say anything about them.

Though Ma said these words gently and

quietly, yet they seemed to come down as strokes of lash on the face of her interrogator. After that Ganesh Babu or anybody else did not dare to speak to Ma in a light vein. I did not like the turn of things. Going out of the room, I told Nishi Babu* everything. Nishi Babu also was deeply worried. He said, 'There was an obstruction at the time of leaving Tarapeeth. I wonder if it is a precursor of something evil.'

I saw it was no good either to keep standing outside. The sooner this ominous controversy came to an end, the better. So thinking, I again went to Ma, sat there and said to Baba Bholanath, 'Baba, I have something to say.' He looked up at me.

I : It was seen before this that when something was done contrary to Ma's will, it inevitably led to evil consequences. Once during the Rathayatra in Puri, Ma wanted to depart from Puri without attending to the Rathayatra. She was prevented from doing so. The result was that a son of Nirmal Babu fell into a well and was killed.

Baba Bholanath nodded in disagreement and implied with a sign, that it happened for disobeying his direction. He also said in writing that his opposition of Ma's plan of sleeping on the temple verandah was for our good—he had no personal interest in it.

* Sri Nishikanta Mitra — A very old devotee of Ma. Now he lived almost the life of an ascetic. Ma ordered him to engage in religious practices in the Raipur temple at Dehra Dun.

I said to Ma, 'Ma, say that your lying on the temple verandah would do us no injury.'

Ma : No, it would not do you any injury.

I : Also make a declaration to the effect that your unwillingness to enter into the room to-night, does not imply that after this you would take to asceticism and leave for an unknown destination.

Hearing these words Baba Bholanath smiled and hinted that he had been implying the same thing so far.

Ma : Where do you think I shall go ?

I : You may go to the hills and stay there. How should we know where you would go ? If we do not see you, we would think that we have lost you.

Ma : All this is neither here nor there. In connection with my coming to Dhaka, I told you before that if I stayed in flesh and you had me back, I would come to Dhaka. My wishing to lie on the temple verandah has nothing whatsoever with what I intend to do in future.

At this I said to Baba Bholanath, 'Since Ma says that her lying on the temple verandah is not likely to do us any harm, please withdraw your objection. Give your consent smilingly.' But the Baba had yet his apprehensions. Pramatha Babu also spoke in defence of the Baba. A little annoyed, I said to Pramatha Babu, 'Raise no more objections. When Ma insists on lying on the temple verandah, no one can make her budge from her decision, and even if it can be done, it

will be to nobody's good. Ma herself has assured us against any evil consequence of her action.'

Thus a sort of decision was arrived at that Ma would sleep on the verandah. I went out of the room. Ma took her seat on the temple verandah. A little later when I made my bow to her and asked for her leave to withdraw, Ma said, 'Babaji, this time I met Bishuddhananda Babaji. I talked to him freely like his daughter.'

I : Ma, I shall hear the whole thing from you tomorrow.

Ma : Very well (thinking a little). Provided that tomorrow comes and we have a talk.

At this all my former doubts returned. Will Ma take to vow of silence from the next day?

I : Ma, then I shall hear it today.

Ma : No, let it be tomorrow.

Shankarananda : Tomorrow I shall remind Ma.

Ma : Do it.

I was troubled by a thought — Ma wanted to relate to me tonight the account of her meeting with Baba Bishuddhananda — was it wrong on my part to oppose her? If Ma really took the vow of silence from the next day on, I shall not be able to hear the account.

I heard from Akhandananda Swamiji that Baba Bholanath was not at all inclined to come to Dhaka this time. It took Ma a long persuasion to make him agreeable. Even when they were at Rampurhat Station, the Baba was heard saying, 'You take her (i.e. Ma) to Dhaka. I shall stay on here.' But it had been Ma's attempt all along

to move him from his resolution.

Next day, it was 28th Agrahayana, Saturday, 1342 (14-12-35). I set out for Ma very early in the morning. When I reached the Ashram, it was yet somewhat dark. I found Ma and Bhramar lying on the temple verandah. The grandma was sitting near Ma. I was told that Ma had got up very early in the morning and said a word or two to Kulada Dada* and had gone to bed again. A little later when Baba Bholanath, having performed his morning rites, came up I made my pranam to him. Then Jatin Babu, Radhika Babu and other devotees started coming in. But Ma was still asleep. In the meantime Akhandanandaji came up, his morning rites over, and without waiting for Ma to get up, went to make his pranam. As the Swamiji made his pranam removing the blanket, Ma sat up. At this tricky move of the Swamiji, Baba Bholanath and we began to laugh. As it was getting late, I sought leave of Ma, for I had to go to the college. As I made my bow to Ma, she said, 'You have come very early today.'

I : If you knew it all the time, then why did you keep lying wrapped in blanket?

* Sri Kuladakanta Banerjee. He worked in the P.W.D. office. Having relinquished the family life, he was then living in the Ashram and performed puja etc. at the Annapurna temple. He had living faith in Ma. Once his son had an attack of cholera. He did not call in a doctor but said, 'The boy will live if Ma protects him, if not, let him die.' The boy died. But Kulada Babu's faith in Ma remained unshaken.

Ma laughed aloud but did not say anything.

Having completed my college duties I went back to the Ashram by 10 A.M. Ma was sitting in the Nam-ghar, but she got up instantly to sit down under a tree outside the Ashram. Bowing down at the temple I took my seat by Ma. She was then giving instructions to an old man.

How the mind comes to be at rest

The old man's question was, 'How can the mind be brought to rest?'

Ma said : 'The mind is restless by nature. It naturally darts this way and that. It can have no rest till it gets its treasure which is its birth right, — the pure attitude. So I interpret *Sadhan* as a bid for acquiring *Swadhan* (one's real legacy). The object of *Sadhana* is steadying the mind. Once the mind is steady, little remains to be desired. In order to steady the mind one must adhere to a single preoccupation such as repeating the name, taking part in a religious discussion, reading religious books and the like. One should devote a greater part of his time to what he takes delight in.

The old man : If the mind flits from point to point while repeating the name, is it any good?

Ma : Why not? If while walking you tread upon fire, you have your foot burnt whether you attend to it or not. In the same way, repeating the name will bring its own reward whether you do it attentively or absentmindedly. We often have the idea that repeating the name is not proving effective. It is true that often we cannot trace

the effect of repeating the name. But actually it is never ineffective. It leaves on us an imprint of its own and later we realise that it has not been in vain. But there is a difference between repeating the name attentively and doing it absent-mindedly. An attentive repetition produces result quickly while an inattentive one takes longer in showing effect. But the effect is not lost. So I say, it is good to repeat the name constantly. You see from the worldly point of view, a person who concentrates more on worldly affairs, has his worldly wisdom well developed. Similarly, devoting greater time to holy ideas lead to their greater development. However, it is not possible to repeat the name for a long time at the outset, because one does not relish it. Children also are not inclined to study as they prefer play to studying. If the children have to be educated, they have to be forced to study; similarly, some force has to be applied in the beginning for continuing the repetition of name. What is needed is the formation of habit. You see, utensils encrusted with dirt, require a good rubbing to scour them clean. One round of rubbing cannot free them from dirt. The more they are scoured, the cleaner they become. To strike a match-stick into flame also requires rubbing; there is no saying when it will break into a flame. It is the same with repeating the name. A continual practice brings in the result.

It is no good regretting that the mind flickers from object to object. The proper attitude under

the circumstances is that you should no more follow the bent of your mind, which wavers despite yourself, but go on repeating the name, contrary to its tendency. You must have seen boys flying kites. The kite flies in the sky — it is not steady, it is now here, now there, but it is bound to the thread wound round the spool. The kite stands for the mind. It has to be tied up to the thread — that is, the name. Thus tied, it is bound to be controllable one day or the other. It is true that restlessness is an attribute of the mind, but it is also its property to come to a steady state. To bring it to this state, something has to be resorted to. To secure a service you have to seek somebody's patronage. In the same way have recourse to the name for salvation. The name should be repeated for at least three hours a day and this period has to be increased gradually. If on some day you cannot repeat the name for three hours, then you must make up the arrear some other day. In this way you must make a resolution, that you would increase the three-hour period gradually till it becomes six hours and attempts must be made to that end. There must be a resolution behind everything.

For religious edification many people accept gurus. Guru really implies God. He is everywhere and at all time. Instructions are scattered all around and they are yours for the picking up. God gives these instructions in various ways. We can get instructions even from trees and animals. In this sense, the guru is all-pervasive.

Ma said many things in this strain. At last she said to the old man, 'Baba, you are now a retired man, remember my words. The days passed can never be recalled—never. So always try to repeat the names.

After that the old man went away. Some women also were sitting near Ma. Some of them were indulging in high topics at intervals, but they lacked sincerity. Ma gave no reply to them. She only smiled from time to time and said, 'Well, Ma, you can talk well.' We are so enamoured of our supposed learning and intellect that we fail to notice the mountain-high stupidity we labour under. The woman went further and pressed Ma endearingly. 'Ma, how I long to have your prasad. True, what I eat at home is also your prasad, but I have a great desire to share prasad touched by your mouth. Will this desire of mine never be fulfilled?' After she had said so two or three times over, Ma said, 'Very well, why not stay at the Ashram this very day and partake of the prasad? (To a woman) Go now my girl, cook in excess, we shall all have prasad.' But it so happened that the above-mentioned woman did not wait for the prasad. She went away under the plea that she had an invalid at home. Alas! Misdirected by our Karmas that we are, we cannot welcome a gesture of grace even when it comes our way.

Ma's meeting with Swami Bishuddhananda

After the woman had left I said to Ma, 'Ma,

please give me the account of your meeting with Baba Bishuddhananda.'

Ma said, 'When this time I was coming via Varanasi, I met the Babaji, but not for long. May be for half an hour or an hour at most. Gopi Babu took us there. Going there, I sat by the Babaji. He had already arranged a seat for me. You know the way I speak. I pressed the Babaji with a child like importunity, 'Babaji, they say you have shown magical feats to many. Do show me a few, will you?' The Babaji said, 'You are sitting quietly. Have you discovered any secret?' I at once posed as a little girl and said, 'Baba, I am your daughter. What do I know? I shall learn what you would please to teach me. Teach me all your secrets?' The Babaji called Jyotish to him and showed him a crystal which he had made out of the petals of a flower. He also produced a number of scents. When the Babaji was demonstrating these things I clapped and said, 'Babaji, I can make out what you are at. But I shall not divulge it.' Then all said to me, 'Ma, do tell us the secrets of the Babaji.' I said, 'If I do so, he would strike me on the head with a cudgel.' The Babaji said, 'Beti, what is there that I can show you? You know all. I am demonstrating to the others.' Next he bought some sweets and offered us to eat. He fed me and I also did the same with him. The Babaji said, 'Beti, remember me. Never forget me. And whenever you come here make sure to meet me.' Before I left I said to Gopi Babu, 'You see, the

Babaji is putting you off with these demonstrations. You should not allow him to delude you. Try to elicit from him the other things that he has within him.'

Seeing that it was close on 12 A.M., I took leave of Ma with these words, 'Ma, now I shall rise.'

Ma : Always try to rise. Never get lower.

I smiled and said to myself, 'Ma, so be it with your blessings.'

On going to the Ashram in the afternoon I found that Bhabani Babu* had just started reading from a text. He read on till evening.

Initiative (Self-exertion), the way of Jiva and the way of Brahma

In the evening Ma went out for a walk in the Ashram ground. After the walk, she sat on a part of the ground. We thought of ways and means for getting instructions out of Ma. Ganesh Babu was on the point of asking her a question, — the same, we were told, as Moti Babu† had asked the previous night. Moti Babu also came up at this time and repeated his overnight question. The question was over two apparently contradictory statements said to be made by Ma the previous night, namely, the attainment of God called

* Sri Bhabani Charan Neogy. A retired Deputy magistrate.

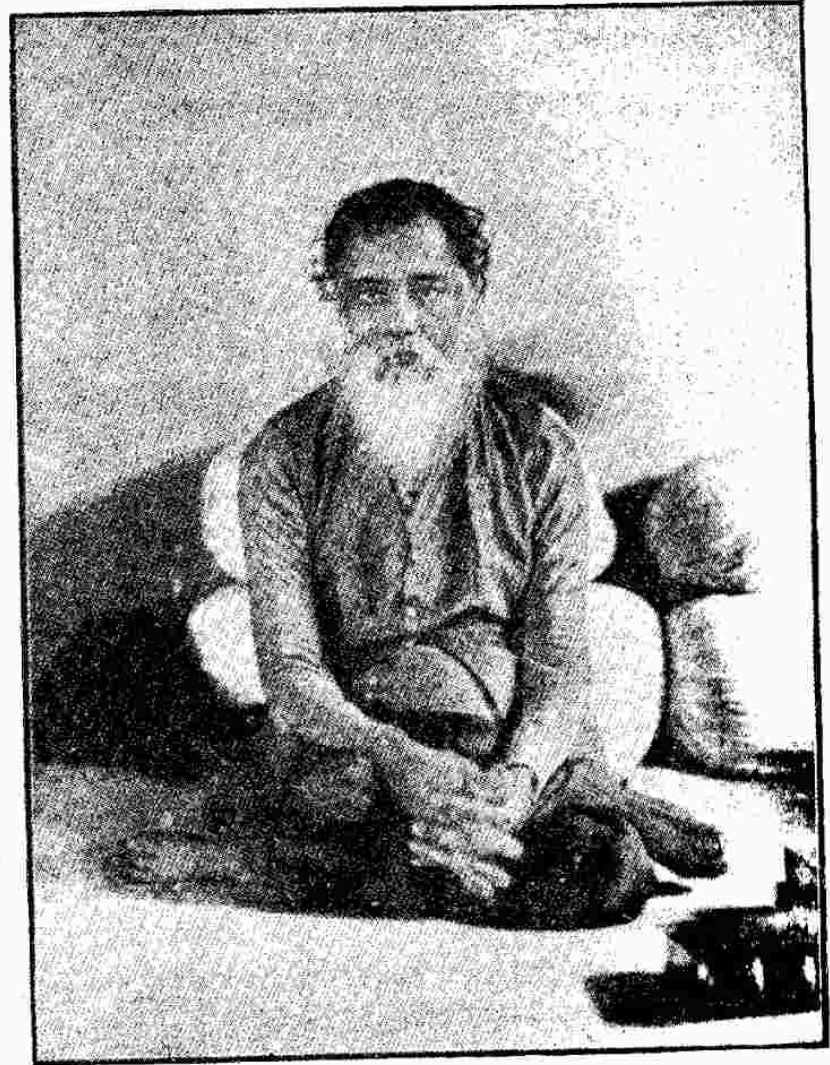
† Sri Rajendralal Roy. The son of Sri Mahendra Chandra Roy, the famous lawyer of Dhaka. A bar-at-law, he was currently carrying on his legal practice at Dhaka.

for Self-exertion and that there was no saying that God could be attained only through Self-exertion. Now a clarification was asked for.

Ma said, 'So long as a man can exert himself, he should do so. So long as there is a drive for Self-exertion, one cannot resist it. Through conscious efforts pure* perception and pure orientation emerge. This pure orientation is something that cannot be expressed in words. It can be understood only when it emerges. And when it arises, the person realises that conscious efforts and actions are not the real stuffs. Then he becomes a puppet in the hand of God, to be worked up as He likes.

But to make this state operative, one has to resort to a line of approach—no matter whether it is dualistic or monistic. One has to cling to an obsessive idea either in the form of 'I am everything, I am everything' or 'You are everything, you are everything.' Gradually the dichotomy withers away and there is either 'I' or 'You'. Everything is immersed in an All-embracing entity. This is the perception of Brahma, attaining God. It is inexpressible in words. For the sake of a rough understanding it is spoken of in terms of gains and losses. Brought within the framework of words, it becomes truncated. Language yields only the flotsam (A pun on 'Bhasha' — language and 'Bhasa' floating). So it is said, Jiva and Siva are incompatible — they are mutually exclusive.

* Apparently used in the sense of unmotivated. Translator's Note.



Sri Sri Bisuddhananda Paramahansa

The jiva point of view can be likened to making a room hedging in a part of a meadow. The meadow is there all the time. Even when the room is made enclosed by a hedge, the meadow is both inside and outside the room. And when the hedge is dismantled, the meadow comes into its own once more. So I say, gain and loss are illusory. A jiva is essentially God. He is called jiva only for his bonded state. When the bond is off, he springs back to Godhood which has been his state all the time. So it is said, "As many Jiva, so many Siva."

The state of being jiva may be likened to the ripples of a river. Ripples arise in the river-water. The ripples are jivas and water is God. The ripples arise in water and are nothing but water. In the same way, jiva has his anchorage in God and he is God in essence. But our intellect has a way of differentiating and so we regard ripples as different from water. Otherwise, they have no difference anymore than Jiva and Brahma. It is our ignorance that has made the difference between them.

Besides, even generally speaking, man bears in him all the attributes of Brahma. These are discreteness, infinitude and ineffability. We can recollect in words all our thoughts during the last five minutes. We can express a good part, it is true, but not all. This implies the infiniteness of the mind. Again this infinitude co-exists with discreteness. We speak word by word, write letter by letter, walk step by step and eat in morsels —

these denote discreteness (articulateness). Again you may observe ineffability in us. We say about a flower that it is beautiful. But we cannot express clearly how beautiful it is. We may use a lot of words in our attempt to describe it, but we can never express the idea in its entirety. Thus jiva has all the attributes of Brahma. He is essentially Brahma. In addition to this jiva has another trait in him—the one we call joy. Jiva, by nature, longs for joy. He can desire it only because he has it within him. Otherwise, he would have nothing to do with it. He cannot help yearning after joy. If you observe, you will discover this desire for joy and peace in all living beings. Even such small animals as worms and insects avoid heat. They seek peace and comfort. Oppressed by the sun, animals seek shade. In the same way man also oppressed by threefold afflictions, strives for God, who is the abode of peace and the source of joy. Protection from these three-fold affliction calls for some other kind of privation. Suffering can be overcome by counter-suffering. This is called Tapasya. To me Tapasya means self-exposure to *tapa* or suffering. As one smarts under worldly tribulations, so it is with one repeating the name of God at the early stage. But painful though it is, it has to be undergone to secure freedom from the threefold afflictions. So striving and action are needed. In birds and beasts there is no urge for attaining God. It is present only at the human level. God has invested the jiva with a pall of ignorance, but He has provided in

it an opening to knowledge. He can secure his liberation through that opening. But it must be borne in mind that to attain the Absolute, namely God, one must rise superior to knowledge as well as ignorance. Brahma cannot be attained, so long as the duality of knowledge and ignorance, that is, the discriminatory faculty persists. When Brahma is attained all such faculty is merged in Him.

I : If jiva is like a ripple of water, then who has caused this ripple?

Ma : Who else but the water? God has Himself become jiva.

I : Then shall I take it that the jiva has no bondage due to action?

Ma : Bondage is there so long as there is a perception or awareness of it. When it wears out the bondage too is at an end. Everything happens as it is willed by God. The moment you realise it, you are liberated. If you believe me, it is also God's will that you should today seek Him.

The need of a guru; getting a Sadguru

A lawyer : Ma, I have a few questions to ask. What is the need of a guru? How can a Sadguru be attained? Why does the line of a guru come to an end?

Ma : Why do you appoint a tutor for the teaching of your children? A guru is as much needed in the religious sphere as in the matter of education.

Lawyer : Everything is written in books.

Where then does the guru come in?

Ma : This book cannot be read on one's own. One can read by himself the book dealing with external subjects but not one dwelling upon internal (esoteric) matters.

Unidirectional efforts are needed for the attainment of a Sadguru. If the efforts are whole-hearted, Sadguru must appear. You see, when a child calls upon the mother and is in all tears rolling on the dust, can the mother stand apart, unconcerned? She is bound to come. You should pray for a guru in the same way. He will come and no mistake. You see, we are not the servants of God. He is our servant. He is bound to supply to us what we desire.

Now about the lineage of a guru coming to an end. Guru is God Himself — How can He be destroyed. Again, if you take it in a temporal sense — why, many dynasties are coming to an end like that of a guru. What is special about this termination? Besides, if one cannot discharge his duties properly, he is in fault and this necessarily leads to elimination. I have put it in different ways, you may take the one that suits you.

It was late in the night. So I made my obeisance to Ma and left.

29th Agrahayana, Sunday 1342 (15-12-35). When I went to Ma in the morning I found her lying still. But she got up presently and went out to have a walk in the meadow. We also followed her. After a short walk, Ma returned to the Ashram and sat in the Nam Ghar. We also sat by her.

Nature is formed by habits

Moti Babu appeared in the morning with hat and coat on. Ma, observing him, said, 'Babaji, you have come today dressed as an Englishman. Babaji, why do you wear a hat and a coat?'

Moti Babu : To keep off the cold.

Ma : No, not to keep off the cold. You should rather say that it is your habit. All are equally exposed to cold, but all are not similarly dressed.

Moti Babu : I have no dhoti.

Ma : There is no dearth of dhoties. Shops are stuffed with them. You may rather say that there is none for you. You see, everything is habit-bound. When a habit is formed through practice, it passes off into Nature. We often say — we do it, we eat it, as for example, we wear dhoties, drink tea. But it is the other way about. Dhoties wear us, tea drinks us. If we were the subject of wearing or eating, we could shed them any moment at will. But how many of us can do that?

The identity of Brahma

A little later, Ma rose up from the Nam Ghar and took her seat in the meadow. Many of both sexes were there to have a glimpse of Ma. Among the gentlemen, I saw Nagen Babu*.

* Sri Nagendranath Dutta. He was the editor of East Bengal Times. A devotee of Ma since her Shahbag days.

Nagen Babu : Ma, what is the identity of Brahma? What are his attributes? He is described in the scriptures as Sat (existent; real), chit (pure consciousness), Ananda (beautitude). Are these His attributes?

Ma : His identity or Nature cannot be expressed, for identity includes its negation. An attempt to bring Him within the framework of language leads to His being restricted. To give a rough and ready idea of him He is said to be Sat, Chit and Ananda. He is Sat because He exists. He is Chit being the very essence of knowledge. Ecstatic joy (Ananda) comes out of the knowledge of this Supreme Being. Joy is necessarily the outcome of the knowledge of a reality. Here lies the aptness of the appellation — Sat-Chit-Ananda. But the reality about Him is that He is above joy and sorrow.

Nagen Babu : Brahma is variously described as Joy, Radiance and Perfect Form. What do you think about it? Which is the Truest description of Him?

Ma : Will you be able to stick to it, even if I tell you? I shall tell you if you give me your word for it.

At this answer Nagen Babu was a bit dis-comfited.

Ma : I have already told you that I did not find it in my tongue to speak out everything irrespective of the person spoken to. A person gets from me the answers measured out to his capacity. I am an instrument. The sound I emit

is according to how I am struck. I invite you to elicit out of me the Supreme Truth. Then I can listen in as well as you.

Nagen Babu : Brahma is called Sat-Chit-Ananda in the Vedas. You place Him above it. Are you hereby preaching a new doctrine? Is it your message?

Ma : I say nothing new. The scriptures are right, so far as they go. But they do not go far enough. The scriptures are like a staircase leading up to the roof. They describe only the steps of this staircase. But scriptures have no word to say about what can be seen when one has got to the roof. Because the person who has made it, can have a direct vision of everything. He has no need of having it described. What is needed is a description of the way. That is what the scriptures contain and call Him Sat-Chit-Ananda. He truly answers that description and at the same time He transcends it. You asked me if the images of Gods and Goddesses which we see are true. My answer is, yes and no. These too are the steps of the staircase. They represent the different phases and orientations of jiva. They are true to the phases to which they correspond. When one rises superior to a particular level, the emotive orientation belonging to it vanishes. It is not true though, that it vanishes into thin air. But so far as that particular person is concerned it is non-existent. It is like a man rising up from a lower step—the lower step is still there, but to him it is as good as vanished. These imageries are also like that.

So long as we are in the ideological domain, all the deities are true to us. But when we leave this domain behind and enter into the zone of truth, then imageries get lost to us, they become unreal. But that does not mean that they are unreal to everybody. They are in their places. In this sense deities are real. Thus Brahma is simultaneously in His truncated self and in His All-embracing self. He is both the part and the whole, existing in both in His entirety. When you touch my finger, you touch me, but I am not a finger. If you touch my cloth, you touch me though I am not a cloth. I am, as much my part as my whole. Though one, He is many, and though many He is one. This is His Lila — the Divine play. He is fully manifested in a grain of sand and equally so in man and in His all-comprehensive self. But man is different from the lower beings in this respect that he has a power which gives him a leverage towards attaining perfection. By man I understand one whose mind has an awareness. (A pun: manush — man, man — mind, Hoosh — awareness). Who has no such awareness but is engrossed with desire for worldly pleasures, does not deserve being called man — he is not entitled to attain the knowledge of Brahma. It cannot be said that the lower animals do not have this power. But in them this power is latent or hardly ever manifest. You know that god incarnated Himself as fish, tortoise and bear. What does this imply? Only this, that He exists in His perfection also in such animals as fish, tortoise etc. and by

manifesting Himself in them, He has made this truth explicit. This is the secret of incarnationism. That is why I say, He is in parts and He is in the whole and that too simultaneously.

When we were listening to these instructions of Ma sitting in the meadow, Khan Bahadur Nazimuddin Ahmed, Registrar of Dhaka University came there for a morning walk. Seeing him, Nagen Babu and Abani Babu called him to Ma. By way of introducing him to Ma, Bhupati Babu said, 'He is a Mussalman.' Looking at the Registrar, Ma said smilingly, 'Baba, I too am a Mussalman.' Hearing that Bibhucharan Guha Thakurata and Sri Nagendra Datta informed the Registrar of Ma's having once performed Namaz. I was of the view that the tale had nothing to do with Ma's assertion. The word 'Mussalman' means an obedient servant of God. Probably Ma declared herself as a Mussalman in that sense.

The Registrar sat down for a while and put a question to Ma through another person. He said, 'If she has obtained peace, why does she wander about from place to place?' When the question was passed on to Ma, she said, 'If I stay in one place then also I shall be asked the rationale of my doing so.' A little later she smiled one of her smiles, rare even in deities, and said, 'Baba, I am a very restless girl and cannot stick to a place. Again considered from another side, you say that I am gadding about from one place to another because you labour under a perception of coming and going. In reality I am at one place.

In other words, I do not go from place to place, I am just wandering within the precincts of my house. When you are at home, do you just keep sitting at one place in the room. You also walk about in the room. I am also doing the same. This universe is my home. I am at home and nowhere else.'

The way to peace

Registrar : You are quite at peace. But we always have our peace disturbed. How can one obtain peace? Why do you not disseminate peace among us?

Ma (Smiling) : You ask me how peace can be obtained. I say when you find that the question 'how' has arisen within you, you are going to discover the way to peace.

We all broke out into a loud laughter at the way Ma spoke.

Ma : How can you obtain peace if you are preoccupied with matters that disturb? One is affected by the emanations from the objects which occupy his mind. If you approach a hot object you feel hot and if you go near a cold object, you feel cold. No wonder that you should feel disturbed, so long as you are engrossed with worldly affairs that are naturally disquieting. You can have uninterrupted peace if you direct yourselves to realities that purify the mind. Association with other things can yield only partial peace, peace mixed with disquiet. So I say, always remember Him no matter whether it is Kali, Allah or Khoda.

All are One. The real thing is trying to remember Him constantly. Let me tell you a story :

There was a king. He had no want of wealth, but he had no peace notwithstanding. One day he heard from somebody that peace could be obtained if one got initiated by a guru and took to japa and tapa. Then he enquired after his dynastic guru (Kulaguru). So long he was blissfully ignorant of his whereabouts. The Kulaguru also was passing his days in abject poverty, suffering from various wants. He was beside himself with joy to hear that the king had sought him for initiation. He came and assured the king that he would have peace, once he was initiated by him and engage in japa and tapa for a while. The king got initiated at an auspicious moment. This was also the occasion for the guru to have his monetary condition substantially improved. He was no longer needy. On the other hand, the king obtaining mantra from the guru duly started japa and tapa, but his restlessness persisted as ever. No sign of its appeasement was in evidence. Then one day the king summoned the gurudev and said, 'I have been initiated according to your direction, and am also performing japa and tapa as instructed by you, but peace is yet to come. I allow you a week's time. If I do not obtain peace by this time and you cannot show me a new way to it, I will kill you with your family at the end of the week.'

At the words of the king, the gurudev's heart was in his boots. He could not relish his food, had no sleep at night and was restless at the

thought of impending death. The only issue of the Kulaguru was a son and he too was a gobbet. Perfectly illiterate, he roamed about in jungles. He came home only at meal-times and it was anybody's guess where he was at other times. Now six days passed one by one. On the seventh day, there was no arrangement for cooking and eating in the Kulaguru's house. The guru and his wife lay almost lifeless with fear and anxiety. At noon, guru's son came home for his lunch and was furious on finding no meal prepared. His parents were equally abusive. At that he was a bit astonished and asked for the cause. Then his father told him the whole thing and said that if he could not point out to the king a new way to peace the next day, they would all be executed. Hearing this the son said, 'There is no cause for worry. You just prepare the meal; tomorrow, I shall show the king the way to peace.' The gurudev was assured at his son's words. They all had their bath and meals.

Next day, the father and son together went to the palace. Seeing the guru the king said, 'Gurudev, I have continued japa etc. as instructed by you for the last seven days. But no peace has been forthcoming. If you cannot explain today why I did not get peace or point to a new way for its attainment, then as already said, I shall chop off your head.' According to previous instructions, the gurudev said, 'Your majesty, my son will explain to you why you failed to have peace.' The king said to the guru's son, 'Will you be able to give the answer ?

The guru's son said, 'Yes your majesty, I shall answer you. But you must act according to my direction. If you do so you shall understand why peace eluded you so long and the way leading to peace.' The king consented.

As instructed by the guru's son, the king and the Kulaguru entered a forest carrying two long ropes. Going some way they saw three big trees standing side by side at one place. The guru's son asked them to wait there and tied the king fast to a tree with a rope and with the other rope he tied his father to another tree. Then he climbed the tree between these two and began to sing and skip of his heart's content. As for the king, he became restless smarting under the pain due to the bond. He called upon the guru's son and asked him to untie him. But the guru's son was heedless. He was absorbed in dancing, singing and freely passing from one branch to the other. The king then asked his gurudev to free him from the bond. The gurudev said, 'How can I free you, being myself bound?' As the king was shrieking with pain a high knowledge dawned on him. He thought, 'Indeed, how could I expect to have peace, being entangled in worldly lies? And how can one bound himself, guide me along to peace?' So thinking he called upon the guru's son and said, 'Now untie me. I have found the way to peace.' The guru's son at once untied him. The king did not return to his worldly duties. He became an ascetic and wandered away.

How can a man tied to worldly transactions get peace? But I do not say that in order to

get peace one should retire to a forest. Peace can be attained even by a householder. Household is too hot only for those who have made the idle shows the be-all and end-all of life*. So I say, Baba, take up to your breast this girl of yours. You have kept her at a respectful distance by calling her 'mother'. A mother is an old woman. You do not hug to your bosom an old woman, do you? My prayer is that you should regard me as your daughter and lock me in your embrace.

That day at noon a kirtan was due to be held. I went to the Ashram a little late in the afternoon. The kirtan was still on. After the evening Ma came out of the Ashram and sat in the meadow. Then conversation went on.

Time for initiation, getting a guru, Kulaguru etc.

Abani Babu** : Ma, is there an opportune time for initiation in terms of the day of the week and the day of the moon ?

Ma : It depends upon the instinctive bias of the mind. When a Sadguru undertakes an initiation, he is not swayed by the consideration of the day of the week, the day of the moon, what is pure and what is impure. Again, there are occasions when these have to be taken into consideration.

* A pun Sansar—World, has been broken up into sang (idle shows; buffoonery) and sar (the essence)—Translator's note.

** Sri Abani Mohan Basu. A lawyer at Dhaka and a devotee of Ma.

Kshitish Babu* : What is implied by the statement, 'Guru himself turns up.'

Ma : Everything happens by itself. We cannot understand it for our ignorance. At the level of our experience, it is seen that when a person longs for a guru, he seeks him out and gets initiated by him. But in reality, these things happen spontaneously. Things happen in the fullness of time. The desire for guru arises and he is on the spot. You see, when seed is sown the plant sprouts by itself. No extra effort is needed for it. In the same way, all the events of the world are coming to pass by themselves effortlessly.

If a person thinks of somebody as his guru and rests assured that he would come to him and initiate him, he is sure to come to him. But such certainty is not found in ordinary men. Generally, one seeks out a guru and is initiated by him.

Kshitish Babu : Is it worth being initiated by a Kulaguru ?

Ma : Why not, if there is devotion and faith, a householder had better be initiated by a Kulaguru. He is a well-wisher of the lineage. So it is better to get mantra from him and get started.

Kshitish Babu : Well, does repeating the name refers to the name suggested by the guru ?

Ma : Yes, to repeat the name means to repeat the 'istanam' (the mantra obtained from the guru).

* Sri Kshitish Chandra Chaudhury. Head clerk of the Registrar at the Dhaka University.

Kshilish Babu : Is there anything wrong in repeating the name received from the guru being alternated by taking part in kirtan etc. ?

Ma : Why should it be wrong? All these are good. All names are His name. All inspire holy thoughts.

I : Has the name nothing to do with the instinctive bent of the mind?

Ma : I do not understand your question.

I : The name given by the guru cannot be arbitrary. He suggests one, I think, in agreement with the instinctive bent of his disciple's mind.

Ma : Certainly.

I : Then how can a disciple profit by it if he discards that name and takes to repeating another?

Ma : The idea is the same. All names express the same idea. So, name, puja, bhajan—whatever you take part in—all are conducive to the holy frame of the mind.

I : Ma, do not answer our questions over our head. If you start at the lower level and then get to the higher ones by degrees, then we shall be able to understand you better. My question is, suppose we begin to repeat any particular name, we do not merely repeat a name, we also meditate. Our meditation is imperfect but we build up in our thought an image or concentrate on a picture. All this is done for steadying the mind. But if we discard one name for another, then the correlated image must also change. If we constantly shift from one name and idea to another,

then the mind, instead of being steadied is likely to become restless. How can such restless mind be conducive to religious edification?

Ma : I have already told you that a person does not meditate, meditation is a spontaneous process. Besides, if some particular name sticks to a mind, whatever name he may happen to hear seems to him to be the same name. He gets the ring of that one name in all the names. You have asked me to step down to a lower level while answering your question. I shall do that now. At the outset while practising a name, it is advisable to stick to one name and try to get it imprinted on the mind. So one has to repeat the name suggested by the guru or the one that he naturally likes. Once it gets assimilated with the mind, the man rises to a higher level. At a still lower level, I should say that those whose religious sense is still underdeveloped, are free to repeat any name and worship any deity. They will benefit by anything they do in the form of puja, japa, meditation, kirtan and charity in order to boost up their religious sense by any means. Do you understand now?

I : Yes, Ma, I do.

Attaining the spiritual goal, visualization of deities.

A lawyer : How can one attain the spiritual goal? What does a jivatma visualize at that state?

Ma : When a person is absolutely pure, he becomes 'siddha' (i.e. he attains spiritual fulfillment) and then the jivatma visualizes everything

us 'siddha' (All laugh). What do you understand by 'siddhi'? (i.e. state of being 'siddha'; success in spiritual aspiration). There are siddhis and siddhis. Take for example 'Astasiddhi' (acquisition of eight-fold miraculous powers). This is success in some particular field. Which 'siddhi' do you speak of? Again you ask what a person sees after the acquisition of 'siddhi'. I say, he sees nothing but 'siddha' such as boiled potato, boiled patal ('siddha' also means boiled. A pun). (All laugh). It is not something to laugh over. It is truth itself. To such a man everything is either 'I' or 'You'. Again 'I', 'You' and the universe, all lose themselves in the Supreme one. This is attaining God or visualizing Brahma.

Pramatha Babu : But it is said, God comes and manifests Himself. People can talk with Him. Are all these untrue?

Ma : Quite untrue, I say. (after a brief pause) Again I say, they are quite true. (Looking at me). These pertain to the talk we had in the morning. These visions, vibrations are true so long as we are at want-based state of nature. The moment we are installed in our intrinsic nature, all distinctions disappear.

Pramatha Babu : I cannot understand what you mean by want-based state of nature. Will you make it clearer?

Ma : We are now in a state of want, that appears to us as our nature. For example, we are hungry, we feel the want of food; this want is removed when we eat. Then again we feel the

want of sleep, rising from sleep we feel the want of walking or talking. We are always pestered by one want or another. Our life is thus a want-based equilibrium. This is called want-based state of nature. One has to pass on from this state to his true nature. Man has in him the power for this passage. So it is said that man, invested as he is with the pall of ignorance, has also an outlet for knowledge. It is through this outlet for knowledge that man reverts to his intrinsic nature and is at rest. After that the Kirtanias began to leave one by one. The chief of the party came to Ma and said, 'Ma, last year we came to your place to give a performance of kirtan, but as you were away, we did not perform. Last year, I was put to a loss of three hundred rupees. I am afraid that it may happen like that this year also. You tell me which way I should go next for the performance.'

Ma : These are not for me to say, I cannot give such directions. Set out with his name on your lips. Go any way you like, there is nothing to worry about.

Instinctive drives brought forward from previous births.

After that Ma said to the Kirtan-singer, 'Baba, just sing to me a song without musical accompaniment.' The Kirtaniya asked a little boy of his troupe to sing a song. The boy nestled to Ma. Ma said, 'What is your name?'

The boy : Haridas.

Ma (to the Kirtaniya) : Has he received this name from you, or is he called by this name since his childhood?

Kirtaniya : It is a name bestowed on him.

Ma : What is your father's name?

The boy : Keramat Ali.

Hearing this Ma was very delighted and fondled the boy by touching his cheek.

Ma : Mark the coincidence. The boy is a Muslim by birth but due to his previously acquired instinct, he has come to be here (i.e. in contact with the Hindus) and is passing his days singing the name of Krishna. So I say, religion knows no distinction of caste or creed.

The boy sang :

Oh, my mind, sing the name of Krishna, freeing yourself from the worldly ties. He sang very sweetly. All present were charmed.

Ma : The instinct of the previous birth is clear in the turns of the song. (To the boy) What relations have you? With whom do you stay?

Kirtaniya : He has no one to call his own. He lives with our party and sings about with us.

Ma : When you have no one of your own, why not stay with me? I shall listen to your songs. Well?

The sweetness that accompanied these words cannot be verbally expressed. Ma seemed to have poured into the words all the affection and attachment of the universe. But the boy remained silent.

Ma : What about staying with me? If you have no relative here with me, you have no more any

over there. Why should you then object to staying with me? You shall stay with me and sing songs to me. Well?

The boy : Have kindness on me. (All laughed)

Ma : He has no will to accompany me, so he answered as he did.

The boy went away. I wondered why Ma insisted like that, though she knew all the time that the boy was not mentally prepared. Ma must have expressed her desire for a song merely to draw the boy to her. She knew that he was a muslim's son, even before anybody told it to her. That was why on hearing that the boy's name was Haridas, she asked if it was not his original name. She even hinted, in passing, at the fact that she was aware of his previous birth's instinct. Why yet she called him and asked him the questions? Was it a pretext of extending her favour to him? She even touched the boy for a moment as she rarely does. She must have a reason of her own for her behaviour—a reason, which nobody else could divine.

A little later, Baul Babu appeared singing. Seeing him Ma said, 'Baba, how are you?'

Baul Babu : First say how you are, for that will imply how we are. (Sitting near Ma) 'Ma, we are in bondage, hopelessly involved in our sons, daughters and the household. You live on hill top. I have heard that to one living on hill-top, the dwellers of the plain are not visible.'

Ma : It is not that those below cannot be seen from the hill-top; only they all appear to be similar.

Baul Babu : You come from your father's house (i.e. from the Himalayas) after such a long time. What have you brought for us?

Ma : I have brought my own self. I am the same as you.

Thus went on bandying of words. A man able to get the better of Ma in exchange of words, is yet to be born. It was close on 9 p.m. So, Ma was conducted into the Ashram. I also took leave of her and left.

Barik Mai and magic pill

Next day (30th Agrahayan, Monday, 1342,—16-12-35) was the day of Ma's taking meals. I went to the Ashram in the morning with some fruit and sweets. Ma was surrounded by many men. After having a walk in the meadow for a while, Ma sat in the Eastern verandah of the cottage. Passing over various topics, she related the story of Barik Mai.

Barik Mai was a Punjabi woman. I do not remember her real name. Ma always referred to her as Barik Mai. She was a widow. She was so fat that she gave one the impression of a lump of flesh. Lest anybody should call her fat, Ma called her 'barik', which means thin.

Barik Mai was not literate, but she could deliver speeches pretty well. During the Swadeshi movement she had joined the Congress and went about delivering speeches in different places. She could also compose songs and poems. Once she had composed a song over Ma. In it she wrote

in one place, 'I shall make shoes for you with the skin of my body.' She sang these songs so loudly and read the 'Adhyatma Ramayana' with such high-pitched voice that it made the people run away for their dear lives. She was mocked for this, but she was not in the least concerned. So firm of determination she was.

Her joining the Congress was not approved by her relatives. When they could not dissuade her by advice, they one day put her in a first floor room and locked the staircase, saying that she would not be freed until she promised not to join the Congress. She also gave up food and sleep and started breaking into pieces the valuables in the room. But still they would not set her free. When she knew that they would not free her for money or love, then she jumped down from the first floor to the ground and ran to the Congress office. She was not afraid to take the plunge with her super-heavy body. Her motto was 'Do or die'. Once she was jailed in connection with some work set by the Congress. While in the jail, she started singing in her strident, a sinine voice which not only made sleep impossible, but even made hell of people's life. The jail authorities tried their best but could not stop her song. When they threatened her, she said, 'You have fettered my hands and feet but have no power to stop my tongue. I shall shout. Do your worst.' The authorities were forced to end by setting her free.

Out of the jail, Barik Mai organized a 'Satsang'. There they took part in good discussions, reading

good books and arranged for Bhajan on fixed days. She began to pass her days in these holy discourses. Ma said, 'When I was at Rishikesh, she used to come to me now and then. Seeing her come to me, other Punjabi members of her Satsang asked her why she associated with a Bengali lady. Did she not know that the Bengali girls were versed in casting spells and by this means changing men into sleep? What with hearing such assertions continuously and what with discovering during her frequenting my place for some time, that she had nothing to gain here, she stopped her visit to me.'

Once Sharada came to Rishikesh on leave for a few days. She had a great desire to be present at Barik Mai's readings and songs. She started looking for her. One day we were on the way to Purnananda Swami's place, we suddenly met Barik Mai. Sharada took her to the Ashram of Purnananda Swami. From this time on she resumed her visits to me and after a few visits, coming to me became an obsession with her. Her companions still asked her not to associate with me, but she paid no heed to them. It was not only that she continued to come to me. She ate with me, slept with me and always sat close to me. To sit still like that was contrary to her nature. Yet she would not leave me to go elsewhere. All were surprised at this change of nature in her, and not the least so was she herself.

In the meantime she also took to taking meals on alternate days as I did. I remonstrated but she would not give in. Hearing about my magical power

from the people and observing changes in herself, she really came to believe that I knew magic. She had also been told that when at night I lie, I rise up into the air from the ground. To put it to the test, she began to pass sleepless nights. But even in spite of all her hardships, she could observe nothing miraculous; on the other hand, hearing the murmur at interval at night, she concluded that I did not sleep at night. Then she thought that I had stopped my aerial journeys on account of her vigilance. So instead of sitting up at night, she kept watch on me, pretending to be asleep. Having passed several days in this manner, she became very weak from absence of food and sleep, and one night she was on the point of death. Her hands and feet became cold, and a groaning sound kept issuing from her throat. Seeing her in this plight, I said to Jyotish, 'Her condition is very critical. Lit up fire and foment her. Also pass your hand over her bosom and back.' Touching her, Jyotish said, 'Ma, she is feverish.' I said, 'No, she is not. You just pass your hand over her bosom and back.' At my instance, Jyotish began to pass his hand, but he was visibly too cramped with fear to be any good as a nurse. He began to shake and kept sitting benumbed. Then I was obliged to go to her and pass my hand over her bosom and back. Jyotish said to me, 'Just mark if she is breathing.' I found that she was breathing very slowly till the breath seemed to have stopped altogether. However, after an interval of massaging, she improved a bit and looked out opening

her eyes. At that Jyotish made her swallow two Kaviraji pills. Jyotish had got the medicine from Gopalji. When at Dehradun Jyotish had become very weak from illness, he was administered that medicine as an invigorant. Perhaps Jyotish still had with him some of those pills. Taking the medicine, she picked up a little. The night passed in this way. Next day she was told all that had happened during the night and was reminded that she would not be allowed to stay with me, if she did not sleep at night. She consented to sleep.

As her companions heard of this incident, they began to say, 'Have you not realised yet that the Bengali enchantress has made you take magic pills ? It is for the effect of her magic that your health has deteriorated like this.' Hearing all these words and considering her physical decline, she believed that I had really cast some spell on her. She completely stopped coming to me. Some days after she came to our Dharmasala to collect her beddings. Then we had decided on going to Hardwar. A bus had also come to pick us up. Seeing her I said, 'Well, Ma, how far has the magic gone with you?' At that she had an idea that I knew everything and could see everything. She held me by the feet and said, 'Ma, I shall accompany you to Hardwar.' I said, 'You could have done so if you had not moved away from here. Now it is too late. Our bus is ready and there is no accommodation for yet another person.'

Leaving her there we went to Hardwar. Later, she had indeed come to us; but I did not allow

her to stay with us and sent her to her house. Later she herself understood that her illness was not the effect of any magic; it was the outcome of her giving up food and sleep. Now you have heard how this Bengali enchantress administers magic pills. Yet know that a chaste-mindedness has something of magic in it. One possessed by it cannot shake himself free from its effect.

Today many got initiated by Baba Bholanath. The initiation ceremony started from the noon. When I reached the Ashram a little before evening, the initiation was still on. Ma and Baba Bholanath were seated inside the Siva temple and Swami Shankaranandaji was at the door. Initiation-seekers were going in one by one. We lingered in the meadow. At about 7 p.m. Ma and Baba Bholanath went to grandma's house for supper. On their return, we assembled in the Nam ghar. At this time Bhupati Babu came and said that the widowed wife of Saroj Bandhab Ghosh, one-time electrician of Dhaka University had come to meet Ma. Told about her, Ma had said that on coming she must put some question to her; otherwise no words would come out of her. 'I said to Bhupati Babu, 'Why did you not ask the reason from Ma?' He said that he had not thought of it at the time. He would ask later.

The unstruck sound, miracles due to Yoga

After some time Ma came to the Nam ghar. The ladies made their bows to Ma one by one and withdrew. When the number of ladies still present,

was appreciably small, Bhupati Babu said to Ma, 'Ma, you said that no words come out of your lips unless a question is put to you. Now, why is it so?'

Ma : You see, a sound is always rising up within me. I cannot hear anything so long as that basal sound is not struck and another sound is produced and I remain tongue-tied. When a question is put to me, the inner sound is struck and an answer comes out of me accordingly.

'Many times it so happens that the people are talking, but I hear nothing. They seem to be murmuring inaudibly. Again if someone asks me a question mentally, I answer him in the same way. Neither the question nor the answer is heard by the others. Again sometimes it happens that I am going to speak and in that (still unspoken word), those present get the solution of their respective problems, without putting any question either orally or mentally. (Referring to me) The Babaji told me to answer at a lower level, so I step down to the ground level and say that at an advanced stage of sadhana, the aspirant comes to a state in which the thoughts of a person standing before him, flashes across his mind spontaneously. He is aware of the thoughts of others as clearly as those of his own. He can read the motive of a visitor from his face or his voice. You must have seen that the grown-ups can understand the thoughts of a child from its gestures, though it cannot speak. In the same way, those who have experienced some spiritual upgrading through sadhana, can read our minds, from our manners, gestures

and looks .

These are the different phases of sadhana. Every Sadhaka acquires these powers*. When a Sadhaka comes by these powers, he becomes jubilant. The joy is due to the unfolding of the divine power in him. For, what are wonder-working powers (Bibhutis) but divine powers? The heart of an aspirant (Sadhak) evolves power to the extent he is able to purge his mind of dross by dint of his sadhana. But the powers thus acquired should not be disclosed. What little leaks out by itself does no harm. But the aspirant sometimes wants to publicize his powers deliberately. This is harmful for him and obstructs his further progress along the path of sadhana. If the disclosure of miraculous powers flatters the ego or brings in fame-consciousness, then only it proves a hindrance to sadhana. On the other hand if the joy derived from the acquisition of miraculous powers urges him along the path of sadhana, the aspirant is not harmed even though a few such power gain publicity. He can pass unobstructed from the high position to a higher one.

Egotism and celebrity are the main hindrances to sadhana. Once they creep in, the power of working miracles disappear. That does not mean that these powers cannot be transmitted to others before absolute power has been attained or the goal of sadhana reached. Even a little power

* To be read with 'at proper stages of Sadhana'. - Translator's note.

attained can be transmitted to others. One who has passed his entrance can teach lower grade students. Hence many sadhus transmit their proceeds of sadhana to their disciples, though they are yet to reach their journey's end.

There is a reason why an aspirant comes to have miraculous powers. These are the outcome of the aspirant's predilection (Samskar). You must have heard many say, 'If I had the power to cure diseases, I would have completely eliminated from the world the sufferings due to 'ailments.' Many again seek these powers for their personal name and fame. Samskars are formed out of such desires and they again appear as miraculous powers as different phases of sadhana. The aspirant finds that he has at last possessed the power he had been craving for so long. The power itself now stands in the way of his sadhana, and may lead to his downfall. But if the aspirant does not get stuck up at this point but proceeds along the path of sadhana, these powers of working miracles disappear. This does not mean they are lost. They just pass into his nature.

Pramatha Babu : What are the preventions against downfall after miraculous powers have been obtained?

Ma : I have told you as much—the aspirant must keep himself directed to one objective. If he proceeds with his eye fixed on the end, he can never have a come-down. If even after the manifestation of powers, the aspirant instead of toying with them, keeps advancing along the path of

sadhana, the powers no longer prove hindrances to him. Hence it is often seen that an aspirant stops developing further powers after a few have come out, and he attains his final end.

I : Ma, what is meant by the miraculous powers passing into nature?

Ma : Suppose one starts Debi-sadhana and as a result he obtains the favour of the Debi (Goddess). What he obtains is a little bit of gain and the miraculous powers associated with it are also truncated. But even after his Debi-consciousness acquires full dimension, the powers will still abide with him. We shall call them whole. Such untruncated powers are not mere powers. They are nature. So the emergence of a superior type of miraculous power is for it to be integrated into nature (i.e. personality).

I : What is meant by resting on Bibhuti (miraculous power)?

Ma : It is the same as acquiring an imperfect (truncated) Bibhuti. By resting you should not think the Bibhuti has been perpetuated, for perpetuation is something alien to Bibhuti. This is because it depends on Samskar. But we call it a state of rest in this sense that the aspirant has come to a stand-still supported by the Bibhuti. He is no longer on the move along the path of sadhana. Suppose you want to get to the roof of a building. To do this you have to clear a number of steps. Now, suppose the roof is the goal of the aspirant and the steps are a series of Bibhutis. If in the course of climbing to the roof, the climber

keeps standing on a particular step—from the view point of the aspirant it would be resting on a Bibhuti. His progress has been stopped. At this state of stand-still, there is a fear of downfall. The downfall does not take place necessarily, but there is a good probability for it.

I was standing while Bhupati Babu was questioning Ma. I intended to go away home without waiting long, in case Ma's answers were vague or brief. Noticing me standing, Ma said, 'Babaji, why are you standing? Are you about to leave that you are standing at the back?'

I : Let me see. What happens.

Ma : The Babaji has a fixed time for going away. I have noticed it. He would never overstay that time.

Nagen Babu : Amulya Babu stays on when the discourses are interesting. When they peter out into little talks, he leaves.

Ma : No, he goes away even in the midst of good discourses. Sometimes, perhaps, he waits a little longer against his will and then goes away. It is a point of principle with him. I call it good. (To me) Well, Babaji, why do you do so? Do tell me. (Smilingly) Tell me, today I shall size you up. Is it because you have some work to be done? Or is it the thought that the Mataji is waiting at home? What is it, now?

I : You have said the whole thing. What is left for me to say?

Ma burst into a loud laugh and said, 'Well, then, I shall say no more.'

After that she answered Bhupati Babu's questions relating to Bibhuti. Nishi Babu whispered into my ears, 'Ask her if one can rise again after a fall in sadhana.'

I : Ma, one of your sons asks if a person having a downfall in the course of sadhana, can rise again.

Ma : A fall is necessarily followed by a rise. The real thing is beyond both rise and fall. (To Nishi Babu) Baba, why do you not put your own questions?

I : Look here, Ma, suppose one can conduct his own law-suit at the court, yet he approaches a lawyer to plead for him. So, when a question has to be asked, people approach the person who chatters away unceasingly before you. It is but natural.

At this both Nishi Babu and Ma smiled.

Ma : You also are serious. You also are not garrulous. Recently, you have learnt to be a little freer with your talks — that's all.

After that Ma asked Prafulla Babu to sing. Prafulla Babu sang three songs with proper feelings thrown in. The songs over, Ma said, 'Bhupati Baba, you may leave now. Amulya Baba, you too may now leave for home.'

I made my bow to Ma and called it a day.

1st Pous, Tuesday, 1342 (17-12-55) (Going to the Ashram in the morning I found that Sri Sri Ma had gone out for a walk in the meadow. After sometime Ma returned. We all sat in the Nam ghar. Sri Jitendra Nath Dhar, the C.I.D. Officer,

began to put questions to Ma.

Jiten Babu: How can one be happy while in the household?

Ma: If a man accepts the role of personating for assumed characters, as in a fancy dressing, he can be happy in his household life. You must have noticed how during fancy dressing, people differently dressed personate for something else, but do not forget who they really are. As for ourselves, we not only assume these fancy dresses but regard them as the real thing—the substance. So we are Samsari, the worldly-wise (A pun on Samsar standing for worldly life or household. Samsar = Song + Sar, vide ante). If we looked upon our fellow-members in the household as transient like fancy-dress people, we can be happy in our domestic life.

Jiten Babu: What is wrong if we are happy as householders and satisfied with our state?

Ma: I have not referred to anything being wrong. It is all right if one can remain absorbed in such a life. But it is not possible. If one takes a dive into it, he gasps for breath. See, you go out for a walk all dressed up. After a while the clothes sit heavy on you and you are uneasy. You are eager to put them off and are relieved when they are doffed. In the same way a man is free by nature. He likes to remain free. He is ill at ease in bondage. So, while leading a domestic life, he cannot be engrossed with it. The bonds of domestic life make him restless and he longs for freedom. What is more, all want peace and joy.

Man is naturally joy-seeking. He wants to rest in joy. So he looks for joy. Why should he seek it, if he did not have within him a foretaste of joy? It is because he has within him an awareness of unfettered joy that he pines under domestic ties. The jiva state is one of bondage. Freed from it the jiva can rest in joy.

Jiten Babu: Many are of the opinion that there is no previous birth. Our own experience is that we cannot recall anything of what we were and what we were not in our previous life. Why should we not enjoy to the full the material happiness that falls to our lot? When we derive pleasure from it, why should we turn to religious practices?

Ma: It is true that we cannot recall our doings in the previous life; but we bear within us an imprint of them. For example, it happens sometimes that we do not remember when and how we got our limbs burnt, but the wounds remain all the same. They are painful too. In the same way, though we have no memory of our deeds in the previous life, we suffer from a hang-over of pain due to those actions. Besides we have the memory of a state in our past, when we had no sufferings. That is why we seek freedom from sufferings. If it had not been so, we could never bring ourselves to look for peace and liberation. If you could have been happy with this domestic life, you would have no sense of wants. But the questions you are asking today show that you lack something. Other wise, why should these questions arise at all? So long as one is in body, one must suffer from the

very fact of being corporeal. Clothes one wear must necessarily gall him. At least he is worried over the thought of preserving the clothes. That causes pain. Leading domestic life is invariably associated with painful experiences. So attempts should be made for not only temporary remission but eradication for all times of such afflictions.

Jiten Babu : If we try to hold on to the domestic blisses while living a domestic life, that must be all we need.

Ma : If you try to hold on to something, you stand to lose. The bliss I speak of, elude all grasp. It comes of itself and abides for ever. The bliss in this case is not laboured. It is the stuff of nature. Happiness derived from material objects calls for efforts and is transitory, while happiness accruing from Sat-Chit-Ananda is eternal. But we must discard this happiness also and rise superior to it. But it refers to a later stage. For the present all I can say is that we have within us a joy more abiding than the one we come across in domestic life. We should try to settle down to it.

Jiten Babu : Does not *Garhasthya Dharma* (virtue inherent in domestic life) count for anything, then?

Ma : Who says it does not? But for it we should not have been here, should we? Nothing drops from the sky or sprouts out of the earth. But can we lead the domestic life properly? Formerly, four Ashramas were recognized. The first of them was Brahmacharya. Now we may regard it as non-existent. Due to its non-existence,

all the Ashramas have fallen into disarray. By *Garhasthya* or household life I mean securing the house in the palm of our hand (A pun again. *Garhasthya* = *Griha* (house) + *Hasta* (Hand). But with us it is the other way about. It is the house that has got hold of us.

Jiten Babu : There are two recognized paths leading to peace—*Pravritti Marga* (Path of action) and *Nivritti Marga* (Path of inaction). Why should we opt for the latter?

Ma : There is only one path. *Nivritti Marga* is also a variant of *Pravritti Marga*. So I say that there is no such thing as renunciation. There is nothing but *Bhoga* (lit. enjoyment; passing through experiences). Man is passing from imperfect *Bhoga* towards perfect *Bhoga*.

It was half past seven at the time and I could not wait any longer but went to the college. On going to the Ashram in the afternoon I found Ma so completely surrounded by the ladies, that no male had any chance of approaching Ma, making his way through that serried barricade of women. We sat in the meadow and had talks among ourselves. Moti Babu came up a little before evening. We heard that in the morning he had entered into the Siva's room in the Siddheswari Ashram, with shoes on, and met Ma. In doing so, he paid no heed to anybody's prohibition.

We began to talk with Moti Babu. He was saying how he was drawn into Ma's field of attraction. I said, 'I had lost my mother in my childhood. So I have always been hungering for mother's

affection. That is not to say that I was not cared for as a child by my close relatives. On the other hand, I was caressed to excess. But the very excess of it reminded me that it lacked sincerity. Perhaps they fondled me excessively lest I should miss my mother.

One day Pramatha Babu told me about Anadamayee Ma. From the very outset it was my decision not to call Anandamayee 'Ma' or make obeisance to her. But she has made me call her 'Ma' almost in spite of myself.

It is not that Ma is physically beautiful. In England I saw the portraits of many beautiful girls. I also saw the collection of pictures at Louvre. Judging by their standard, Ma is not beautiful. But she has on her face a tenderness mingled with simplicity, which is truly rare. And her laugh also is a thing by itself. Such sincere full-throated laugh is unique. Every limb of Ma contributes to this laugh.

On my first day with her, I entered into a hot argument, but afterwards I spoke nothing. At that Ma said that she had silenced me. It was an empty claim, for my silence is deliberate. I prefer to observe her graceful appearance rare even in deities in speechless wonder. What she says does not enter my ears.

Last Monday, after my work at the court was over, I went to the Ashram with Pramatha Babu. Pramatha Babu's daughter gave me a rose, which I presented to Ma. Taking the flower in hand, Ma said to all, 'This flower has been presented to me

by one who has decided not to call me Ma.' Then she handed it over to Baby didi and said, 'This is my much-prized flower. Keep it carefully.' With that she told a story. From it I came to learn that Ma had given a bunch of flower to somebody but it had disappeared though kept under lock and key. All nonsense. However, I was very angry seeing her give the flower to Baby didi. I thought, 'If you are my mother, you should keep whatever I may offer you like a prized treasure. But I find you giving it away to somebody else.' Goaded by this anger I said to Baby didi, "When you go home throw the flower into the latrine." Hearing me say so Ma kept looking at me for a time. Then she said to Baby didi, 'Give me the flower, I shall eat it up.' Baby didi tore off a petal and put it into Ma's mouth. Ma then told all present to put a petal apiece into her mouth. When the stalk was left behind, Baby didi chewed it up and ate it. Then I concluded that she must be my mother, having eaten up the flower offered by me with such relish.

This morning also I went to Ma. I went into the Siva's room with my shoes on, and made my obeisance to Ma. In the afternoon I gave her two rupees. I tried to put the rupees into her hand, but Ma did not accept them. Akhandanandaji said that Ma did not touch money. I then threw the rupees at her feet. One of the two was dumb— it did not ring. The scripture tells us of two birds living in a tree—one of them eats fruits while the other only keeps looking on. My two rupees were

like that. The ringing one was like the fruit-eating bird, while the other that did not ring was like the bird that did not eat fruits but only looked on.

Seeing that there was no chance of talking to Ma that day, I offered my bow to her from the distance and left for home.

27th Pous, Wednesday 1342 (18-12-35). Going to the Ashram in the morning I found Sri Pratap Chandra Sen, Health Officer of Dhaka and his wife. Pramatha Babu and Moti Babu were also present. A little later Ma went out to have a walk in the meadow. We also followed. Pramatha Babu was leading along with Ma. I thought he must have some private talk. But he hinted at me to come alongside of him. Pramatha Babu was saying, 'Ma, I have brought Moti to you. Now if any ill befalls him, it will be to your discredit. I do not want to say anything on behalf of me. Only take care of Moti.' Hearing Pramatha Babu's words, I was reminded of Jyotish Babu. One night he was also afraid like this, seeing Barik Mai in a precarious condition. Already it was bruited about in Rishikesh that Ma was an enchantress. To make things worse, if Barik Mai died while with Ma, it would bring great disgrace on her. At this thought, Jyotish Babu was almost frightened to death that day. Hearing the words of Pramatha Babu, Ma looked at me. From her look, it occurred to me that she had divined my thoughts. We laughed together. But at heart I could not help praising Pramatha Babu. Was there

any doubt that the man, whose heart pined at the thought of other's sorrows, is great?

At time Moti Babu came and said, 'Ma, shall I go now?'

Ma : As you like.

Moti Babu : I have no desire to go; but there is one (i.e. Pratap Babu)* waiting for me. He would neither come here nor go without me.

I : Ma, shall I call Pratap Babu to you?

Ma : I am a Ma to you, but he would not call me Ma.

However, Pratap Babu was brought to Ma.

Ma (To Pratap Babu) : Baba, you shall not call me Ma. But I am a daughter to you. You must comply with a request of your daughter.

With that Ma began to laugh and slowly advancing towards Pratap Babu, touched him with her hand. Seeing her touch him like that, I regarded Pratap Babu as a very fortunate man. For it was not Ma's way to touch anybody of her own accord.

Ma (smiling) : Say, Baba, you shall not say no to a request of this daughter of yours. As you devote your attention to different worldly affairs, so you will devote a bit of your time to His works. You attend to your duty, do you not? Just so regard it as a duty to repeat His name. Give me your word, Baba, that you would not turn down this request of your mad daughter.

Pratap Babu : I shall try.

Ma : Trying is not enough, say, you shall do it

* Pratap Babu was Moti Babu's brother-in-law.

for certain. You see, all that you are up to are want-based activities. Eating, walking, earning—all these are urged by wants. But these only lead to a proliferation of wants. But when His name is invoked, there is no longer any want. Then one is securely placed in his pristine nature. All you are doing now are also His works; for, there is nothing else but He in the universe. He exists in the form of wife and also as duty. But one must be conscious of it. So I say, just as you are regularly attending to all the worldly works, in the same way repeat His name regularly for some time. Cannot you do that Baba?

Pratap Babu : Well, I will.

Ma (To Moti Babu) : Baba, my message to you is that you should allow yourself to be guided by them (meaning, Pratap Babu and others). Never disobey them. And always try to keep yourself calm and steady. Your failing is that you cannot always be at a steady state. Unless one attends to a work steadily, he gets nowhere.

Moti Babu : Why, I obey them. As for steadiness, why do you not steady me?

Ma : Try to steady yourself. How can one have peace, unless his mind is at rest?

So saying Ma walked away. We also followed her. Pratap Babu and his wife went back home.

On returning to the Ashram I met the grandma. Last day she had performed the worship of Rakshakali, which was generally performed at the cremation ground. But at Ma's will, the site of the worship was the Ashram and Baba Bhojanath

had officiated over it.

I (to the grandma) : Granny, is some prasad left for me?

Grandma : Yes, there is. But would you partake of it?

I : What? Prasad, and I would not partake of it!

Grandma : It is Kedgeree and cold too. So I had some doubt if you would like to take it.

With Shibshankar Babu, I sat down near the Bhog room to eat the prasad. The grandma served a plenty of Kedgeree. I was eating when Ma appeared from somewhere and said, 'Baba, will you let me have some?' At Ma's words, I was taken aback. Looking back I found Ma already entering into Akhandanandaji's room. Shib Babu had seen Ma coming, so he was not surprised. But Ma's words had taken me unawares, with their suddenness.

Next started offering Bhog to Ma. There was no counting the people who had come to offer Bhog to Ma with sweets, oranges etc. At the end of each Bhog-offering, we got prasad. We practically ate away the morning.

At about 8 A.M. Ma came to the Nam Ghar. A girl sang a song to Ma. It was very sweet. Hearing it Nagen Babu burst into tears. As it was getting late, I bowed down to Ma and went to the college.

Going to the Ashram in the afternoon I found a crowd of people. The Bhog offered to Ma consisted of Kedgeree and sweets. The crowd was apparently

in connection with Bhog-offering. I saw Pramatha Babu and Moti Babu also. I was told that Ma was lying under a tree in the meadow when an old woman became restless for offering Bhog to her. She was requesting everybody to call up Ma so that she might offer her Bhog and go away. It was urgent for her to go back home. Moti Babu first requested Bhramar to call up Ma but as she declined, he himself called her up. I was told that on getting up, Ma straightaway entered into the Ashram without a word.

I found Khukuni Didi conversing with Bhramar. She and Jyotish Babu had arrived from Chittagong the same day. I heard the account of Tarapith from Khukuni Didi. She said that once in Tarapith, Ma was in a frightful condition. She laughed and cried by turns, giving all present the fright of their life. It was a long time since they had seen Ma in such a state. Ma said that she felt strange physical discomforts. Next, going to the Tara Temple she lay down for a long time. Then getting up, she said to Khukuni Didi, 'Do what I tell you, if you are particular to keep me in body.' Hearing her speaking in this key, all kept looking at her in silence, very much frightened and depressed at heart. After a while, she got it over and said, 'Come on now, let us listen to the kirtan.' At that time a kirtan was on with great fanfare in the Nat Mandir. Sitting to the kirtan for a while, Ma rose up again and going to Jyotish Babu said that she must go to Chittagong at once. Jyotish Babu pleaded his illness. Ma said,

'If you feel indisposed, take Khukuni with you. But you must go at once.' Ma said to Akhandamandaji, 'Baba, have you any objection, in letting Khukuni go along with Jyotish?'

Swamiji : 'Ma, what is there to object when it is your order? But, Jyotish being ill, it would have been better to have a man around.'

Ma : Khukuni is a he-man, is not she? She is Brahmachari. What else is she but a he-man?'

This happened at night. Ma at once said to Panuda, 'I told you this morning to get a carriage ready. What about it?'

Panuda : Yes, Ma, the carriage is ready. I can present it as soon as you command.

He was told to bring in the carriage. Didi said, 'We two got into the carriage silently. At that time Ma was in such a mood that perhaps it would have been impossible to thwart her will, even if the whole universe had been pitted against her.'

Khukuni Didi was going to say more when Nagen Babu came for her and conducted her into the Ashram. Didi's story remained incomplete. I understood at last why Baba Bholanath had put up such a strong resistance to Ma's lying on the temple verandah. He was afraid that Ma might shuffle off her mortal coil while there. That fear was in everybody's mind at the time, in the context of Ma's condition at Tarapith. That Baba had in mind the good of us all in raising the objection, admits of no doubt.

I spent the time in the meadow up to evening.

After evening, Chintaharan Babu started his kirtan. Ma sat surrounded by women, to listen to the kirtan. We also went to the Nam Ghar and took our stand there. All were eager to listen to Ma, who could have any ear for the kirtan?

3rd Pous, Thursday, 1342 (19-12-35). It was the day of Ma's second departure from Dhaka. People crowded at the Ashram from the very morning. Going early in the morning, I found Ma seated on the verandah of the Annapurna temple. There were many sitting around Ma. I sat in one side. A boy was questioning Ma.

Casteism

The boy : I find a provision for casteism in our Scriptures. But we think all men are equal. Discrimination between man and man is not good. So I ask you if it is a sin not to abide by casteism.

Ma : If you do not want to abide by the injunctions of the Scriptures, why do you not make a Scripture of your own?

The boy : We do not have that power. But still I am curious to know if transgressing casteism is sinful.

Ma : If you have doubts, it is a sin.

The boy : I have no doubt that there is nothing wrong about anti-casteism.

Ma (Laughing) : Then you must be a knower of Brahma.

Swami Shankarananda : Doubts persist till one attains Brahma-consciousness.

Ma : If you have no doubts, why do you ask?

Without doubts, question does not arise. The question of virtue and vice presupposes doubts.

It rests upon us to keep Ma in her body.

At this time Pramatha Babu said, 'Ma, now to business. Tell us if you will come back to Dhaka.'

Ma : I shall, if you have me back.

Pramatha Babu : I do not want such evasive replies. Say for certain if you shall come back.

Suren Babu* : Last time you said that you would come back. This time also say something positive.

Ma : Did I say that I would come back?

Suren Babu : Yes, you did.

Ma gave no reply to this. I understood that Suren Babu had made a mistake. Ma rarely hinted at what she would do in future.

Ma : I neither say I would come back nor that I would not. What I say is that if I am in this body and you have me back, I would return.

I : Can't you be in body if you will it?

Ma : It depends upon your will.

I : How can we keep you in body?

Ma : How do parents protect their children? They do so by wishing them well.

The reply assured me to a great extent. My fear for the preservation of Ma's body wore off. I thought that Ma would remain in body for our benefit, so long as we wished it. So far as she was concerned, to be or not to be depended

* Sri Surendra Nath Banerjee - An employee at the Post Office.

upon the wish of her children.

As the crowd was building up, Pramatha Babu asked Ma to go to the Nam Ghar. Ma consented. We all went to the Nam Ghar and sat there.

Knowledge of Scriptures and Knowledge of Self.

When all were seated, Sri Akhil Chandra Chakravarty said to Ma, 'Ma, Nirdoshananda, who read out Kathopanishad for a time in this Ashram, advised us to concentrate on the thought, "We are the Soul Absolute (Paramatma). But this idea does not come easy to us. Besides, we have no notion of the Great Purusha. While meditating anything, we have your image before us. Last night I had no sleep, but only thought of your instructions and all the time your appearance flashed across my eyes. How can I, thus situated, identify myself with the Soul Absolute in my meditation?'

Ma : Paramatma is something to be perceived. We can have no concept of Him from reading Scriptures or listening to religious discourses. The Scriptures only set us on the way. I equate a Scripture (Shashtra) with one's own weapon (Swasthra)*. Scriptures voice different views, all equally true. The sages set down in the Scriptures their own experiences in the course of sadhana. Each described in his Scripture the state which he himself attained. It cannot be understood

* A pun. By one's own weapon, Ma implies, the weapon which the Scripture - maker used for his own spiritual purpose—
Translator's Note.

simply by reading or listening. The proper meanings of the Scriptures can be understood only when one has attained those states. In this sense, all Scriptures are true.

You see, formerly we had four Ashramas (divisions of life). At the Brahmacharya Ashram, people learnt the do's and don't's of life through the reading of Scriptures. They came into the Samsar Ashram (Garhasthya) with that knowledge and while leading the worldly life tried to put the knowledge into practice.

At the end of his worldly duties, he took to Vanaprastha (lit. 'going to the forest'. Living apart from the family), he tried to realise the knowledge acquired from the Scriptures. That would naturally lead him to Sannyas or renunciation. But now in the absence of the Brahmacharya Ashram, all the rest have gone topsy-turvy. We can never see the last of wants.

I have told you before that you are in a want-based state of nature. All you are preoccupied with are transitory. What you earn by your service is being spent on family requirements. Nothing abides. Yesterday they took a photo of this body. I said, 'What will you do with the photo of this body? It is also changeful. What is at present will be changed in a few days.' By want-based nature I mean being taken up with the things that pass away. Attempts should be made to acquire what is ever-lasting and this calls for a one-directional mind. For this again we must have recourse to either of the two ways of thinking—identification

of everything with 'I' or with 'You'. Later it is discovered that there is only one thing in the universe. Nothing else exists. In other words, He is present in His fulness in every object of the world.

So I say that the Jiva state is a state of bondage. It is like a certain space in a meadow being partitioned off by a hedge, which is also in the meadow. So I also say that though a jiva is shrouded by a screen of ignorance, yet a door to knowledge is also provided in it. It is just as we are sitting inside the room, while sunlight is finding its way through doors and windows. We can see the sunlight, but our body is not exposed to it. If we wish we can go out through the door and take our stand in the sun. In the same way, the jiva has many outlets for passing from the state of bondage to that of freedom. Call it a guru or an idol—it is a door leading from bondage to freedom. What is needed is to be single-minded. All are evolved out of the Absolute soul. That is why guru has to be looked upon as God. Nothing will come out of it so long as guru is regarded as a human being and there is no perception of Godhood in him, nor will it be any help if an idol is regarded as a mere stone. That is why I say that a jiva can never be God at the same time. If it is a jiva, it is a jiva. Again regarded as God, it is nothing short of God. It is the same with guru. He is God or a human being, according to one's point of view. Godhood must be attributed to one whose assistance is sought for securing single-mindedness.

These days women worships Lakshmi. Their aim is that they should have plenty of money. You worship Saraswati so that you may have learning and earn money enabling you to lead happy family life. But I say that a worship performed in this way is useless, for neither learning nor wealth is ever-lasting. Such a worship is want-based worship. If you feel like worshipping, you should worship Mahalakshmi instead of Lakshmi. The wealth attained thereby has no decay. In the same way we should worship Mahasaraswati instead of Saraswati so that we may obtain Brahmavidya, the knowledge of Brahma. It will enable us to pass from the realm of wants to one of fulfilment which is our pristine nature. For this, one must acquire the passivity of an instrument. Then comes the realization that only He exists in the universe and is the doer of everything.

So I say all should repeat the name constantly. Days that pass away never come back. It is not right to give way to despair from a sense of utter frustration. For the very awareness of non-achievement is a proof that something is being achieved. What is needed is a sense of want. I am not being able to repeat the name properly, how can I do it? Success comes within our reach from such an intense feeling of want. But we do not feel the prick of want. We do not hunger for Him. When you have no appetite you whip it up by taking an appetiser, taking the name of God is like that. As one repeats the name, the sense of lacking is awakened and one is restless

for attaining Him.

At this time some prostitutes came to meet Ma. Coming up they sat with other women just in front of Ma. At that Pramatha Babu said, 'I shall not allow them to sit among the ladies.' So saying he removed them. But other women came and sat in their place and with that the elder grandma came and kicked up a row. Ma's speech came to a stop. Looking at Pramatha Babu, Ma said smiling, 'How now, Baba, are you satisfied?' Perhaps she meant that nothing good is gained if a prostitute is looked down upon for her profession. At the words of Ma, we laughed aloud.

Two prostitutes approached Ma from another direction and told Ma about their diseases. Ma said, 'This body can make no comments on these things. This body is very intractable. Mother, I would advise you to repeat His name.'

At this time Shankarananda came and said, 'I am taking Ma elsewhere for just five minutes. A woman has some private talk with her. You wait for five minutes.' Ma said, 'Will it take only five minutes and no more?' At that we understood that we had heard the last of Ma's talks for the present occasion. In fact we had no further talk with Ma. After that women surrounded her till it was time for her to depart. Ma's photos were being taken at intervals. We began to walk about outside the Ashram.

Ma's departure from Dhaka

The time of farewell was drawing near.

Ma came out of the room and stood in the courtyard of the Ashram. All bowed down to her touching her feet. When I rose up after making my obeisance, I found Ma looking at me smilingly. Even at that time innumerable heads lay prostrate at Ma's venerable feet. To me her smile was a token of her acceptance of my obeisance. Ma made no distinction between far and near. She had told me at Dehradun that she accepted even a pranam made without touching her feet. Perhaps she took this occasion to point that out beyond all doubts. Ma got into the car. As soon as I moved out of the Ashram, I met Khukuni Didi. I bowed down to her and said, 'The story of yesterday remained uncompleted.' Didi said, 'Perhaps you do not know that last evening Ma suddenly said to me, 'You were telling a story, were you not? Go, finish it.' But on coming out I did not find you.' So saying Didi smiled. Her smile implied that nothing was hidden from Ma. For, when Didi was telling us the story, sitting in the meadow, Ma was amidst the dins of the Ashram. She neither saw Didi nor knew that she was telling us a story. Yet nothing was beyond the range of her knowledge. She even knew that the story was unfinished. Ma was not only a knower of all minds, she was also provided with all-directed eyes.

Bidding Ma farewell we came back home with dejected hearts. The last few days we passed in a sort of excitement. Today it was weariness, weariness all over.

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