

Mother Reveals Herself
(Early period of Mātri Līlā: 1896-1932)



As recorded by

Bhaiji
(*Jyotish Chandra Roy*)

(English translation of an edited version of 'Māyer Kathā')



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Anyone calling out for God,

from any land,

in any language,

and in any age,

Remember, their cries reach this heart,

Like the waves of the ocean crashing onto the shore.

- Shree Shree Mā Anandamayee

Shree Shree Mantra...
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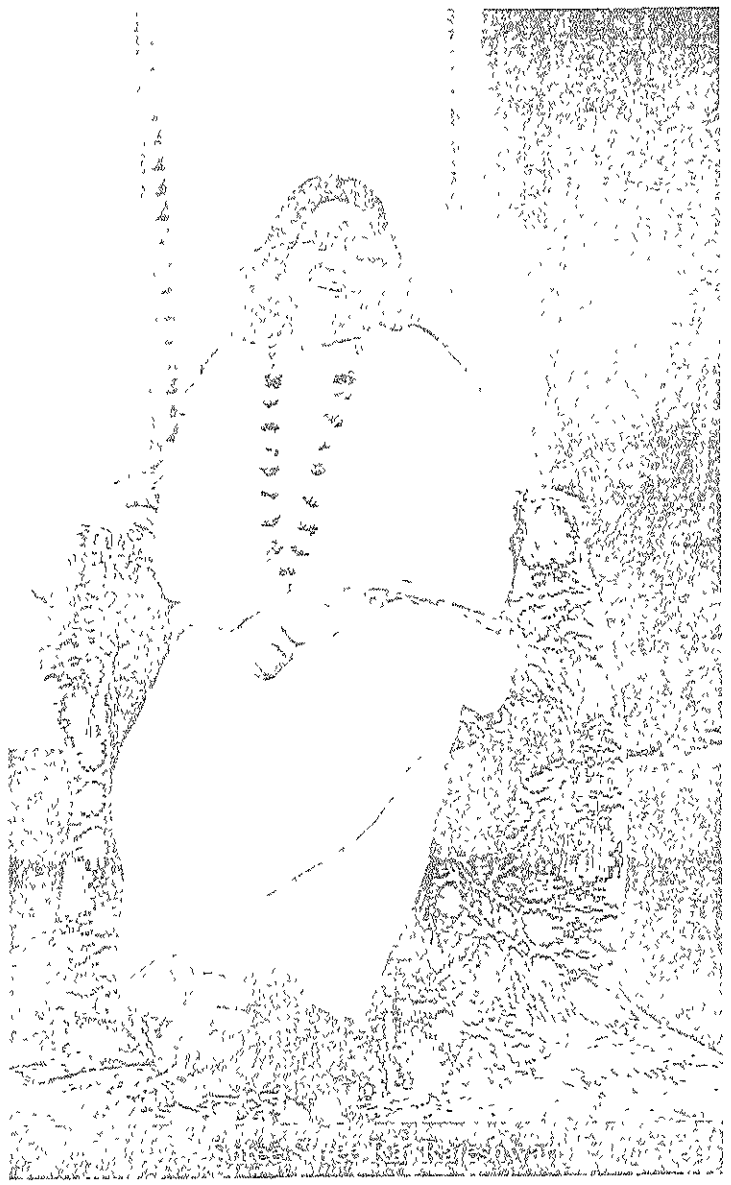
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Preface

Bhaiji (Jyotish Chandra Roy) received Mā's blessings in abundant measure. In private and without reservations, She allowed him to be in close proximity to Her, and making use of that golden opportunity, he asked Her many diverse questions, writing down Her responses daily in his diary. This diary is the treasure trove providing inspiration for such books as *Sad-Vani*, *Mātri Darshan*, *Sri Charan*, and *Dwadash Vani*.

In the preface to the second edition of *Mātri Darshan* in Bengali (dated January 6, 1948) Mā's disciple, Gangacharan Dasgupta, (Bhaiji's uncle) has written, "There is another lengthy book written in Bhaiji's own hand, in which he has written down accounts of many events of Her life as related to him by Mā Herself, almost exactly in Her own words. A lot of the material from that book has been briefly presented in his book, *Mātri-Darshan*." This was later translated in English as *Mother as Revealed to Me*.

Before leaving for Mt. Kailash with Shree Shree Mā and Pitāji, Bhaiji handed over the manuscript of the entire book, written in Bengali, to Dasgupta with the request that he edit it as required, and have it printed as soon as possible. On the way back from Lake Mānsarovar Bhaiji passed away in Almora, on August 18, 1937 (the 12th day of *Jhulan*). Within a short time of his passing, *Mātri Darshan* was published by Dasgupta.

The remaining part of the manuscript, still unedited, was kept by Dasgupta, till, after some time, it was taken over by Gurupriya Devi (*Didi*). In all probability, it remained in *Didi*'s care until 1955. The existence of this manuscript remained undisclosed to most disciples. In May 1956 Mā's 60th birthday was celebrated in Benaras (now known as 'Varanasi') with unparalleled pomp and grandeur. Amidst the preoccupation of the celebrations, Gurupriya *Didi*, who was then

ailing, handed over for the safe keeping of the manuscript to Amal Sen who had moved to Benaras. After his death, the manuscript remained with his wife for a few years until she handed it over to Jitendra Nath Dutta in New Delhi around 1970. Jitendra Nath Dutta passed away on September 23, 1974 in the presence of Mā at Vrindaban.

This manuscript was kept safe in a bookcase in the *pūjā* room of his residence until it was discovered around 1980 by his son who informed *Swāmi* Paramānandaji, General Secretary of Shree Shree Anandamayee Sangha. *Swāmi* Paramānandaji instructed the co-ordinator to continue safeguarding and preserving the manuscript. After Mā left Her temporal body, the co-ordinator reminded *Swāmi* Paramānandaji about the manuscript and was directed by the latter to photocopy it for his perusal. After going through it, *Swāmi* Paramānandaji sent the photocopy to Dr. Gopal Dasgupta with instructions that it should be published as soon as possible. In 1985 this manuscript was published in Bengali as *Māyer Kathā*.

From the letter written by Gurupriya *Didi* (see Submission), it is learnt that this manuscript had been read out to Mā. While listening to it, whatever remarks were made by Mā, as prompted by Her momentary *kheyāl*, were also incorporated into the text at the relevant places. In her 'Submission', Gurupriya *Didi* has further written: "In order to make it more comprehensible, Kamal (later known as Virajānandaji) and I, and at times Jogesh Brahmachārī read it out to Her, trying to understand it ourselves as far as was possible, and wrote it down on fresh sheets of paper. Thus, we have tried to chronicle actual facts to the best of our ability, over a period of sixteen years."

Many devotees unfamiliar with the Bengali language and script, expressed their regret at not being able to read *Māyer Kathā* and learn of Mā's early *līlā* as recorded by Bhajiji. This attempt at translating *Māyer Kathā* into English will hopefully allow a wider circle of Mā's devotees to have access to the earlier parts of Her life. To help facilitate better comprehension for the reader, some of the paragraphs have been rearranged to ensure a chronological sequence of events. We have incorporated explanations of the Sanskrit and

Bengali words in parenthesis and at places in footnotes as well as having included a glossary. A few significant statements about Mā's revelation of being the all-pervasive Supreme Being have been highlighted in the text. Efforts have also been made to correlate certain incidents based on data compiled by the Archive on *Mātrī Līlā*. Discerning readers will find, between the lines, much guidance to help them on their path of *sādhana*.

We shall be gratified if this humble attempt satisfies the thirst of sincere spiritual seekers.

Jai Mā!

Co-ordinator



Bhaiji (Late Jyotish Chandra Roy), 1880-1937

A Brief Biography

Jyotish Chandra Roy, a senior government officer of the Imperial Service Order, was the foremost among the devotees of Mā, who came to revere Her as the Goddess Incarnate, the deity of his eternal adoration - *Jagadhhatrī Devi*. It was his good fortune that Mā accepted him as Her adopted son; thus he became Bhaiji (elder brother), respected and honoured by one and all.

Bhaiji was born on July 16, 1880, the tenth day of the waxing lunar phase, to a noble and aristocratic family of Chittagong (then known as Chattogram) in East Bengal (now Bangladesh). Bhaiji's father's name was Gobinda Chandra Roy, who was a devout and saintly man. Bhaiji received his education in his home town. The story of his life too was simple, beautiful, and pure.

When Bhaiji was working as a senior officer in the Agriculture Department, Dhaka, he heard of Shree Shree Mā's divine qualities and developed an urge to meet Her. Towards the end of 1924, Bhaiji along with two of his colleagues, met Mā at Shahbag (the extensive gardens belonging to the Nawab of Dhaka where Her husband was employed as the manager). At first sight, he recognised that She embodied everything that he had been searching for all his life in numerous sacred places. With Mā's grace, he completed the four stages of life (*brahmachārya gārhasṭha*, *vānaprastha* and *sannyās*) as prescribed in Hindu sacred texts. At the last stage of his life, Mā initiated him into *sannyās* (monastic life), on the shores of Mānsarovar and named him *Swāmi Mounānanda Parvat*.

On his way back from Kailash Mānsarovar, on August 18, 1937 the 12th day of *Jhulan*, Bhaiji breathed his last in Almora.

Soon after his passing, Bābā Bholanath wrote a long letter to Gangacharan Dasgupta dated September 8, 1937.

Upto the very end Jyotish was fully conscious. Shortly before passing away, he said to me: "Look, Bābā, in this world nobody can be called one's own. Shree Shree Mā alone is real." After chanting 'Mā. Mā', and 'Om', he called Hariram and said to him. "Listen, we are all one. Mā and I are one. Pitāji and I are one." Then fixing his gaze on Mātaji and pronouncing 'Mā. Mā', he slowly breathed his last. (*Mother as Revealed to Me*, page iii)

As revealed by Mā, Bhaiji in his previous lives had been an ardent seeker of Truth and an ascetic. One of his *samadhis* is located below Mā's *kutiā* (100m) at the Ramna *āshram*, Dhaka.

Bhaiji came up with the name 'Ānandamayee Mā' (bliss-permeated Mother) by which Mā is now known the world over. He was instrumental in developing the concept of the ideal *āshram*, prayer, and *kirtan*, establishing Mā's birthday celebration, creating a flag of seven colours for the occasion, and embodied a code of conduct by the way he lived.

On reading through the text, one will understand the true significance of Bhaiji's revelation.

Jai Mā!

Coordinator



Submission

Bhaiji noted down these conversations with Mā and compiled them, prior to his departure for Kailash. He is understood to have appealed repeatedly to Mā to allow him to read these out to Her. He persisted in these efforts and, prior to their departure for Kailash (in June 1937), when Mā was staying in Bareilly for a few days, he again said to Mā in a rather dejected manner, "Mā, I have not yet been able to fulfill my wish of reading out my notes to You. We shall soon be leaving for Kailash, and there is no time for that." Seeing him crestfallen, Mā is said to have told him, "Alright, I will hear them sometime." On his way back from Kailash, Bhaiji passed away in Almora.

Through the following years, we too have often tried to read out these notes to Her, but without Mā's *kheyāl* nothing is possible. This time Mā said, "You seem to have set up some sort of a link between this Body and the writing that you want Me to hear. All right, let us put an end to it this time. You know that unlike you, this Body has very little to do with writing or listening to anything. Whatever comes to pass..." Perhaps as She gave us Her word She saw to it that our wish was finally fulfilled.

There were many corrections and deletions in Bhaiji's notes. In order to have them put in order, the notes had passed through many hands, and, as a result, some of the pages had come loose and several were on the verge of tearing. This made it still more difficult to decipher the contents. In places there were obvious mistakes and description of events were not in proper order. These could possibly have been due to the fact that either Bhaiji heard the incidents from a third person, or he heard these from Mā and tried to put them down on paper much later.

Due to such reasons and in order to make these notes more comprehensible, Kamal and I and at times Jogesh Brahmachārī, read

them to Mā, tried our best to understand and wrote the contents again on fresh sheets of paper. Mā was not always receptive to being read to. When we read them in Her presence at times She would listen, at times make some comments, and at others it was impossible to tell whether She heard us at all or not. In this way, we have tried to chronicle actual facts to the best of our ability over a period of sixteen years.

It appears from the foreword to his book that over a long period of time, and in the course of many conversations, Bhaiji asked Mā questions, and on the basis of Her replies, wrote down his notes with the aim of publishing them in the form of a book at a later date.

Bhaiji passed away before he could complete all that was needed to be done to have the notes published. No one has the right to alter the text of a book other than the author himself, this is why we did not think it proper to make too many changes to the original manuscript apart from those which were absolutely necessary. As far as possible, the notes have been largely left as they were.

It is an impossible task to have anything explained or clarified totally by Mā; She had very little to do with such things. We have changed only those parts regarding which we were able to obtain some elucidation from Mā in the course of conversations. We have, however, incorporated in the text whatever new facts we were able to glean from these.

*Gurupriya Devi (Didi)*¹



¹ Gurupriya Devi (affectionately referred to as Didi) was especially close to Shree Shree Mā for over 50 years, much of that time spent as Her close attendant (see Chapter 8). She maintained a diary detailing different incidents of *Mātrī līlā* which provides valuable insights to Mā. Didi's diaries are published in 18 volumes in Bengali & Hindi and partially translated into English (6 volumes). She was instrumental in creating the *Shree Shree Anandamayee Sangha* (a registered organisation) that incorporated the many āshrams which *Shree Shree Mā's* devotees had established in different parts of India and, today is the custodian of Mā's Samadhī Mandir – 'Ānanda Jyoti Peetham' in Kankhal (Haridwar).

Translator's Note

The first time I read the book *Māyer Kathā* in Bengali, I was overwhelmed by its impact, which was unlike any other book I had read before. It brought me an intense, lingering joy and left an indelible mark on my mind. In early 2007, when the coordinator suggested that I translate the Bengali version to English, I was completely taken aback, as I did not think I was worthy of such a task, for the thought of trying to render its complexities into English was daunting indeed. When I voiced my doubts, he said, "Why don't you start? You will find that Mā will help you." Fully conscious of my limitations, I started, after offering my humble prayers at Mā's feet and seeking Her guidance.

The book uses Mā's own words in the form of responses to questions put to Her by Bhajji. It is a measure of his exceptional spiritual stature that Mā often spoke in the first person when She answered his questions, something which may startle many readers. In conversations and discussions Mā used to refer to Herself as 'this Body'. In the book Mā talks of the various stages of Her life—Her '*prakash*' (manifestation), infancy, childhood, marriage, and *sādhan līlā* (play of spiritual endeavour). However, even the ordinary events of Her life were imbued with an extraordinary quality, which, one fears may easily be lost to some extent when translated from Bengali to English. Again, very often there are no adequate words for those used by Mā, and it is sometimes impossible to capture the simplicity and intangible quality of Her utterances in the English language. Inimitably, She leaves sentences unfinished and refers to Herself flexibly, in the both the first and the third person. As She did this with the full consciousness of being the Supreme Being, all pronouns referring to Her have been capitalized. For the same reason,

the word 'She' has been used as the pronoun for 'this Body' instead of 'it' as done in some books on Her. Her language becomes cryptic in places where She speaks of that which is beyond the understanding and experience of an ordinary individual, for instance, where She recounts in detail the intricacies of Her *yogic kriyās* (activities pertaining to spiritual *yoga*), the supranormal and its manifestations in Her, and refers often to the Supreme Reality. She also speaks about the stages a *sādhak* (spiritual practitioner) goes through in the course of his/her *sādhanā*, i.e., the spiritual path towards Self-realization, and talks of the problems - practical, philosophical and metaphysical - that are encountered by him or her at various stages of this quest.

These are the many passages that have presented challenges to my efforts as a translator. While I have endeavoured to convey the profundity and intangible quality of Mā's expressions as precisely as possible, there are places where I have had to transliterate Her sentences into the logic and flow of English in order to keep as close to the meaning as possible and maintain the readability of the text.

Moreover in Bengali conversation, the subject is often implied, rather than stated specifically. Whenever in Her conversation, the subject has been implied, we have used the first person in our translation in order to ensure smooth reading. Those readers familiar with Mā's way of expression will appreciate our constraint in this matter.

Some of Mā's actions seem to defy explanation as they appear to be beyond human comprehension. As I have already mentioned at the beginning of this note, I am fully conscious of the import of trying to translate words spoken by Mā Herself and recorded by someone of Bhajji's stature into another language. I humbly seek Mā's forgiveness and the readers' tolerance for the shortcomings in my effort.

To facilitate the reader's comprehension, meanings of all words in Bengali or Sanskrit, which have been italicized, have been included in the Glossary. Only words or concepts of religious and social import have been provided with footnotes.

Regarding pronunciation, the longer versions of the vowels 'a, i, u' have been shown as 'ā, ī, ū'. Sanskrit words have been spelt according to their phonetic sounds.

This translation in its final version could not have been realized without the assistance of a small but dedicated team of translators and editors who worked closely with the coordinator. Their assistance was particularly invaluable in arriving at the final manuscript that conveyed the subtle nuances of Mā's descriptions of Her *bhāvās*, *kriyās* during Her *sāadhanā līlā*

Finally, I thank the coordinator for providing explanations and filling the gaps in the translation, helping me where I felt inadequate, encouraging me to continue when I felt daunted, and, above all, for giving me this opportunity to be close to Mā, for which I consider myself blessed.

Jai Mā!

Maitrayee Sen

(Amal Sen's daughter-in-law)



Contents

Prelude

Foreword

Shree Shree Mā's Handwriting

Chapter 1

1-27

Early Narratives, Mā's *Prakash* (Revelation) in Kheora, Early Childhood, Deaths of Her Brothers, Initiation of Parents, Obeying Orders, Surobalā, Mā at School

Chapter 2

28-51

Marriage, At Her Brother-in-law's Household, Bidyākūt, Astagram Mā Proceeds to Bholanath's Place of Work, Harakumar's Prophecy, Feeling of Oneness with Deities of Temple, Changes in *Kriyās* according to the Divine Mood, Cleanliness and Sanctity of the House, Stay in Astagram, Divine Medicine, Mā in *Kirtan* at the Base of the *Tulsī* plant, Mā Goes into *Bhāv* for the first time in *Kirtan*. In the *Kirtan* of Gagan *Sādhu*, Gour and Nitai in the *Kirtan*. Appearance of a Light on Hearing Bhāgavat, Spontaneous *Āsanās* on Reciting *Harī's* Name

Chapter 3

52-74

From Astagram to Bidyākūt, A Jewellery Theft, At a Cousin's Wedding, Touching of Idols, Healing Sick People, Connection with the Pious and the Virtuous Visit to Kasba *Kālī* Temple, Postman Harish, From Bidyākūt to Ātpara Neighbours Helping Out, Mā in Bajitpur, Mā receives instruction on Wearing *Tulsī Māla*. Mā at *Kirtan* in Bhudeb *babu's* House, Worship of Goddess *Kālī* in Bajitpur, Mā at Needlework, Play of *Avidyā Māyā*, Mā Cooking for a Feast, An awestruck Maid Servant, Bholanath's Puppy, Curing Ailments

Chapter 4

75-118

Ushā *Didi* and Janakī *babu* in Bajitpur, Weddings of Two Sisters in Dhaka, The Ascetic Shīvananda, Performing *Lakshmī Pūjā*, *Yogic Kriyās*

Manifested by *Harinām*, Mā's *Dīkshā*, Revelation of Mā's True Identity, Mā in the Play of *Sādhanā*, *Granthī-chakras* of the *Shai-chakra*, Appearance of Living Gods and Goddesses, Neighbours' Advice, A Dog in the Play of *Sādhanā*, External Items for Worship losing Significance, Service to Husband in the *gārhashta* Stage. Nature of Fear, A Glowing Symbol of Shiva between the Eyebrows, The Spontaneous Activities and Revelation in the Play of *Sādhanā*, Mā on *Pūjā*, *Pāth*, *Japa*, *Irha (Idā)*, *Pingalā* and *Sushumnā*, Clairvoyance, Divine Power and Will Power, Revelation of the Self, A Stage of a *Sādhak*, An Arabian Saint, Reaction to *Pranām*, Kshetrapal's Exorcism, Spinning Thread on a Spinning Wheel, Some Incidents.

Chapter 5

119-140

Mā Reveals to Bholanath - His house from Past Life, Initiation of Bholanath, Different Aspects of the Play of *Sādhanā*, *Shrī Pūjā* in Mā's Name, Dissolution of Bondage of the Finite at the Appearance of Infinity, Speaking through the *Kundali*, Bholanath's Illness, *Ushā didi* addresses Her as Mā, Consequence of Taunting, Transformation of a *Sādhū*, Ashu's Sacred-thread Ceremony and Bholanath's Promised Worship of Goddess *Kālī*, Mā in *Bidyākūt*.

Chapter 6

141-175

Bholanath's Transfer to Shahbag, Dhaka, Change in Diet, Seven Days at Siddheswari *Kālī* Temple, Game of Wit with Sri Kushari, Ramna *Kālī* Temple, In the Guise of a Guest, Prior history of the Ramna *Āshram*, *Lakshmi Pūjā*, The Duties of a *Sādhak*, Vision of Deities and their Essence, Categories of *Sādhaks*, Mā in *Harinām*, The Seven Stages of *Kirtan*, Divinity Manifested in Form and Formless, Who Gives *Dīkshā*? Different Aspects of a *Sādhak*, *Māyā* and Knowledge, Obedience in Family-Life, Following Bholanath's Instructions without Question, Immersed in Ecstasy while doing Household Work

Chapter 7

176-192

Arrival of Pious Men, Spiritual Link with Jyotish, Bholanath's Anxiety, The Sense of Absolute Oneness, *Kheyāl* to Eat only Fruit, Observing *Akshay Tritiyā*, Mā in Shahbag, *Dīpānvitā Pūjā*, Promotho *babu*'s Vow of Silence, Overeating, The Hazards of Testing Mā, *Vibhūti*, Eating with *Didimā*, *Amāvasyā Bhog*

Chapter 8

193-211

Khukuni's First Meeting with Mā, Public *Kirtan* during the Solar Eclipse, Transforming a Young Man with a Glance, Curing Ailments at Bholanath's Behest, Shashanko *babu* Worships Mā, Inability to Eat with One's Own

Hands, The Healing of a Young Girl, Full Moon *Bhog* at the *Āsram*, Feeding the Poor, Paying Homage by Touching the Feet, *Bāsanti Pūjā* Labanya's State of Divine Intoxication, Reaction to People Paying Homage, Prediction of Danger to Moroni, Jyotish's and Niranjan's Prayers.

Chapter 9

212-244

Obstructions in the *Sādhak's* Path. Spontaneous Revelation in *Kirtan*. Mā's Play with *Brahmachārī Jogesh* during *Kirtan*. The *Līlā* of taking Rice, Mā at Balānanda *Brahmachārī's* *Āshram*, Mā at Promotho *babu*'s Home, *Kālī Pūjā* in Shahbag, Preserving the Sacrificial Fire, Biren Worships Goddess *Kālī*, Placing the Sacrificial Fire in a *Kund*, Mā's Visit to Nirmal *babu*, Kamalakanta becomes an Ascetic, Without Drinking Water, Mā in Paoldiya Village. Jyotish's Illness, Jogesh Living the Life of a Mendicant Forms of Diseases, Arranging a Visit to *Purna-kumbha* in Haridwar, Mā in Kolkata, Messages received in Rishikesh, At *Manasā Pūjā* in Shashanko *babu*'s Home, Fire for Hiralal and the Dead Man's Last Rites, Hazard of Not Following Mā's Instruction, The Impulse to Cure Diseases, Mā's response depends on One's Sincerity, Prediction of Monu's snake bite, Sudden *Kheyāl* to leave Dhaka, Wandering about in a Single Garment

Chapter 10

245-251

Mā and the Evolving Powers of a *Sādhak*, Spontaneous Reciting of *Namāz* in Shahbag and Mā's *Kheyāl* for Her Muslim devotees, *Yoga-vibhūti* and *Swabhān-vibhūti*, A *Sādhak* must Manifest Power with Caution, *Durgā Pūjā* at Shashanko *babu*'s Home, Coming to and Going away from Mā, Mā in *Giridīh*

Chapter 11

252-268

More about the Vindhyaçal Snake, Bholanath's Worship of Mā, Bholanath's Visit to Tarapīth, Receiving the Sacred Thread, Shifting the Idol of *Kālī*, Reward of Fervent Action, The Establishment of the *Āshram*, Departure from Dhaka, Mā in Haridwar, Ayodhya, Dehradun and Kashi, Mouni Bābā of Nabadvīp.

Chapter 12

269-286

Bholanath's Illness, Mā's *Kheyāl* regarding Sickness and Disease, Effect of Seeing Fresh Blood, The *Sādhak's* Body during *Sādhanā*, Daily Walks in the Fields, Sacred Thread to Jyotish, Jyotish as Adopted Son, Offering *Prasād* to Vultures, First Trip to South India, *Panchavati* in the *Āshram*, A Young *Sannyāsi*, Injury to the Idol of *Kālī*, *Samadhis* beneath Dhaka *Āshram*. Departure from Dhaka

Epilogue	287
Appendix I - Revelation of the Supreme One as Shree Shree Mā	288-289
Appendix II - Mā's self revelation	290-291
Appendix III - Granthī Chakras	292-293
Appendix IV - <i>Mahāvākyas</i> : Great declarations of the Vedas	294-295
Appendix V - Bholanathji (1881 – May 6, 1938)	296-299
Appendix VI - Location of Ramna Maidan & Shahbag	300-302
Glossary	303-326
Acknowledgment	327
Persons associated in <i>Mātri-Līlā</i> as per text upto 1932.	328-332
Layout Plan of Ramna Āshram & Shahbag	
Map of India & Bangladesh showing the places relevant to <i>Mātri-līlā</i> upto 1932.	

List of Photographs

- 1 Shree Shree Mā's bust photo
- 2 Shree Shree Mā as *Raj Rajeshwari*
- 3 Shree Shree Mā in *siddhāsana*
- 4 Jyoti in crescent form as seen on Shree Shree Mā's forehead, (photograph taken around second week of October, 1926)
- 5 Shree Shree Mā during *sādhana-līlā*
6. Shree Shree Mā and Bholanathji sitting on either side of the altar at the holy spot in Siddheswari, the pillar on the altar is of the height of Shree Shree Mā's sitting posture
- 7 Sketch of Ramna Kālī Temple and the Dilapidated Temple at the background
- 8 Shree Shree Mā before going into *samādhi* }
- 9 Shree Shree Mā in *samādhi* }
- 10 Shree Shree Mā steeped in *samādhi* } *Different*
- 11 Shree Shree Mā lost in *samādhi* as if life-less } *-stages*
- 12 Shree Shree Mā engrossed in *samādhi* } *of samādhi*
- 13 Shree Shree Mā coming out of *samādhi* }
- 14 First photograph of Shree Shree Mā with Bholanathji taken in June, 1925
Forefront Baul Chandra Basak, Pran Gopal Mukhopadhyay and Nani Gopal Mukhopadhyay
- 15 Shree Shree Mā, Bholanathji and child Motoni in Shahbag – after *Bāsanti* pūjā of March, 1926
- 16 Balānanda Brahmachārī and his devotees
- 17 Shree Shree Mā with raised left hand sitting beside Bholanathji when Mā *Kālī* appeared between them at Dr Shashanko Mukhopadhyays home in Tikatuli
- 18 Brahmachārī Jogeshda sitting in front of Bholanathji's temple in Kishanpuri *Āshram*, Dehradun
- 19 Photograph of the first āshram in Siddheswari, Dhaka
20. Shree Shree Mā and Bholanathji blessing Bhajji in Siddheswari
- 21 Shree Shree Mā with Bholanathji and Bhajji after leaving Dhaka in June 1932

Prelude

Shree Shree Mā Ānandamayee (the bliss permeated Mother) is omnipresent, without boundaries or limits encompassing all the dimensions of space and time that the Vedas describe. Bhajji's exceptionally evolved spiritual state enabled him to grasp the infinite magnitude of Mā's true Being. His questions to Mā, which form the basis of this book, illustrated that he understood the different aspects of spiritual evolution and their essence, and he recognized the importance of maintaining authentic records for posterity. It is our good fortune that through these records we are able to learn about the 'līlā' of *Shree Shree Mā Ānandamayee* from Her childhood through the completion of Her 'sādhan līlā' - a period spanning 36 years (1896 to mid 1932).

Through Mā's narration of simple incidents in Her early life, we learn about Her divine childhood, set against the backdrop of the prevailing social customs in rural Bengal at that time. The main mode of transport then was by boat and steamer traversing the rivers and rivulets that criss-cross the region that is now Bangladesh. Mā frequently travelled by these modes, as well as by palanquin when appropriate. The tranquillity, cultural integrity and cohesion of late 19th Century rural East Bengal, from where Mā emerged, is virtually unimaginable in the 21st Century.

In almost every one of these early incidents related in the first few chapters one gets glimpses of Mā's divinity and the play of 'mahāshaktī' (divine creative power). That She was an unusual child can be noticed in Her behaviour - the complete absence of desire or want or bodily discomfort, the devotion to duty, truthfulness and Her ever-cheerful disposition. Her deft handling of the many challenging domestic chores She was called on to perform as a

thirteen-year old married girl are glimpses of a *karma yoginī*. Men and women, young and old, irrespective of caste or creed were attracted to Her divine beauty and demeanour like a magnet.

In the subsequent chapters the narration shifts to a unique firsthand description of incredibly profound and esoteric yogic processes, as Mā underwent many different aspects of *sādhanā - bhakti, tāntric, yogic, and gyān* - that spontaneously manifested in Her during Her play of *sādhan līlā*. Her profound and precise descriptions of the progressive stages to the Absolute, will be of tremendous interest to spiritual seekers who will find ample guidance for their own spiritual practice as well as be warned of the pitfalls if one is not alert. Many similar aspects in the narration may be new and startling to a discerning reader. For Mā to give such a candid and detailed description of these *sādhanās* is a blessing for the serious spiritual aspirant and yogic practitioner and a unique event in the history of world spiritual literature.

The production of this book in English was a spiritual journey for those involved and we hope that the reader also experiences the same.

The details given in the footnotes of the text, the dates and the appendices are based on the research work on Mātrī Līlā being carried out at the Shree Shree Mā Ānandamayee Archive, Kankhal.

Jai Mā!
Coordinator



Foreword

This book is comprised of words spoken by Mā Herself, at different times, in the form of responses to questions put to Her.

No one has heard Mā make any reference to, or give any indication of, a previous life. She is completely silent on the subject. To the author's limited wisdom, it appears that She did not take a bodily form and come to earth in order to bear the consequences of activities of previous births; this is the actual truth. However, if on reading the book the reader mistakenly believes that the events related here are the results of Her previous births, the fault lies with the author and his note taking. All the *yogic* powers, *mantric* powers, and psychic powers that spontaneously manifested in Her body and received their ultimate culmination in Her so naturally, were, I believe, meant purely for us.

If a person can keep his vision single-mindedly focused on carrying out his *dharma*, to the extent of transcending his contradictory inclinations and disinclinations, he may aspire to reach such a state in himself within the natural course of his spiritual evolution; for indeed, this is possible only for a human being.

In keeping our attention focused on these *kriyās* in Mā, can we not experience this transformation within our own selves?

Bhaiji



Shree Shree Mā's Handwriting

There were earnest prayers to Shree Shree Mā for a sample of Her writing. She said, "I do not do anything wilfully, if the time comes you will get it." Fortunately on Thursday June 19, 1930, She wrote a few lines in Bengali, of which an English translation is given below.

(Bengali version)

শ্রীশ্রীশ্রীমাতা

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শ্রীশ্রীশ্রীমাতা

(শ্রীশ্রীশ্রীমাতার হস্তাক্ষর)

"O thou Supreme Being! Thou art manifest in all forms - this universe, with all created things, wife, husband, father, mother and children, all in one. I see that man's mind is clouded by worldly ties; but there is no cause for despair. With purity, unflinching faith and burning eagerness go ahead and you will realize your true Self.

- Shree Nirmalā Sundari Devi."

CHAPTER 1

Early Narratives

Once the topic of Mā's early life came up during our conversation, and, on my repeatedly asking Her to tell us something about it. She began to speak:

"At that time *Dol*¹ and *Durgā pūjā*² were celebrated every year at this Body's maternal uncle's place. When this Body's mother made her offerings in the temples and in the presence of the *Durgā* deity during *pūjā* celebrations, there would arise a prayer wishing for a child in her heart. Soon after a daughter was indeed born to her but the baby died prematurely, thus intensifying her yearning for a healthy child.

This Body's father was extremely fond of *kirtan*³ and would spend his days roaming from place to place, singing *kirtan*.⁴ Some wondered how such a lovable young man came to be behaving this way, no doubt causing much anxiety to his parents and near ones. His early life was spent mostly in Kheora village - where his maternal uncle's family resided. When he went missing for days on end his mother would weep constantly for her only son, not knowing where he was wandering like an ascetic.⁵ Apparently he had even taken to saffron

¹ Festival of colours celebrated on the full moon generally in the month of March, see Glossary for details

² Worship of the goddess *Durgā* in spring is known as '*Bāsanti pūjā*' and in autumn as '*Sharadiya pūjā*'

³ Devotional singing

⁴ He would sometimes be gone for weeks or months on end, wandering in devotional ecstasy with other like-minded musicians

⁵ When a person experiences divine joy in singing *kirtan*, his/her attachment to physical world diminishes and personal comfort loses its significance

robes⁶ for a while. One day word reached his family that he was spending his time singing *kirtan* in a neighbouring village and with a great deal of persuasion he was brought back home. He had an innate love for God and for singing His praises, and was gifted with a sweet and melodious voice.

The paternal grandmother of this Body was an extremely devout, simple-natured woman. She died before this Body was married as per your perception.⁷ This lady too prayed for a grandchild whenever she visited temples. One day she visited the famous Kasba *Kālī* Temple, where, while inwardly praying for a grandson, the words escaped her lips, "If there is a granddaughter and she survives, I shall perform a grand *pūjā* to Mother *Kālī* at the time of her marriage..." The moment she rose from her prayer posture it occurred to her that, having all along wanted a boy, she had somehow actually prayed for a girl. She thought to herself, "I walked all this distance⁸ to come here eager to pray for a grandson: what did Mother *Kālī* do to me that I ended up asking for a granddaughter! Well, so be it! Let Her will be done!" Soon after, ...this Body ...!"

Another day, while walking beside Mā, I happened to ask, "How is it possible for someone to remember things about the time of one's birth—as we understand it?" Mā replied, "The *kheyālī* to say everything does not come always. Whatever comes...!"

From the days of this Body's childhood, to the time when She became a bride, whatever She has been relating to you, as well as whatever you have seen of Her from the time that you have laid eyes upon Her, She has always been the same. **Whatever action takes place in this Body occurs only to serve your collective needs.** It is your longing to know that moves this Body to talk.

⁶ The robes of a formal renunciate

⁷ The concept of marriage as normally perceived is not applicable for Mā, as She had no ego and hence was beyond all earthly associations and attachments

⁸ She had walked six miles to the Kasba *Kālī* temple

As you recall, at the time of a boy's sacred thread ceremony⁹ he is said to be reborn and attain a second life, is he not? The *mantra*, *sutra* (sacred thread) and his new clothes together bring about a change in his outer appearance as well. Whereas Here (Mā referring to Herself) the emergence of a new body (in the form of an infant)¹⁰ was seen, but this is only in your perception. It is not possible for a person to grasp the essence of this knowledge¹¹ without the grace of his *guru* (spiritual guide) or without *sādhanā* (spiritual practice). Where is the ability? ...In any case, an analogy can never be perfect: you have to take whatever can be gleaned from it. I asked Her again, "Then how can we understand?" Mā smilingly replied, "How can you understand unless you receive the ability to do so!"

Sitting on the raised cemented base surrounding a huge banyan tree beside the Ganga¹² in Kankhal¹³, while talking about Her advent in response to our earnest and repeated questioning, She began to talk in an enchanting manner, "There is so much to tell—but all is random. .if indeed you want to know, then listen ...!"

⁹ This ceremony is mandatory to the members of the Brahmin community and marks a boy's official acceptance into his caste. At this point he becomes "twice-born". Every one has a first, biological birth, but when a Brahmin boy approaches maturity and seeks his spiritual identity, he symbolically accepts a spiritual teacher as father and takes the Vedas as mother. He may also receive a new, spiritual name. At the ceremony he receives the *upavit* (sacred thread), usually worn through his entire lifetime. It is replaced at intervals but never removed until a new one has been put on. The ceremony itself involves shaving his head, bathing and wearing new clothes. The boy begs alms from his mother and from other relatives. There is a *havan* and the investiture of the sacred thread which hangs over his left shoulder across his body to his right. The boy hears the *Gāyatrī mantra* from the priest, who may give him a spiritual name to signify his "second birth". Thereafter, wrapping the thread round the thumb of his right hand, the boy chants this prayer thrice daily, at dawn, noon, and dusk. The boy takes vows to study the Vedas, serve his teachers and follow certain norms, involving celibacy during the period of *brahmachārya*. The ceremony concludes by offering the traditional gift to his teacher.

¹⁰ Phrases in smaller font within parenthesis are provided to facilitate better understanding.

¹¹ Mā uses this analogy to contrast the eternal condition of Her body with the temporal conditions of humans.

¹² River Ganges - the sacred Indian river.

¹³ Situated near the bathing ghāt (stepped embankment) of the *Dakṣha Mandir* Kankhal Haridwar, not far from the *Ānanda Jyoti Peetham* (in which Mā's sacred body has been enshrined after Her Mahāsamadhī in 1982). This conversation took place more than 50 years before Her Samadhī Temple was constructed nearby.

Mā's *Prakash* (Revelation) in Kheora

In the early hours of a Friday¹⁴ (by Hindu reckoning a Thursday), in the month of *Baisakh* (April-May), inside a thatched room, this Body revealed Herself, the head pointing towards the north-easterly direction. The Body, as you perceive it, at the moment of touching the ground lay on Its back, slightly inclined to Its left side. At that very moment, Khurimā (paternal aunt of this Body's grandmother) picked Her up. She was the only one present in the room at that time. No one else was there. She alone knows of the revelation of the Supreme One (Mā's *prakash* - manifestation into this world).¹⁵ Khurimā was a very virtuous and devout woman, and about sixty years of age at that time. She lived to be quite old and passed away after this Body was married.

Through the gaps in the thatched roof this Body could see branches and leaves of a neem (margosa) and a mango tree. On that morning an elderly *Brahmin* of the village came to the house. Grandmother carried this Body in her arms and sitting on bent knees at the door of the room, showed Her to him. At that time the *Brahmin* gave (Mā) the name *Dākshāyanī*.¹⁶ This Body's head was then positioned towards the East.¹⁷ Looking up She saw leaves and branches of trees and the sky.

¹⁴ Friday, May 1, 1896 As per the Hindu system, the day starts with sunrise and not at 12 midnight. This date has been taken from the Archive on *Mātṛī Līlā*.

¹⁵ Mā being omnipresent, manifested in this world as *bhāv saru* (a body created from an overwhelming spiritual emotion coming from the very heart of creation), Her Body having come into being as a result of the intense spiritual desire of many spiritual *sādhaks* over numerous lives, through centuries. For details of Her *prakash* please see Appendix J.

¹⁶ Female creative power of *Brahmā* – the creator; literally means dextrous lady.

¹⁷ Significance of East.

Sun rises in the East dispelling the darkness, true knowledge arising from light, symbolising Sun, thus in Hindu spiritual tradition all significant rituals are essentially performed by facing East.

It will be observed in the *Matrī Līlā* that Shree Shree Mā's head was facing East while She was being named as *Dākshāyanī*, so also in Her revelation as *Purna Brahma Nārāyan*. The reader will find similar instances in the text.

Early Childhood

One day the lamp that burned in the room where this Body was kept looked as if it was about to be extinguished. Observing this My grandmother began chanting 'Haribol, Haribol' and mother hastily lifted this Body from the bed and pressed Her to her bosom with her left arm. A daughter had died a short time back and, because of the prevalent fears concerning ghosts and spirits, someone or the other remained constantly in the room with this Body. They kept chanting God's name all the time. From the first day on they would take this Body to the holy *tulsī*¹⁸ plant and roll Her under it twice a day. When this Body grew up a little She would go Herself and roll under the *tulsī* plant.

Whenever mother went out of the room she would mark the space around this Body with her left foot, reciting God's name. As this Body's complexion was very fair, so mother named Her *Nirmalā* (immaculate beauty). Grandmother, out of joy, named Her *Teerthabasinī*¹⁹ and there were other names given as well.

When this Body was three months old She was taken by mother to her parents home in Sultanpur. A few days later they travelled again, setting out for her maternal uncle's home. Thinking she would be back in a few days, mother did not consider it necessary to take permission from the family elders for this trip. As soon as they stepped on to the boat to go to her uncle's place this Body was taken ill with cold and fever and could neither open Her eyes nor eat anything. Aware that they had not formally taken leave of their family (as was customary) for this visit, everyone was anxious lest something should go wrong due to this transgression. This Body was given the necessary medication and treatment while there, as well as rolled under the *tulsī* plant twice a day.

Soon the party started back for Sultanpur. As soon as this Body was back in the boat, Her eyes opened and the intensity of Her cold

¹⁸ A fragrant plant of the mint family known as basil in English that is sacred to the Hindus. It is considered to have both divine, as well as healing properties.

¹⁹ Residing goddess of holy places.

and fever receded. This sudden change in Her condition surprised everyone and they whispered among themselves that God had taught them a lesson for taking an unscheduled visit without observing village norms, which demanded that women should have the permission of the male members of the family to move from one place to another.

Until this Body was ten months old, when She could sit up and crawl, girls from neighbouring Muslim families often came to the house, eager to hold Her in their arms and play with Her. According to the social custom of the time, as long as *annaprasan* (rice eating ceremony) had not taken place, there was nothing wrong in touching a Muslim²⁰. In the villages at that time the aspect of purity and desecration by touch was very strong and hence contact with a person of another caste was to be avoided.²¹ This Body used to be put down on the floor so that She could Herself crawl from one person to another.

Once when visiting a Muslim family Her grandmother took Her along. In that home there lived a girl called Ekabbar who was very eager to take this Body in her arms. So Her grandmother set Her down on the ground and Ekabbar held out her arms, but every time this Body crawled towards her, Ekabbar would move further and further back. In this manner she played for some time, laughing gleefully. However, after a while this Body suddenly began to cry so bitterly that Ekabbar picked Her up and tried to console Her, but she was unable to do so in spite of her best efforts. Tired and scared, Ekabbar then carried Her to where Her grandmother was sitting and set Her down on the ground. Her grandmother picked Her up and

²⁰ At that time over fifty percent of the population in Mā's village was Muslim. There were strict rules of social engagement between the two traditional communities, yet the relationship was very cordial.

²¹ In orthodox Hindu families, purity of body, mind and soul plays an important part in the daily life for their spiritual progress. Contamination of mind occurs through the five senses, particularly via food, touch and sight. Hence sanctified food plays an important role, likewise touch induces the propensities or body impulses of the person touched and vice versa and similarly so does sight. It was considered by orthodox Brahmins that different castes, as well as different religions, had fundamentally different subtle vibrations and although all were no doubt equally good people within their own groups it was considered that mixing the subtle vibrations via touch or food (in particular) was harmful to specific spiritual practices that were fundamental to the Brahmins.

with a lot of caresses and soothing words succeeded in quietening Her. After this Ekabbar never again indulged in this kind of game with this Body. She later told this Body's mother that she had felt tormented seeing Her cry in such a manner, and whenever she remembered the occasion she still felt shivers running through her. Ekabbar was indeed very fond of this Body and later, after her marriage when she visited her parents, she would come to see Her and talk about that particular incident stating that she would never forget it in her life.

This Body called her grandmother's aunt 'Boromā' (the only person present in the room at the time of Mā's *prakash*—revelation). Boromā owned several cows and milk was plentiful. Fresh buttermilk would be extracted daily. As a small child this Body would start out early every morning for Boromā's home with no clothes on Herself²² but holding a pot against Her stomach. When the buttermilk was ready, first of all Boromā would serve some to this Body along with some butter. At that time this Body was very healthy and plump so some people jokingly called her a '*chālkunro*' (a kind of pumpkin).

One day this Body reached Boromā's home as usual with the milk pot held against Her stomach. The moment she saw Her, Boromā exclaimed with slight irritation, "I have hardly begun my work and already She is here for the buttermilk! You have it every day, don't you? Well, you are not getting any today!" There was a trace of annoyance in her voice as she said these words. She then noticed that the large pot she was using had developed a hole through which all the curd was running out. She was amazed at this happening and no buttermilk could be churned that day. Hastily she took a little from whatever remained in the utensil and gave it to this Body. From that day onward, even if this Body arrived late, Boromā would call Her to give Her buttermilk.

When this Body was about two and a half years old She visited Her maternal uncle's home. At night there was *kirtan* being sung in the next house. Mother went there taking this Body in her arms and

²² In rural India it is a common sight during the summer season to see children without clothes.

after seating Her, told Her, "Watch and listen to the *kirtan*!" This Body always obeyed Her parents implicitly. That day too She did what mother had asked Her to do, but while watching and listening to the *kirtan* attentively the Body kept drooping forward from time to time. Mother had asked Her to listen to the *kirtan* and while doing so a blissful state came over Her, which happens when one gets completely absorbed in *kirtan*. Thinking this Body was falling asleep, mother kept nudging Her, exclaiming, "There are all these children sitting here, only You keep dozing off. How can You sleep with all this sound of music and singing around You?" But this Body was still and motionless, as if having become one with the *kirtan*. When the *kirtan* was over mother brought this Body home and put Her to bed. The next morning She was still drowsy and in a stupor like state from the spiritual absorption aroused by the *kirtan*. Mother attributed this to Her going to bed late the previous night.

Mother fell seriously ill at her brother's place when this Body was about three or four years old. This Body went about Her daily activities as usual, but would not even once go anywhere near mother. People remarked, "What kind of a daughter is this that She does not peep into the room even once! Does She have no feelings for Her mother at all?"²³

This Body's father used to chant *Hari's* name daily in the very early hours of the morning. Once when this Body was five years old on hearing him chanting She asked him, "Father, what is *Hari*?" Father replied, "*Hari* is God's name." This Body said, "Oh, and what happens if we take His name?" Father replied, "If you call Him, He comes." This Body asked again, "What does He do on coming?" Her father told Her, "Just as You come when I need You, so does He. If one tells Him one's heart's desires in all sincerity, He fulfils them. Just as You fetch something for me when I ask You to do so, in the same manner He too grants one whatever one asks of Him. He does so much more

²³ The criticism from Her uncomprehending family members offers the discerning reader a glimpse of Her divine nature in which She approached all situations with perfect equanimity, as for Her there was only 'That' - supreme undifferentiated oneness

too." This Body asked, "If one calls Him by *Hari*, will He come?" Father replied, "Of course." Again this Body asked, "Tell me, how big is He?" Her father answered, "Very big." This Body asked, "Will that field be able to hold Him?" Father said, "No, but keep calling Him - *Hari, Hari* and when He comes You will see for Yourself how big He is."

When this Body was small, one night a storm blew away the thatched roof of their hut, alarming everyone; but this Body started clapping Her hands and joyfully shouting, "The house is falling, the house is falling." The following night, pointing through the ripped roof, this Body said to Her mother, "Look, mother, how beautiful, we can see the stars from right inside the room. We no longer have to go out to see them!" Mother ruefully commented, "Your words are as odd as you are. Really! One does not know what to make of You and Your fancies." Neither the cold of winter nor the heat of summer seemed to affect this Body's cheerful disposition; even in pouring rain She would frolic about joyfully. Mother would say, "Nothing seems to disturb this child." Seeing Her strange and amusing ways, Her parents would laugh, feeling happy in spite of their many tribulations.

At the time of *Durgā pūjā* this Body's younger maternal uncle²⁴ would come and take the entire family with him to his home. His other sisters would also come over, and on these occasions young girls would gather around playing with this Body and enjoying themselves hugely. The younger uncle always kept a keen watch on every aspect of this Body's behaviour, and seemed to be fascinated by the way She walked, the way She talked, everything.

At the age of six this Body went to Her maternal uncle's home during *Navarātri*.²⁵ One day, while watching *pūjā* (the rituals of worship), this Body went into a deep mystic trance and indecipherable sounds emanated from Her mouth. Her uncle, who had been watching

²⁴ Pundit Sarada Charan Vidyasagar

²⁵ The *Durgā pūjā* celebrations held in the month of *Ashvin* (September-October) is also known as *Navarātri* - nine nights after the new moon. During this period the Goddess *Durgā* is worshipped in a sumptuous and festive manner.

Her closely for quite a while, later asked Her, "What was that You were saying? Tell me." This Body remained silent. Her uncle considered Her extraordinary and during the *pūjā* he eagerly made his first offering to Her as a *kumāri*²⁶. Similarly others also found great solace and satisfaction in feeding Her as a *kumāri*.

At the age of seven She visited the *Shiva* temple at Chālna with Boromā, who seated Her under a banyan tree and left Her alone for sometime. While sitting there the Body noticed a temple near a pond without any idol inside. The moment this Body's eyes fell on the pond, She saw a stone *shiv-linga*²⁷ playing in the water - one moment diving into the water and slowly coming back to the surface, then springing up into the air before diving down once more. There are so many anecdotes connected to this. Some time later this Body went into the temple and found the *Shiv-linga* inside where it normally was to be found. On returning home, when this Body related all that She had seen, the others said that they had all along seen the *Shiv-linga* inside the temple. However, later it was learned through hearsay that the *Shiv-linga* did not always reside in the temple but liked to wander about in the woods and play in the waters of the pond!



At another time on questioning Mā about Her childhood, She narrated the following: In the month of *Baisākh* (April-May) every villager offered a ripe mango while performing the *Baisākhi Pūjā*. This Body asked Her mother one day, "Mother, what about our ripe mango offering?" Her mother replied, "Do we have a mango orchard? We do not require any mangoes." Outside the house there were some mango trees which belonged to others, but mother had given instructions never to pluck any fruits from the trees but to pick up only those that had fallen on the ground. The previous day, when this Body had gone to the pond, She had noticed a ripe red mango high

²⁶ During *Durgā pūjā*, *Kumāri pūjā* (the worshiping of pre-pubescent girls as living goddesses) is performed on the seventh, eighth and ninth days as well as during the cusp between the eighth and ninth day

²⁷ Oval shaped stone - the principal symbol of Shiva and worshipped throughout India as his embodiment

up on a tree. Now suddenly the thought crossed Her mind that if that mango fell from the tree, then it could be offered to the deity. While wishing so She went to the spot and found the mango lying under the tree. When She took it to Her mother the latter asked Her, "I hope You have not plucked it from the tree?" This Body told her how She had found it, and Her mother then offered it to the deity. She knew that this Body only spoke the truth. It was quite obvious that all forms of worship, undertaking of *vratas* (fasts), *kirtan* or reading of scriptures filled this Body with joy.

Another day this Body's mother said, "The summer months are going by, but such is Your luck that there is not a single mango in the house for You to eat." A little later this Body accompanied Her grandmother to the woods to look for edible herbs and there suddenly they found a large mango lying on the ground. There were no mango trees around and it seemed as if someone had come and placed it there. A mango of such good quality was rare indeed, even its shape was rather special - unlike the local ones. This Body's mother's face beamed as she held the delicious sweet smelling mango in her hands.

Once, while lying beside mother, this Body suddenly asked her, "People keep talking about heaven, is it so easy to get there?" Mother replied, "Yes, if one feels an intense desire to go there, one can do so." This Body said, "Mother will you please show Me the way?" Mother said, "Only when one is really keen can one find the way." Then this Body asked, "If I really desire it will I be able?" Mother replied "Of course!" Many such philosophical discussions used to take place between the mother and daughter.

One day on hearing the sound of *kirtan* accompanied by a *khol* (a type of two-sided drum) coming from a distant house, this Body asked Her mother, "What can be gained by all this?" She replied, "It pleases God. However, He can hear You even if you repeat His name silently in Your mind. He can see what no one else can." Such words of spiritual wisdom were often spoken to this Body by Her mother.

Any sound of some magnitude emanating from the worship of a deity or marriage celebration or other such activities would cause this Body to become completely still, as She is, after all, both the

sound as well as the act of hearing. During this period even the normal physical processes would cease for sometime. On occasions, upon seeing someone crying or laughing, this Body would join in crying or laughing with them; while at other times She would appear completely indifferent to someone's joy or sorrow and kept Herself aloof, even when surrounded by a noisy crowd.

Once, while sitting for lunch with Her mother, on the day of the ceremonial purification rites of the Goddess *Durgā*, this Body saw the Goddess along with all the other Gods and Goddesses and their respective *vāhans* (carriers) walking away from a particular house, almost as if they were human *Avatārs* (Incarnations of God), who were also being worshipped there at the time, were also walking away in a single file. Looking at this Body, they said to Her, "We have left that home due to child-birth related impurity that has contaminated the *pūjā* arrangements."²⁸ This Body gazed at them intensely. Her mother, noticing Her absentmindedness, gave Her a tap on Her cheek and said, "What is this! Where does Your mind wander when You sit down to eat?" This Body gave no reply. You see, even in childhood She was the same. At times when She looked in a particular direction, Her gaze seemed to become absolutely fixed.

Noticing this Body's utterly simple and guileless ways and Her frequent spells of absentmindedness, people sometimes took Her to be somewhat dull and lacking intelligence. Some even thought Her a little queer and said She had perhaps inherited this streak from Her paternal grandmother. They even expressed concern saying, "God only knows what will happen when She gets married unless She gets over Her peculiar ways".

Grandmother had a close friend whom I called 'Chikon Didi' who was a child-widow and thus childless. She was very fond of this Body

²⁸ If *pūjā* rituals are carried out with purity of thought and the ingredients offered adhere to the scriptures (based on vedic *mantras*), then the God/Goddess being invoked enter into the images. This can be experienced or/and witnessed by spiritually evolved souls. Similarly, body impurities such as menstruation or child-birth or illness are not conducive to the proper observance of rituals

and would often take Her to her home. She would make this Body cook for her, and would then say, "Whatever you cook tastes like ambrosia." So the very first training in cooking that this Body had - as per worldly perception - took place at Chikon Didi's home.

Chikon Didi's neighbour in Kheora used to celebrate *Durgā pūjā* every year. They had a daughter whose name was also 'Nirmalā'. It became a routine practice during the three days of *Durgā pūjā* and other important celebrations in their home for this Body to stay over and have Her meals there. At these times a beautiful *līlā*²⁹ would take place - this Body playing with Her own 'Self'. She was transformed not only into the deity being worshipped but also the oblations, the worshipper, and the *mantras*³⁰. Even at the time of the recitation of *Chandī*,³¹ it was as if She Herself was the embodiment of this hymn. This Body knew that She could recite all the *mantras* fluently. Sometimes during that period She would levitate from Her seat, unnoticed by anyone. The moment there was a chance that someone might start to notice, this state would withdraw on its own within itself and the Body would return to its normal condition. This happened not just with this particular deity but occurred irrespective of whether it was *Lakshmī-Nārāyan*, *Shiv-Pārvatī*, *Sītā-Rām*, *Rādhā-Krishna*, *Mangal-Chandī*, *Shashthī* or whatever other deities that might happen to be worshipped, whether Christian or Muslim or any other path of worship. Every religion has its own ritual gestures which this Body manifested spontaneously while in a state of intense absorption (*bhāv*) induced by divine ecstasy. All faiths were the same to Her.

Some of this Body's actions were perceived to be extraordinary for Her age by family and friends and were thus often considered to be unnatural. Once this Body was asked by Her aunt to plaster the oven and the earthen floor of the room with a mixture of cow dung and mud (as was normally done in all village homes). This Body was very young and did the job wearing no clothes. Later Her aunt called

²⁹ Literally means 'game', but also with the sense of a Divine play - as in God's *līlā* etc.

³⁰ Mystical sounds/hymns, latent with power.

³¹ Hymns in honour of Goddess *Durgā*.

others to show them this Body's work and exclaimed in surprise "Look at the plastering, it looks as if its been done by an older person. How could such small hands leave such large marks?"

Once a cousin who had never learned how to read or write, nor could retain anything in her memory took *dīkshā*.³² She would ask this Body's mother to show her how to perform the different rites. One day she said to this Body, "I don't like to disturb your mother over and over again. Can You show me the *anganyās*³³ and *karanyās*³⁴?" Laughingly and playfully, this Body revealed the method. "Do it this way." You may ask why a much older sister should rely on a young girl of nine or ten years for such clarifications. You see, people would be oblivious of the age difference when approaching this Body for advice.

On hearing of this incident, this Body's mother asked in wonder, "How did She know all this? What She said was correct!" When mother questioned this Body, She answered, "When *Didi* asked Me, the answers came to Me on their own." Mother gazed at this Body for some time and then rebuking, said, "How can they come on their own? Do not ever make fun of such things. One can even lose one's sanity that way. *Mantras* are not things to be trifled with, you know! It is not right at all."

People of all ages behaved like friends with this Body.

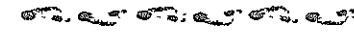
Grandmother was a humble and pious woman and considerably advanced in age. This Body spent a lot of time laughing and playing with her. One day after her prayers grandmother was walking towards the kitchen, softly reciting a *mantra* to herself, when this Body remarked, "You are just repeating the same words again and again." Taken by surprise grandmother asked, "How do You know what I

³² *Dīkshā* - the initiation ceremony where the initiated receives a *mantra* from his or her preceptor. This *mantra* is to be recited thrice a day maudibly for a fixed number of times as directed by the preceptor. This can be done on a rosary or even with one's fingers.

³³ An act of touching different parts of the body to invoke the concerned gods, as one recites (usually mentally) different incantations before a *pūjā* (ritualistic worship).

³⁴ Movement of fingers as part of a ceremonial worship.

was saying? It is not right for small children to utter these *mantras*." Another day this Body said something that brought about a dramatic change in grandmother's physical state and she became transfixed. This Body looked at her face steadily and after a while grandmother suddenly exclaimed, "I lost consciousness of my surroundings the moment I heard You utter those words."



Once an older cousin bought a pair of conch-shell bangles for herself but no one could get them on her hands. She greatly fancied these bangles and was depressed at not being able to wear them. This Body laughingly said to her, "Come *Didi* (elder sister), let Me put them on you." The cousin remarked, "You think You can do what all the others couldn't? All right, You can try." This Body easily slipped the bangles on the cousin's wrists and she exclaimed in surprise, "How could You do this without any exertion and with those small hands of Yours?" All those present looked at this Body in wonder.



Right from Her childhood, everyone seemed to be particularly fond of this Body. Whenever She visited Her maternal uncle's home, girls from the neighbourhood would come to play with Her. They knew that if asked about anything, this Body would always give an honest answer; and so while playing games, if there was something they did not want others to know, they would either not tell this Body or, if She had to be told, they would do so with great care. Often they would assign Her the role of a queen and make Her sit on one side. At times while playing games the girls plotted together to defeat this Body, but they never succeeded and invariably lost the game and felt foolish. But this Body never made any conscious effort at competing, and was not even the least bit interested in winning.³⁵

While wandering about with Her companions this Body would sometimes start talking with trees as if they were human beings. This unnatural behaviour surprised and frightened Her friends. They would

³⁵ This attitude of Mā as a child enables the Divine Power to take control of any situation in place of will power. Please consult the section entitled "Divine Power and Will Power" within Chapter 4 for a better understanding of this topic.

see the trees swaying gently but could understand no more than what they saw. It was known that sometimes *mahātmās* (great souls) existed in the form of trees, and Her companions would jokingly say, "Come, show us some of those strange things that You can do." They were as wary of this Body as they were fond of Her, and they could not do without Her in any of their activities; for their joy would not be complete without Her.

One day Her cousin, Sushila *didi* placed a copper ring on this Body's finger. On seeing the ring mother said, "If one tells a lie wearing this ring, they can never get absolved of that sin." This Body said, "But this Body never tells lies." Mother said, "Even a lie told unknowingly or by mistake would become a sin." This Body told Her mother, "All right, there will be no mistake." But mother still insisted, "It would be better not to keep the ring." This Body then took it off Her finger and threw it into the pond. Everyone knew that this Body never told lies so, in case it was ever necessary to verify a person's statement and if this Body had been present on the occasion, She would always be asked to give Her version of the incident and that would unanimously be accepted as the truth.

Once during *Durgā pūjā* this Body's father took Her with him to visit his sister. On reaching the station he learnt that there was still considerable time left before the steamer would arrive, so he started looking around for some food for Her. While he was away an unknown lady befriended this Body showering a great deal of care and affection, as if this Body were her own daughter. Indeed when it was time for the steamer to leave, it was with great reluctance that she let this Body go.

Eventually the steamer reached its destination but it was a long walk to the aunt's place and, as it was dark, father decided to spend the night at a nearby house. At that home *Durgā pūjā* was being celebrated and the women there were overwhelmed with joy on seeing this Body. Exclaiming that Mother *Durgā* Herself had come to visit them, they showered Her with a lot of affection and began calling their neighbours to come and see Her. They were so delighted to have this Body amongst them that they hardly knew how to express their feelings. This Body too became one with them and spent the

night with them and not with Her father. The next morning, the women adorned Her with new clothes and other gifts, and with great reluctance let Her go.



This Body never expressed any preferences for food, clothing, or other desires. Her parents were extremely fond of Her and before going anywhere, Father always asked (Her), "What shall I bring for You?" He would often insist for a response. Sometimes She would mention something, or She would just remain silent. Hawkers selling bangles, anklets, and other trinkets sometimes came to sell their wares, and children would run to their parents clamouring for a bauble. However, this Body never showed the slightest interest in any such things.

This Body never mentioned hunger or expressed any desire to eat. In fact She had to be called to eat Her meals. Nor did She ever approach Her mother with any childish demand for any special item of food or anything else, like other children. One day on seeing others asking for food, She too said to Her mother, "Mā, give Me food." Mother indicated the place where the food was and asked Her to take it Herself. But it was not in Her nature to take any food by Herself and so She walked towards the food two or three times as directed, but kept returning without picking it up until Her mother came and served it to Her. This Body could not tolerate any impure or unclean food, and She would fall sick if a lapse ever occurred. For this reason Her mother always remained extremely vigilant in all such matters.

Deaths of Her Brothers

On another occasion in reply to my questions about Her childhood, Mā said, "In accordance with your perception, after this Body, three brothers were born one after another³⁶ The first one remained chronically ill and treatment yielded no results.

When *Chhotomāmā* (Mā's younger maternal uncle) arrived to take this Body's mother with him to his home, he said to his sister on seeing the sick child, "It does not seem possible for you to travel

³⁶ Mā had eight siblings. The first, sixth, and seventh were girls, the second was Mā, the third, fourth, fifth, and eighth were boys.

now, so let Nirmalā come with me." Hearing this, the sick brother exclaimed, "Didi, please don't go now. Go after I die." Mother told him, "Your sister will not go anywhere." His condition steadily worsened until one night things became critical. Towards early morning there appeared signs of the child's impending death and he was carried out into the courtyard.³⁷

This Body was then about seven or eight years of age. She was standing nearby observing the scene when suddenly She had a *kheyāl*³⁸ that Her sick brother might get well enough to go back into the house, eat and might even start talking. Surprisingly enough, his condition changed for the better at that moment. At these visible signs of improvement he was once again carried back into the home. Everyone hoped that he had been granted a new lease of life and might, after all, survive. Mother put him in bed and gave him some barley water, some of which he did indeed manage to drink. Very soon after this his condition deteriorated and those present began wailing in despair. This time when he was again being carried out he looked at this Body and said clearly, "Mother, oh Mother, I die, die, die." With these words on his lips he breathed his last. Everyone was taken by surprise. He was about five and a half years old at that time. Was it not strange that with this Body's *kheyāl* he did indeed go back into the house, eat some food, and even talk?

While on the subject of Her brother's illness, Mā had said that during the period when his condition was critical, one day someone visited Her bringing food for Her brother and requested that She offer it to him. She told the visitor, "No! His path lies towards salvation"³⁹ The one who had approached Her was a supernatural being

³⁷ When death is imminent, it is customary amongst Hindus to place the individual on the ground, preferably out in the open to breathe his last

³⁸ Generally speaking, a sudden and unexpected psychic emergence, be it desire, will, attention, thought, fancy, feeling, consciousness, memory or knowledge. In the case of Mā, as there is no ego, it means a spontaneous upsurging of the Divine Will expressed through Her

³⁹ Mā refused to offer the medicinal food brought by the spirit for Her younger brother because had the brother recovered from his illness he would have remained within the cycle of birth, death, and rebirth. His dying at a young age was a reprieve from the imprisonment of mortality.

Following brother's death, mother used to cry unceasingly. This Body would also start crying along with her, and at times cried so bitterly that Her mother was forced to stop. She would say, "Because of this girl I can't even lighten myself a little by crying!"

After this the second brother fell ill, suffered for five months and died at the age of about three. Due to his prolonged illness, he had developed an intense aversion towards food for some time before his death, and would not eat anything. Upset by his obstinacy, Father one day gave him a push, thus causing an injury to his arm.

Many years after the incident a professor belonging to the *Vaidya*⁴⁰ caste came to see this Body in Kolkata with his seven or eight year old son, who had an arm that was deformed from birth. Upon seeing him, this Body exclaimed immediately that Her second brother had been reborn. Later, when both mother and father were told of this, neither could properly recall that particular incident of the past in which their son's arm had been injured.

The third brother too died when he was only forty-five days old.

Astrologers had found a number of auspicious signs in the horoscopes of the first and the second brothers, but they had at the same time predicted that the boys were not very likely to survive. The second brother had a raised line from above his nose up to his head, indicating a royal lineage. The third brother was born with definite signs of a sage.

As long as this Body lived at what you would deem to be Her father's home, none of the brothers and sisters born before or after Her lived very long. They had come merely to fulfil their *karma* and to meet Her. After this Body's marriage, a sister and a brother were born. Later this sister⁴¹ died in Kashi (Varanasi)

This Body's mother was the epitome of virtues such as truthfulness, patience, and tolerance, always ready to help others and content with her own lot. She never indulged in criticizing others, was devoted to

⁴⁰ Name of a caste among Hindus that practised traditional medicine (ayurvedic)

⁴¹ Her name was Hemangini. She died in 1945 at the age of 37

the service of God and of saintly people, lacked all trace of greed, and possessed an innate serenity. As for anger, she hardly had any, and despite the hardships of poverty she never seemed to lose her joyfulness.

As a result of so many tragedies, a pall of gloom descended upon the household. In her mental anguish this Body's mother, on the pretext of going to bathe in the river, would sometimes go to the *shamshān* (cremation ground) and sit there for hours at a time. She carried out all the household work meticulously but often appeared absentminded. There was also great distress due to the grinding poverty in which we lived. Despite all these tribulations mother never failed to be hospitable towards guests. If a beggar happened to arrive when she had just sat down for a meal, she would immediately offer her food to the beggar and go without eating at all. With her firm belief in God she tried to accept all hardships equably, without ever letting anyone know of her sufferings.

Initiation of Parents

Due to the misfortune that had befallen the family, the neighbours advised the parents to make a trip to the Brahmaputra,⁴² bathe in the river on the auspicious *ashtamī*⁴³ day, and then receive initiation. Leaving this Body with Her grandmother, mother went first to take her dip in the river. When it was Her father's turn, he was about to go when on second thought, he decided to take this Body along with him. They had planned that on their return after their bath they would leave Her at home and then proceed to the home of their *guru*; but somehow it so happened that this Body accompanied them there as well. This Body always listened quietly to whatever Her parents decided, but somehow their decisions, sooner or later, would change and become in tune with this Body's *kheyāl*.

It was a very long walk to and from their *guru*'s house and Her mother took several days to recoup from the aches and pains. But

⁴² The great river of Eastern India, originating in Tibet with distributary flowing near by

⁴³ Eighth day in the waxing phase of the moon

this Body was quite unaffected, causing people to comment that She seemed to have no sense of suffering.

Although there was never any outer demonstration of the way Her parents performed their prayers, *pūjā* (ritual worshipping of deities) or *pāth* (study of the scriptures), yet this Body always observed in them a deep love, reverence and faith in God. Whenever they performed any *pūjā* or *pāth*, it was always with the utmost sincerity and earnestness. My mother, especially, had such an unshakable faith in God that in spite of the immeasurable suffering and grief she experienced she always accepted them with joy and gratitude as God's grace. My father too had a passionate love for singing *kirtans*.

Obeying Orders

After the death of the brothers, all the love and affection of the parents centred on this Body. They never asked Her to do any household work, however some of the neighbours would at times get Her to do quite a lot of work for them. She complied with whatever Her parents asked Her to do, following their instructions to the word without questioning them.

One morning, when she was setting out for the pond to wash some utensils, Her mother playfully said to Her, "Take the stone cup along too and see if You can bring it back, broken!" On Her way to the pond this Body was talking to the plants when the stone cup did indeed slip from Her hands and break. She meticulously gathered up all the broken pieces, washed them with other utensils, and on returning home carefully put the pieces back in place. Seeing this, Her mother exclaimed angrily, "So You did exactly what I said!" This Body said, "But Mother I have brought back all the broken pieces as you told Me to." Her mother put up a show of being angry but the next moment started to laugh, trying to hide her face from Her. She then said, "Silly child, what will I do with the broken pieces? Can the cup be made whole again? God alone knows what will become of this child!"

There are many similar instances regarding this Body's activities during Her childhood. Finally, whenever she had to give Her any

instructions, Her mother would explain them to Her in great detail for she knew that this Body would do exactly as She was told. This Body remained in a totally different state of consciousness all the time, so in worldly affairs She merely followed orders. On the other hand, sometimes it also happened that when a certain thing caught Her fancy She would be completely engrossed in it to the extent of forgetting everything else. If She saw a good piece of sewing or an intricate work of cane or bamboo She would in no time create similar works of art. She would even improvise and improve upon them so that people wondered how a girl of such seemingly simple-minded intelligence could accomplish such quality work.

When She was about ten or eleven years of age, Her mother would sometimes bemoan Her lack of domestic skills but then seeing Her at times showing a surprisingly high degree of skill in activities like sewing or even cooking, she would exclaim in relief, "How nicely You have done it! I myself could not have done it so well! There is no need to worry; by God's grace You will be able to do everything, when needed."

Surobalā

Seeing Her mother grief-stricken after the death of Her three brothers, it came to this Body's *kheyāl* that it might bring her solace if a daughter were to be born to her. Soon after Surobalā was born She was a healthy child with a glowing, very fair complexion and an unworldly, almost divine demeanour. Whoever saw her felt drawn by her beauty and amiable nature. Her face radiated joy and she was always smiling. Surobalā was about ten years younger than this Body.

If ever Surobalā was on the verge of crying, her face would darken and her body would become still as if she could hardly breathe. Those around her would begin to fear that she would stop breathing altogether. For this reason they took great pains to see that she was always kept happy. Being admonished for a trivial reason, such as reaching home a little late, would be enough to upset her. She would quietly walk away, but after a while, not hearing any thing from her,

when someone went in search of her she would be found standing somewhere by herself, her mouth wide open as if crying, with her eyes fixed and her body rigid, seemingly not breathing. With a lot of caresses and comforting words, mother would then soothe her and bring her back to normalcy. She would remark in wonder, "Where did this child get these strange ways from!" When Surobalā was in her infancy, people would sometimes deliberately make her cry to see her strange reaction, and then mother would have to hurry there and calm her down. Her laughter and crying were unlike any other child's.

Right from Surobalā's birth this Body cared for her and she in turn seemed to be especially drawn to this Body. It was as if she could not stay without Her company. Thus for sometime Surobalā remained a childhood companion to this Body. There was something unusual about her attachment to this Body—the way she addressed this Body or searched for Her or found joy in disclosing all her thoughts to Her. In spite of the considerable difference in age she behaved like a friend to this Body. It was heard that when this Body left Her father's home after marriage, for many days Surobalā would sit alone by the lane near the house and cry, 'sister, sister'.

After Surobalā's marriage, when she came to pay her respects to this Body prior to her departure for her in-laws' home, the words came out of this Body's lips, "Do not stay long in this world."

When this Body was in a state of silence in Bajitpur, suddenly one day She 'saw' that Surobalā would not live after the age of eighteen. Bholanath⁴⁴ wrote to his mother-in-law to find out Surobalā's exact age and learned that she would turn eighteen at the end of the month of *Agrahāyan* (mid-December). There were only a few days left for that.

Around this time a beggar happened to come to the house accompanied by his blind wife. Suddenly the *kheyāl* came to this Body that if sustenance was provided to this blind woman for seven or eight months, Surobalā would live for at least that period, and this Body would be able to visit her within that time. Thereafter the beggar

⁴⁴ Bholanath (Mā's husband) whose name was Ramani Mohan Chakraborty

visited the home from time to time and was handed out alms in the form of rice and coins, adequate for the period of eight months. It was this act of giving alms that kept Surobalā alive beyond her ordained number of days, and the extra eight months gained by this made it possible for her to see this Body again.

Surobalā was ill and living in Joydebpur. Due to an illness of the brain⁴⁵ she had lost her eyesight as well as the ability to hear. Circumstances made it necessary for this Body to go to Dhaka and so it was possible to visit Surobalā on the way there. As soon as this Body touched Surobalā a *mantra* poured spontaneously from Her mouth into Surobalā's ear (*dīkshā*).⁴⁶ This was similar to when *yogic kriyās*⁴⁷ had earlier manifested themselves on their own in this Body. Hitherto Surobalā had not had any initiation but with the utterance of the *mantra* her sight and hearing were restored to her for a while. She died a few days after this Body's visit.

During the time that Surobalā was seriously ill this Body once spent an entire night at the Siddheswari temple. At dawn, Her thoughts were focused on Surobalā and suddenly She uttered the words, "Be free from all bondage!"⁴⁸ Later that day this Body returned to Shahbag and in the evening father and mother arrived from Joydebpur, bringing news of Surobalā's death early that morning. Mother was inconsolable in her grief, but this Body remained very detached. Later, when discussing Surobalā's death, it was found that she had died the very moment that this Body had had the *kheyāl* for her to be released.

Surobalā died only three years after she was married, but during this short span of time she had won the hearts of everyone with her beauty and her many admirable qualities. Her exceptional intelligence, her charming, happy disposition and her patience and forbearance in

⁴⁵ Encephalic disorder.

⁴⁶ This was the second incident when Mā spontaneously initiated someone.

⁴⁷ Literally means actions, activities, but in Mā's case it denotes spontaneous *yogic* processes induced by movement of the awakened *Kundalinī* - the occult spiritual life-force normally coiled and dormant at the base of the spine within the subtle body.

⁴⁸ To be free from the cycle of birth and death, Mā bestowed salvation to Her first brother and to Her sister, Surobalā.

the face of her parents' poverty and tribulations endeared her to those who came in contact with her.

Throughout her life, from the time she was very small until after her marriage and all through her final illness, when her body was withering, her eyes unable to see and her ears to hear, Surobalā spent her time contemplating on this Body. She breathed her last in the same manner.

Surobalā's illness occurred at the same time that various changes started appearing in this Body at Bajitpur. It was as if Surobalā had come to this earth only to be a companion to this Body for a certain period of time, and when that period came to an end the *kheyāl* arose that she should become free of her bondage. About six or seven years after her death, when this Body visited Chunar, She suddenly saw a girl who looked exactly like Surobalā in form and appearance for a short while in Jyotish's home.⁴⁹

Mā at School

This Body's formal education was very brief and She attended school for barely three to four months, in Kheora and Sultanpur, where Her maternal uncle lived. The school in Kheora was some distance away and, as Her brothers were often sick, there was no one to accompany Her there. Consequently She often missed attending school. Once She spent three months at a stretch at Her uncle's place during which a *barna-bodh*⁵⁰ was bought and She started going to school with Sushila *didi*.⁵¹ The first day the master taught them the first lesson and then asked them to read. Sushila *didi* was not able to read well. However, when the master heard this Body read, he said 'good girl'. He assumed that She had prior schooling and made her sit with older girls to learn to recite poetry.

⁴⁹ Salvation from the cycle of life and death may take time before the subtle and causal bodies merge with the Supreme, just as when one switches off a fan the movement of the blades continue for a time, gradually slowing down to a stop.

⁵⁰ A basic elementary school book of Bengali alphabets.

⁵¹ Mā's maternal cousin.

Later they returned to Kheora where there was a lower primary school in which a total of not more than twelve girls were enrolled. The school master was this Body's grand-uncle. At this school this Body completed learning the alphabets, but Her education remained incomplete. There were four girls in the first grade and although this Body was younger to them all She was made to sit with them. These four girls had new books and slates, while this Body carried an old, torn hand-me-down book, and a broken piece of a slate which could at best hold three or four lines if written with tiny lettering. This Body had little interest in studies and sat down to do so only because it was expected, but never on a regular basis. In fact She hardly ever studied. Once in a while, when the thought occurred to Her parents and they urged Her to study, She would begin looking around for the piece of slate and, on finding it, sit to study.

When in school, if She was asked a question, the answer would appear in front of Her eyes and Her reply was always correct. It is like when you see a picture of some place: You retain it in your memory and when needed you easily bring it back to your mind. But in the case of this Body there is no question of seeing or not seeing a thing. It was so in the case of studies also, at times it so happened that this Body was asked questions on the very passage that Her attention happened to fall upon just a short while earlier.

One day the school inspector visited the school. The other students had all come dressed in their best clothes while this Body arrived there in Her usual torn, soiled dress, holding the same torn book and broken piece of slate. On his arrival the inspector looked at the well-dressed girls and, pointing to a certain passage in the book, asked them to read it one by one. They did so rather haltingly. At the end, when it was this Body's turn, She started reading so fluently that after She had read about six or seven lines, he said, "Good! That's enough." After this he asked everyone to write. The school master gave Her a proper slate to write on. The lesson that the students were asked to write was by chance known well to this Body, and when She had finished the inspector was pleased to see Her faultless writing. However, by and by, this Body had to give up going to school.

In Kheora, when the school master died, a lady teacher who was also related as a grand-aunt to this Body replaced him. The day the school inspector was expected this grand-aunt asked this Body to come to school and sit in the class-room with the other students, so that there would be a larger number of students. At that time this Body hardly had any connection with studies. The inspector asked the students a question while the school mistress, hidden from his sight outside the classroom with the intention of helping the students, wrote the answer on a slate so that the students could see it. Suddenly this Body cried out in a loud voice, "What are you showing?" Embarrassed, the mistress moved away. This Body answered the question the inspector had asked.

Later the mistress said to this Body, "You are going to be eleven years old and yet You have not learned what to say and what not to say in front of people! That was no way to behave!" To which this Body replied, "You teach us not to tell lies. Was it not wrong what you did?"



CHAPTER 2

Marriage

This Body's behaviour with people around Her remained unchanged as She grew older. She continued to be Her simple, happy Self. There were many elderly relatives in Kheora with whom She would lovingly spend time as a child. One day Her mother said to Her, "You are no longer a child, and it is not right that You should mix so freely with everyone. When a girl grows up she should not touch a man, nor look at his face while talking to him, nor laugh and joke with him." From that day onwards there came about a transformation in this Body's behaviour with others



On another occasion conversing with Mā, She added, "When this Body was twelve Her father started searching for a suitable husband for Her.¹ Her maternal uncle was proficient in reading horoscopes and he took this Body's horoscope but would not return it even after being asked to do so several times. Her parents became apprehensive lest it indicated something adverse.

The family belonged to the renowned and much respected Bhattacharyas of Bidyākūt's *Kāshyap* lineage and did not normally give their daughters in marriage to anyone outside Bikrampur². Several proposals came from other regions, but were rejected forthwith. Ultimately this Body's father himself set out for Bikrampur, near Dhaka, in search of a groom

¹ As in many traditional cultures, marriages were arranged for young girls shortly after they reached puberty. Child marriages in India are now illegal.

² Known as a centre of education and culture.

When father returned home he was accompanied by Sri Sitanath Kushari of Dougachi. This gentleman was the eldest brother-in-law of the prospective groom. He talked to this Body and then settled Her marriage with his brother-in-law, Bholanath. On an auspicious day he did the *āshīrbād*³ and left.

In the meantime this Body's grandmother became seriously ill and later passed away. After observing the *shrāddha* (obsequial rites), the wedding date was fixed for 25 *Māgh* 1315 as per the Bengali calendar.⁴ Once Her wedding date had been finalised the elders of the village, as well as Her contemporaries, would joke about it in a playful manner, but She remained unaffected by their revelry. So, at the age of twelve years and ten months, this Body was married. During the ceremony She followed all the instructions thus adding to everyone's general enjoyment.

The next day Bholanath's eldest brother took them with him to the railway station at Sripur where he was the station master. When She was leaving Kheora everyone started weeping and this Body too joined them. Indeed She started to cry so bitterly that some people remarked that they had never seen anything like it. What can one say of this Body?⁵ Whatever comes to pass at whatever time, it is so ...⁵

At Her Brother-in-law's Household

At the time of leaving Kheora this Body's mother had told Her, "Remember always to serve Your husband with the utmost devotion and faithfulness. The gods will then fear You. Even at the cost of Your life You should adhere to these virtues. You must carry out without protest whatever Your husband or the guardians in the home tell You to do."

Soon after the wedding Bholanath left to return to his place of work. Before leaving he said, "See that You do whatever my brother

³ Ritualistic blessing ceremony, comparable to an engagement ceremony.

⁴ Sunday, February 7, 1909.

⁵ The body for Mā, can become a vehicle for the expressions of *bhāva* that can be variously interpreted as spiritual ecstasy, divine moods, and inner feelings. Mā can sometimes absorb and reflect back the moods of the people surrounding Her. However, despite this appearance of attachment, inwardly She remains detached from the world at large.

and his wife tell You to do." And so in Sripur, this Body kept Herself engaged in housework, cooking, looking after Her eldest brother-in-law's children, cleaning the house, washing clothes, and utensils.⁶ She carried out all these duties much like an automaton. Constantly being under pressure to carry out all the chores, She often forgot to eat, comb Her hair, or even bathe. This Body developed sores on Her hands and feet as a result of having to constantly work with water.

Ashu's father⁷ fell seriously ill and the entire household travelled to Dhaka for his treatment. From Dhaka the family went to their home in Ātpara and here, seeing the sores on the Body, the neighbours would say sorrowfully, "What kind of a person are You? Are You not conscious of the pain? Are You not human?" They did not know that She was following Her duty to serve by obeying orders.

When the condition of Ashu's father improved, the family returned to Sripur. He had a great affection for Me. Despite the existing social strictures regarding the distance that had to be maintained between the elder brother-in-law and younger sister-in-law, this Body left nothing undone in Her effort to look after him well. His health, however, deteriorated again and once again he was taken to Ātpara. At that time this Body's father came and took Her to Kheora where She spent a few months with Her parents. After Ashu's father recovered and rejoined work at Narundi station this Body travelled there with Ashu's mother.

One day, when the wife of the Assistant Station Master of Narundi first arrived, she saw this Body working in the kitchen. Later when she visited Ashu's mother she asked her, "I saw a newly married bride in your kitchen the other day, where is She?" Pointing to this Body, Ashu's mother told her, "There She is." But she would not believe her and said, "The one whom I saw had a beauty that was

⁶ Mā at the tender age of thirteen used to manage the entire household - glimpse of a *karma yogini*

⁷ Ashu's father was Bholanath's eldest brother, Sri Revati Mohan Chakraborty. It was the prevalent social custom to address the elder relatives like father, mother, uncle or aunt as suffix to son's or daughter's name. Ashu was the younger son of Sri Revati Mohan Chakraborty.

celestial, like a veritable goddess. This bride bears no resemblance to Her."

When the assistant station master and his family left Narundi, the house was taken over by a Muslim gentleman. His sister would talk at length with this Body about their religion, and the two of them would discuss such matters for long hours, both finding great joy in doing so. No contradictions arose due to their separate faiths.

From childhood this Body would at times fall into a *bhāv*⁸ for short periods during which **She was conscious of Her earthly body not existing in a finite space but being diffused everywhere. At times there were moments when Her temporal body ceased to exist.** As heard later from those who witnessed it, this would sometimes become visible to others, striking them with amazement. If this happened while this Body was engaged in some household work, everything seemed to go out of order. It never occurred to Her to tell anyone about these states.

Due to the lack of understanding of these phenomena, this Body was subjected to many adverse comments. As often happens in households, She would sometimes be blamed for mistakes She did not commit. Without protesting She would listen, not uttering a word. Invariably everyone realized the truth later, but in any case nothing made any difference to this Body. It was Her custom to listen silently to whatever was said about Her while continuing to do Her duty meticulously and cheerfully. This Body knew this was the nature of this world.

Look, the earthly life is called '*sang sar*', (a pun of which means 'the act of a clown'); but instead of acting our roles as an actor on the stage of the world, we regard it as real by considering trivial and transitory events as the most important things in one's life. That is what causes all the sorrows and troubles. **One must continue to work throughout one's life with the detachment of an actor playing**

⁸ Generally means 'Inner feeling'. In Mā it denotes a state of spiritual ecstasy or divine mood, often intensely devotional, which induces a condition of overwhelming mystical absorption.

different roles which are preordained in order to be relieved of one's *karma*.

Bidyākūt

When this Body was sixteen years old and roamed freely in Bidyākūt, a star-like light would often manifest itself in the region of Her left eye. Her inclination towards reciting *Harinām* and its associated spiritual *bhāv* belonged to this period. It was also during this time that on some mornings She would enter the *pūjā* room and sit quietly in a corner looking intensely at the *shalgram shilā*⁹. She saw the deity, who had been put to bed the night before, now sitting in His usual place on the throne as during worship, radiating a bright aura that was sometimes deep green but gradually turned blue. At that moment She had no *kheyāl* to question how the idol could be sitting upright on his throne when he had not yet been awakened from sleep.¹⁰ Later, when others opened the door, She observed that the idol had returned to the bed under the covers.

These sort of occurrences happened when this Body had a *kheyāl* to be engaged in *sādhan līlā* (the 'play' of spiritual practice). This Body's father and kin worshipped this *shalgram shilā* by rotation. In later years when they had left Bidyākūt and Her father was absent from home, this deity was relocated and placed among several other deities. The *shalgram shilā* was named Rajrajeshwar. After the Ramna *āshram* was established in Dhaka, Her father retrieved the family *shalgram shilā* and brought Rajrajeshwar to the *āshram*¹¹.

⁹ Black fossil like stone from the source of the Gomti river at Muktinath (in Nepal) located beyond the Annapurna peak in the Himalayas, which is worshipped as the incarnate symbol of Vishnu/Narāyan. It is believed that when a *tulsī* leaf is placed at the source of the Gomti river, a *shalgram shilā* emerges from the water.

¹⁰ When the idol is put to sleep, it is usually put under a cover on the throne or on a specially made bed. During times of worship the idol is placed upright on the throne. The obvious question here is how could the idol have climbed out from under the covers to sit on the throne when no one had entered for prayer? This was indeed a miraculous event.

¹¹ This deity is now being worshipped at Mā's Varanasi *āshram* along with Goddess Annapūnā.

In Bidyākūt, many women performed *Lakshmi pūjā*¹², and once this was organized as per this Body's mother's desire.

One day this Body was sitting on the veranda crafting a fan out of cane strips and working letters of the alphabet into its design when Her younger maternal uncle, Sarada Charan Vidyasagar, arrived there. She touched his feet. He asked about everyone's welfare and expressed his pleasure and admiration at the work She was doing. "This is not easy work," he said. "It is time consuming and needs a lot of intelligence."

This Body had been living in Bidyākūt for quite a while, but due to his ill health Her maternal uncle had been hitherto unable to visit Her. He told Her that when She used to visit their home as a child She had been very fond of eating jackfruit from a certain tree in their garden. It was a very old tree and She would wander about under the tree and play with its leaves. Some years the tree would become so laden with fruits that large ones would appear sprouting on the ground around it. He had brought a jackfruit and other gifts for this Body. After spending some time, he said, "Now I have to go to *Purbapara*"¹³ as his maternal cousin's daughter was getting married there.

The next day this Body too went to attend the wedding. By the time the wedding feast was over it was nearly dark and had started drizzling. This Body had a younger brother who was a mere child and two sisters with Her. Before leaving She searched for Her uncle to inform him that She was going home alone. Her uncle then asked Her, "Should I come with You?" This Body remained silent. The rituals of bidding the bride and groom farewell were not complete and so there was no one else to accompany Her and the children home. Her uncle, taking a few clothes with him, went with them. He suffered from acidity and had been resting after the late meal. Actually this Body had had a *kheyāl* that She would take him home with Her.

It stopped raining on the way back and on reaching their home Her mother made arrangements for the uncle to sleep in one of the rooms.

¹² Worship of Goddess of wealth and prosperity.

¹³ The eastern side of the village.

After a short while he started calling Her mother by name. She and other members of the family awoke to find him groaning in pain. He asked her to make his bed on the veranda, which she did. Seeing his condition worsen, she sent for a *kavirāj*¹⁴ and certain prominent people of the neighbourhood. When the medicine prescribed by the *kavirāj* failed to bring any relief and his condition deteriorated further, this Body's mother was about to call the doctor but uncle stopped her. "I shall die in your home," he said. "I shall die very soon." However, he continued to talk with everyone, taking the names of different gods and goddesses, the names of his ancestors and other respected persons and the names of this Body's father's ancestors, paying his obeisance to all of them with folded hands. A little later he said, "My body is cold up to the naval, I have very little time left." Hearing this a cousin of this Body came forward and started massaging his feet. Uncle then said, "You are an elderly *brahmin pundit* of such an exalted family; please do not touch my feet." While speaking thus he folded his hands to pay his respects to those gathered round him and *breathed his last*. All this happened within a matter of three to four hours. This Body's mother started crying, but as for this Body there were no tears. She remained unaffected. The next day neighbours asked how it had all happened and this Body narrated the events without any sign of grief. She noticed that some were discussing Her amongst themselves, saying, "She seems to have no feelings at all!"

Astagram: Mā proceeds to Bholanath's place of work

The following morning a letter came from Bholanath saying that he would be arriving the next day. This was the first time since marriage that he would be visiting this Body's parental home. Due to financial constraints, it had not been possible for this Body's parents to invite him to their home earlier. Bholanath arrived the next day.

For some days this Body's father had been away from home. When he returned everyone went by boat with Bholanath to Sultanpur, where

¹⁴ Ayurvedic doctor.

this Body's maternal uncle's home was located. This family was known for their long and noble lineage. Many scholars, priests, and *sādhas*¹⁵ had been born in this family. Family lore had it that a pious widow in the family had mounted the funeral pyre of her husband, joyously singing hymns.¹⁶

Days passed and Bholanath's vacation was drawing to an end. The family returned to Bidyākūt and, after staying a few days, this Body accompanied Bholanath to his place of work at Astagram in the month of *Jaisthya* of the year 1320 as per the Bengali calendar.¹⁷ She was then seventeen years of age.

A gentleman by the name of Jaishankar Sen lived in Astagram with his son Sarada and brother-in-law Harakumar. There were several rooms in his house, and this Body and Bholanath resided in one of these. The day this Body arrived in Astagram, Bholanath took out a nose ring from a box and gave it to Her to wear. Removing the one made in Bidyākūt that She had been wearing, this Body put on the new nose ring.

Earlier, a gentleman by the name of Madhu *babu*¹⁸ and his family had spent some days with Bholanath. One day when Madhu *babu*'s wife expressed a liking for the new nose ring, this Body put it on her nose. When Bholanath came to know that this Body had parted with gold jewellery that had been especially made for Her, he became angry. It had not occurred to this Body that he might not approve. She apologized, "It was My mistake, I shall never again give away any gold ornaments on My body to anyone without asking your permission."

¹⁵ The word *sādhas*(s) (spiritual practitioners) appearing throughout the text applies to both male and female.

¹⁶ According to the Puranas, Sati is the daughter of King Daksha who self-immolated herself through *yogic* power when her father severely insulted her husband, Lord Shiva in his absence. The practice of *sati* refers to virtuous wives who had reached a stage of beyond body consciousness and wished to follow their husbands by immolating themselves on their husband's funeral pyres.

¹⁷ As per the Western calendar this was during the months of May-June in 1913.

¹⁸ As a sign of respect '*babu* or *ji*' would be added as a suffix to the first name of the person.

One day Jaishankar Sen's wife said to this Body, "All women have children and are referred to as so-and-so's mother I am giving Your beatific smile a name, *Khushi*. *Khushi* is Your child, because in all this time I have never seen You without Your smile. You are always so full of joy and laughter. I shall henceforth call You Khushir Mā"¹⁹ From that day onwards everyone there called this Body Khushir Mā and all were very fond of Her.

This Body called Jaishankar Sen's wife *māshimā* (maternal aunt) and others addressed this Body as *didī*. Harakumar was called *māmā* (uncle) by everyone. Sometimes this Body also referred to him the same way, but She never talked to him and kept Her face veiled in his presence.

Kshetra *babu*, a court employee, also stayed in Jaishankar Sen's house. This Body came to know that Kshetra *babu*'s wife and Madhu *babu*'s wife both called Jaishankar Sen's wife *mā*. She had no daughter, so they behaved as her adopted daughters.

Harakumar's Prophecy

Harakumar entered the room one day and said to this Body, "I lost my mother a short time back. She used to stay here in this very room. I feel that she has come back now and that You are my mother. You must now give me clothes for *shashthī*."²⁰ From that time onward, Harakumar called Me Mā Bholanath did give him clothes for *shashthī* and he was indeed extremely fond of him. Harakumar looked after Bholanath's accounts and zealously took care of all our needs. This did not always meet with others' approval. Since he was without a job at that time, his wife and daughters stayed at her father's place.

Jaishankar Sen, his wife, and Harakumar greatly admired this Body's skills at cooking and other household work. They used to eat onions and were of the opinion that food could not taste good without it. But of course this Body never used onions.²¹ Sometimes this Body

¹⁹ Mother of joy/smile.

²⁰ Sixth day in the waxing phase of the moon - the day of ceremonial purification rites of Goddess *Durgā* during the *Durgā pūjā*.

²¹ Brahmin and those involved in *yogic* meditation often avoid onions and garlic as they are considered *tamasic* - properties that dull the mind.

would send them some of the dishes prepared by Her, and they relished them. Gradually they stopped taking onions.

This Body had finished cooking and was serving Bholanath his meal one day when he said, "Jaishankar Sen is having his meal now; go and give him some of the *dāl* (pulses) that You have prepared." This Body did so. Later with a great deal of amusement Bholanath said, "Jaishankar Sen always says that no one can cook like Khushir Mā; let us see what he says about Your *dāl* today." Later he asked Jaishankar Sen, "So! What did you think of the *dāl* today? You always say that no one cooks like Khushir Mā, don't you!" Jaishankar Sen replied, "Why, it was excellent, as usual!" Bholanath remarked, "Surely you are being partial? She forgot to put salt in it." But the gentleman insisted that this was not so, that he was accusing Khushir Mā unjustly. It came to be known later that although this Body had indeed not put any salt in it, the *dāl* had not tasted salt-less to them.

One day Harakumar asked this Body a question and She tried to answer by gesticulating with Her hands.²² He could not understand and said to Her, "I have been calling you Mā for the last one year and entreating You to talk to me, yet You do not. If I had put all my thoughts on a stone in this manner, even the stone would have responded." Saying this, he burst into tears. Earlier Bholanath had told Her to speak to him, but this Body had not paid any heed. Now he told Her to do so again, and from that day She started to talk to Harakumar.

Prior to this Harakumar would come every morning and night to do *pranām*²³ When this Body was having Her meal, he would sit before Her begging for *prasād*²⁴ like a child, and not leave without getting it. It had become a regular practice with him to have something of what She had cooked. Sometimes he would say, "Today I call You Mā, but You will see there will come a day when the entire world will call You Mā. No one recognizes You for who You are."

One day like a child he said, "Mother, You must give me a name." This Body replied, "I give you the name Haribola." He was very

²² As a young married woman it would be a breach of the societal norms of the time to speak to a man who was not directly related to Her.

²³ Bowing to Mā - genuflection, act of reverence.

²⁴ Sanctified food from Her plate.

pleased with this name for he was good at *nām-kīrtan*. Some time later he found a job at another place and moved far away. Occasionally he would write letters which he always addressed to *Mā Devi*. He was always truthful. Later when this Body went to Bajitpur, She found that Harakumar had become mentally unbalanced, chanting *Hari's* name constantly. He spoke only about God. In that state too his mannerisms were always tranquil and graceful.

Feeling of Oneness with Deities of Temple

In a neighbouring village there was a temple of *Brāhmanī Devi* and one day Bholanath planned to take this Body there. We were about to start, when Bholanath's friend, Kshetia *babu*, arrived and on seeing this Body exclaimed, "I have seen the Deity." After doing *pranām*, he left.²⁵

At the *Brāhmanī* temple an unusual spiritual state came over this Body which many of the people present noticed. **This Body is one with all things—with deities and with the universe**, so She shared a sense of oneness with Goddess *Brāhmanī*. This phenomenon would manifest itself outwardly at times, as happened on this occasion. Instead of going through the normal action of prostrating Herself before the deity, She remained totally absorbed within, appearing outwardly stiff and inert. The state of manifest and the lack of it, followed one another in quick succession like the rapid switching on and off of a torch light which would occasionally, for a fraction of a second, become visible to the outside world when visiting temples. This type of *bhāv* would come upon this Body from time to time, irrespective of any particular deity, and this was sometimes noticed by the people accompanying Her.

Changes in *kriyās* according to the Divine mood

There are big lakes in Astagram that overflow during the rainy season to the extent that the shores are not visible from one side to

²⁵ Mā reveals Herself – a glimpse

the other. From the point of view of the world this Body had never seen the sea, so this was Her first sight of such a vast expanse of water. One day, while taking a boat ride over a swamp, She felt as if She was one with the water. This happened all of a sudden and, like a burning flame, would become visible to those around Her. Therefore She lay down inside the boat covering Herself completely from head to toe for a while. A person called Madhu *babu* jokingly remarked, "It seems the lady is sleepy."

Hearing this, a question was put to Mā, "Why did these unnatural phenomena manifest themselves in Your Body at times?" Laughing, Mā replied, "Unnatural, natural; all are the same to this Body."

A few years earlier this Body's sister-in-law, Motori, was amusedly telling a story about herself and reported experiencing unusual *bhāvs* within herself. After arriving in Astagram and one day while sitting alone this Body had a *kheyāl* of Motori and her story and, like a magic show, her unusual experience of *bhāv* appeared within this Body. At times it was noticed that whatever *bhāv* came to Her mind it would manifest itself in Her body accordingly. For example, on hearing a *kīrtan* reach a climax, this Body would go into blissful state, or on encountering a devout Muslim She would recite *namāz*²⁶ spontaneously. Likewise when religious worship to a deity was being performed in Her presence, She would often go into a state of ecstasy.

There was an individual who called this Body *māshimā*. One day her four year old son came into the room. They would sing *Hari's* name for a while and then offer *hariv lūt*²⁷ at the base of the *tulsī* plant. This had been done the previous day as well. The next morning when the boy came to the room and called out *māshimā*, this Body said to him, "say *bolo haribol*".²⁸ Immediately the boy started chanting, "*bolo haribol, bolo haribol*" after Her. After repeating this a few times he went into a kind of a *bhāv*. Seeing this, one of his family members said that perhaps it had not been a good idea to make him chant

²⁶ Daily prayers by a Muslim

²⁷ Puffed sugar pieces distributed at the end of a *kīrtan* session among the devotees

²⁸ This is also a type of initiation

When told to stop, the boy seemed to become somewhat morose. Thereafter, whenever the child saw this Body, he would start saying “*bolo haribol*”.

Cleanliness and Sanctity of the House

Mā said, “I used to keep the house so clean that not even a small piece of straw could be seen anywhere. Every day at dusk I went around the cottage with the lamp and lit incense in My hands. Every morning I woke up early and regularly performed all the daily duties of a householder with My own hands in spite of there being a servant.

In all homes it was the regular practice for the women to pay their obeisance to the *tulsī* plant, light lamps and incense there, and offer *harir lūt*. There was a framed picture of *Sri Krishna* and *Rādhā* and one of *Kālī* in the room where Jaishanker Sen’s wife regularly did *pūjā*.

Stay in Astagram

We arrived in Astagram in the month of *Jaishtha* (May-June), and stayed there for a year and four months. The first two or three months went by in getting acquainted with the neighbours. For the next seven or eight months this Body kept indifferent health and was engaged in *kriyās*. The rest of the time was spent in *kirtan* and in a state of ecstasy.

Divine Medicine

Living among our neighbours, the days in Astagram passed pleasantly. Then suddenly, one day this Body fell seriously ill. It became increasingly difficult to move about without help from others and Bholanath had to cook and feed Her. One evening the *kheyāl* came to Her that She should try to look for some divine medicine. No sooner had this thought occurred to Her than She noticed a big grasshopper carrying a leaf in its mouth which it placed on a corner of Her bed. This Body picked up the leaf and, turning it in Her hand,

found that it was not like the leaves of any of the local trees. The desire to find out more about this leaf did not arise in Her. Much later, while travelling in the Himalayas, She saw similar leaves in some places. This Body has never yet mentioned this incident to anyone until now. This happens quite often. The *kheyāl* does not come to say all things at all times. Even if the thought is there, it is not expressed in words.

Mā in *Kirtan* at the base of the *Tulsī* plant

This Body had planted a *tulsī* plant near the house and every day it was bathed and decorated with flowers after the area around it had been cleaned and incense lit at the base. Seeing this some neighbours remarked, “To bathe the *tulsī* plant is a practice for ascetics and widows. A married woman whose husband is alive is not supposed to do it.” This Body said to them, “Can there be any restriction on serving God? To Him there is no difference between a *sannyāsi* (ascetic) and a householder.” Madhu *babu*’s wife told this Body one day, “You should not let the water running over Your conch-shell bangle, fall on the *tulsī* plant.”²⁹ You should first touch Your bangle to Your forehead, and then make Your obeisance to the *tulsī* plant.” This Body said, “Alright, that will be done,” and from then on She did so.

When She would measure the rice before cooking, She would put a handful away every day. When this amounted to about ten or twelve kilos Bholanath would pay the cash value of the rice and that money would be used in the service of *Bhagabān* (God), distributed to the poor and distressed, or offered in *harir lūt*.

²⁹ At the time of this narrative, married women in Bengal parted their hair in the middle and put vermilion in the parting. They also wore bangles made of conch shell, iron, and sealing wax that symbolized their marital status. These items were considered sacred and care was taken not to break or defile them. Hence, when Mā offered water to the *tulsī* plant, She was advised by a well-meaning neighbour to pay respect to the symbol of Her marriage. Since the bangle was subsequently broken while in the midst of Her *bhāv*, Mā reveals that She is beyond all conditions. When one is engrossed in God, all social norms pale into insignificance.

Mā Goes into *Bhāv* for the first time in *Kirtan*

One day I asked Bholanath to arrange *harir lūt* under the *tulsī* plant. He agreed and asked Harakumar to make the necessary arrangements and to inform the neighbours. It was nearing dusk and the daily *kirtan* at the nearby *Shiv* temple was being sung. Hearing the *kirtan*, Harakumar went to the temple to invite all those gathered there. They agreed to come and join as soon as they finished at the temple. On returning Harakumar started the *kirtan* with those who had already gathered, and soon the party from the *Shiv* temple joined in joyfully. Madhu *babu's* wife was sick at the time and I was sitting on her bed observing everything through the bamboo fence. Suddenly I saw the house fill with a brilliant light, and this Body, brimming with joy, merging with the light in the midst of the *kirtan*. At exactly that moment She dropped down from the cot rolling in divine ecstasy on the floor and breaking the conch shell bangle on Her wrist. She then lay there with no outward sign of life but She was not unconscious either.

Seeing Her fall to the ground, the infirm lady called out for help. Bholanath and the others came and saw Her in this condition. Everyone started saying that Khushir Mā (Mā) had had a seizure, and they sprinkled water on Her face and helped Her to sit up while Her body continued to tremble.

It was as if infinite ripples of joy were running through Her every limb. Somehow this Body remained seated in that condition and when the *kirtan* ended She went to Her room. There Bholanath asked Her the reason for this sudden change in Her condition and, as She tried to tell him, She felt Her body horripilate overflowing with heavenly joy. It was not possible to talk, but very slowly a little was communicated. This was the first time that this Body had the experience of going into ecstasy on hearing *kirtan*. She had never before seen this happen to anyone else earlier.

Another day, while *kirtan* was being sung near the *tulsī* plant, this Body was in Her room. Bholanath used to check on Her from time to time. That day too this Body went into *bhāv* collapsing on the floor,

but She picked Herself up immediately. She was on the verge of rushing out in a state of wild ecstasy to where the *kirtan* was going on but Bholanath held Her back. There in the room itself She continued to sing along with the *kirtan*, while Her body rolled ecstatically on the floor. Bholanath, with all his strength, could not hold Her still. After the *kirtan* this Body went into a state of complete bodily inertness. Expressing some annoyance Bholanath asked, "Why is all this happening again? It is so embarrassing!" What could I say? I kept silent. After this incident, *kirtan* was discontinued for some time.

In the *Kirtan* of Gagan *Sādhu*

There was another incident not long after this in connection with a pious man who was visiting a neighbouring village. One day, returning from his office, Bholanath said, "Gagan *Sādhu* is going to sing *kirtan* here this evening, after which he will have his meal here so make the necessary arrangements." This Body finished cooking early and sat with four or five other women on a wooden cot in the courtyard behind the room where the *kirtan* was being held. From that spot one could hear the *kirtan* but could not see the singers.³⁰ The kitchen had a bamboo door and I ran in and out in a childlike manner to check on the food. No one knew at what moment I fell off the cot in *bhāv*. It was very late when the *kirtan* ended and there was only the wide expanse of the sky overhead and the darkness of the village all round. Except for an old woman who sat quietly because her grandson had fallen asleep, everyone had gone home.

Bholanath came to the room to find that this Body was not there though the lamp was burning. This Body had apparently been so deeply absorbed in Her *bhāv* that She had probably left the door ajar and a dog had entered the room and desecrated the food. Angry at this chaos, Bholanath began to call out loudly for this Body. Meanwhile the old woman was unsuccessfully trying to rouse this

³⁰ In those days collective *kirtan* was the domain of men and women listened from behind curtains or places out of sight. During Her stay in Dhaka Mā brought about a change for women to collectively do *kirtan* for whole night.

Body by pulling Her up. However, when she touched Her she felt that the body was abnormally still as if there was no life. She then called out, "Come and see! Your Khushir Mā has become unconscious. Her body has gone cold." Bholanath came out, and together with two or three others tried but failed to rouse Her. They somehow carried Her in and laid Her on the bed. Alternate arrangements had to be made to feed the *kirtan* party, and it was nearly dawn by the time they were fed. This Body remained lifeless like a stone through all this.

Bholanath began to get worried and afraid. He kept asking whoever he met, "What should I do now? I have never before seen Her in this state." Someone suggested that *kirtan* be started once again, and, since everyone agreed, Gagan Sādhu was called back. When apprised of the ensuing events he was moved almost to tears and said, "Why did you not tell me of this last night? It is my good fortune that my singing has induced this kind of divine mood in Her." Gladly he resumed what he had been singing the previous night. This Body was carried in and placed in the corner of the room where the *kirtan* was going on. The *kirtan* continued till four in the afternoon.

It is heard that when one goes into or emerges from the state of *samādhi* symptoms appear in the demeanour of a true devotee such as those described in the scriptures, and these were manifested in this Body. Gagan Sādhu and many others present were satiated in heavenly delight and reduced to tears. The atmosphere remained charged for a long time and the entire village was said to have been affected by this sublime excitement. Divine joyfulness pervaded the area and whoever came there became a part of that and experienced a blessed change of mood.

Gour and Nitai in the *Kirtan*

Later Jaishankar Sen's son, Sarada, asked this Body, "What did You see during the *kirtan*? How did You get into that state?" This Body was still in a supra normal condition. Tears ran down Her cheeks continuously and no amount of wiping could help. She replied, "At the beginning of the *kirtan* that night, when they sang 'Come, oh!

Gour, Nitai', I saw Gour³¹ and Nitai³² as two young boys in the midst of the singers." When asked from where they had appeared, this Body answered, "From here" pointing to Herself.

There was no inclination to say much more to Sarada at that point of time as even then the outward expression of the inner mood was present in Her demeanour. When *Krishna-līlā*³³ was being narrated in the form of a song this Body kept running to and fro like a small child. Sitting outside, as Her hands and feet began to get cold, a strange feeling came over Her and She felt She was present at the place of the *kirtan*, inseparably united with everyone else in a very profound *bhāv*. The *kheyāl* to explain the nature of this divine mood is not coming forth, and indeed, where are the words to express such a state?

The second time when the *kirtan* started this Body's sense of identification with the outside world returned and there was a feeling of being one with the people gathered there, and yet at the same time distinct from them. At first there was no urge from within to veil Myself, despite the presence of other people, for there was no feeling of separation³⁴. Gradually, however, I veiled and covered Myself properly. For the next three or four days the unsteady feeling of being in an intoxicated stupor remained with Me. Even while speaking My immensely joyful state could not be concealed.

Another day there was *kirtan* at *māmimā*'s (aunt's) home. Bholanath had secretly instructed a woman to keep an eye on this Body. As usual this Body was sitting in the room at a considerable distance from the place of *kirtan*, when all of a sudden She experienced the sensation of an electric current arising from within that moved Her body naturally into a *yogic* posture. As long as the *kirtan* went on this Body remained motionless in that posture. Later someone shook

³¹ Avatai (incarnation) of Lord Krishna who appeared in Bengal circa 1494 and became known as Sri Krishna Chaitanya.

³² Constant companion of Gour (Sri Krishna Chaitanya).

³³ Stories of Krishna's divine play, particularly as a child.

³⁴ At that time it was unheard for a young married woman from the highest caste to not be veiled in public.

Her, but even that had no effect in rousing Her. After a time She got up very slowly, still berumbed but exuding joy

Soon after, this Body went to a neighbour's home to listen to Gagan *Sādhu's kirtan* and, when She began to feel the divine intoxication coming over Her, She somehow managed to return home hastily. Earlier too She had noticed that, during the time of *kirtan* at the *tulsī* plant, the moment *nām kirtan* reached Her ears Her body would be swept on a wave of intense joy, despite Her efforts to keep it under control.

One day there was *kirtan* at a distant location and this Body was holding Madhu *babu's* daughter in Her arms. She was on the verge of falling with the child when Bholanath caught Her. You may ask how such a thing could happen. You see, this Body again began to be carried away in *bhāv* and Her arms loosened their hold on the child. It was after hearing Gagan *Sādhu's kirtan* that the divine mood started to manifest itself more and more - each day in a different form

Earlier, when the boys chanted *Hari's* name, this Body would sometimes tell them, "See that you do not go into a trance." But She had never before heard of this actually happening to anyone or seen anyone in that condition.

The local people of Astagram were enthusiastic about *kirtan*. When the neighbours spoke mockingly amongst themselves of seeing Her divinely entranced, this Body felt amused - it was indeed all nothing but a play. They neither knew nor understood, and therefore gossiped about Her

When the above mentioned states of mystical absorption started to manifest themselves during *kirtan*, word was sent to Bidyākūt that this Body was suffering from hysteria. Her parents found out the medicines for this and sent the information, but Bholanath wrote back, saying, "There is no hysteria, She is well."

Appearance of a Light on Hearing Bhāgavat

One day Sarada told Kshetra *babu's* wife, "If you want to hear the Bhāgavat³⁵, finish your meals early and come to our room, I shall be

³⁵ A popular ancient Hindu scripture - one of the Puranas dealing with the life and divine 'play' of Śrī Krishna and other historical incarnations and facts

reading Bhāgavat today." That was the first time this Body heard a little of the Bhāgavat. We were sitting there listening to it when lightning like sensations of supernatural emotion began running through this Body and a light similar to that of an electric bulb flashed in a peculiar way from Her. The hands and feet turned cold, the body became numb, and an abnormal condition came over Her. Pulling on My veil I said, "I am going" I rose, holding on to the pillar and fence outside, and somehow managed to stagger to My room and lie down quietly. A little later the lightning like flashes abated somewhat, but the numbness and the drowsiness remained for quite some time. Whenever this kind of state showed itself, it took a long time to go away.

After this, on another day, Sarada was discussing the topic of saints. I could not hear all his words, but still there was a change in the Body. There would always remain a feeling of slackness and drowsiness. Sarada used to observe this Body's conditions very closely. One day I asked him, "Can you tell Me why such things happen to Me?" He replied, "As You Yourself do not do anything wilfully, whatever happens on hearing the name of God or words in His praise has to be good. You must remain in the mystical state that comes to You naturally"

Spontaneous Āsanās on Reciting *Hari's* name

Often, after I had been observing silence for some time, the chanting of '*haribol*' would issue spontaneously from My mouth, and immediately a mysterious sensation would come over Me. The hair on My skin would stand on end. Gradually the body would become stiff, like a log of wood, and all outward physical sensations would disappear completely. It was then seen that everything was dissolving into a state of void. From the time this Body felt an urge for *Harinām*, these manifestations began appearing³⁶

One day there was the *kheyāl* to chant *Hari's* name while sitting in the dark at night with eyes closed. This Body began to sing, although

³⁶ Please consult the section entitled "The Seven Stages of *Kirtan*" within Chapter 6 for a better understanding of this topic

She had never seen anyone doing this. After two or three days of chanting *Hari's* name like this for some time, wherever She looked, there was only the sky and stars. On asking some knowledgeable person, Bholanath found out that these were signs of a *yogi* and were very auspicious.

One night after dinner I told Bholanath, "I want to sit for some time. You go to sleep." Sitting on the bed chanting *Harinām*, I realised after a while that '*haribol*' was automatically issuing from within Myself in tune with My breath, while simultaneously My mouth kept on outwardly chanting. Later still, My tongue and mouth ceased functioning and *Harinām* continued in unison with My breathing. Very soon the signs of physical changes began to appear, and automatically My legs folded themselves to form an *āsana*. Later I learnt that this was *siddhāsana*.



Shree Shree Mā in *siddhāsana*

Then My body began to sway and while doing so it spun round in circles while still remaining in the *āsana*, immersed in sublime joy as if overflowing with *Shakti* (divine power). I felt as if *Harinām* was exuding from My entire body. While moving in this manner one of My hands accidentally fell on Bholanath's body. Thinking it to be the hand of a thief, in alarm he caught hold of the arm tightly. Realising it belonged to this Body, he then released it. He said that the hand had appeared to be heavy and big. Intense *yogic* activities can have such effects on any person's body.

On another night in Astagram this Body told Bholanath, "You go to bed; let Me sit reciting *nām*³⁷." Sitting in a common posture, I started singing *nām* in an undertone and slowly the hair on My skin stood up. My legs folded themselves automatically into the position of a *padmāsana* while *nām* continued from My mouth as well as with My breath. I soon found the body swaying right and left energetically and then spinning while remaining seated in *padmāsana* like a wheel that continues spinning on its own axis after being set in motion. **At such times there was no consciousness of the body, but there was a feeling of omnipotence, of infinitude and of ecstatic joy.** Suddenly it dawned on My senses that it was late at night and I had not slept at all. Immediately all the *kriyās* gradually slowed down and stopped, just as an electric fan starts slowing down when it is switched off. I lay down.

Another night I was sitting in the same way for quite some time with the room in total darkness. Suddenly I saw a ray of light emerging from between Bholanath's eyebrows, its beam extending up a long distance. This light shone for a short while and then disappeared. All his features had become visible in that light.

Earlier, when I was in Narundi, one night there was a collision of goods trains and the carriages had fallen off the track. The next morning a crane arrived and pulled each carriage back on to the track, each time creating loud, clanging sounds. Later, as I sat on the ground chanting *Harinām* in Astagram, I felt *nām* flowing automatically with my breath. Then I found that My tongue was no longer uttering *nām*.

³⁷ The chanting or singing the names of God

and that My body had become rigid. A little later, around the centre of My waist and up My spine, there occurred repetitive rapping sounds like when the crane pulled the carriages back on track. Simultaneously I felt as if I was being elevated slowly, despite My remaining on the ground. My breath flowed upwards and, was then suspended for a space of time, with the spine upright and the Body seated with folded arms and legs. Then gradually, as the breath slowly descended down the spine, the Body assumed a new *āsana* and became absolutely still, as if someone had fixed all the joints with screws. Consciousness was intact. Even if desired, the Body could not move. But there was no particular desire to move either nor was there any sign of discomfort. The Body was calm. Together with the *pūrak*, *rechak* and *kumbhak*³⁸ of the breath, *nām* had continued in a ceaseless flow. At that time I had not heard from anyone or seen anywhere such actions of the *prān-vayu* (life-breath). On getting up the next morning there was a feeling of languor and lightness in the Body. A sublime sense of bliss remained with Me for the next two or three days. This feeling usually lingered on faintly. After this, whenever I sat down to do *nām*, this process would be repeated before the *nām* started flowing.

Sometimes I sat down to do *nām* at night, but it was not possible every day due to the pressure of all the house-work. On the days when I was able to do *nām*, the *kriyās* would come about spontaneously and the body would get into a state of intoxication. I would perform all the house work in that condition. With the flow of *nām* continuing within, there was a constant eagerness for the night to come when I could sit down once more in peace and quiet. Thus the flow of *nām* continued through different *bhāvs*.

Bhaidada³⁹ had given Me a biography of a *sādhu*. This Body was never able to read well, and even when She did read a little the Body would get into an abnormal state. After trying for a few days I had to put the book away. One day he came to see Me as he was to go to Dhaka. Suddenly I said, "You will not be able to go today", but he hurried out anyway. As it happened he was not able to get the steamer

³⁸ Inhaling, exhaling, and holding breath

³⁹ Sarada Sen

that day and returned. He would occasionally write from his place of work and, on Bholanath's instruction, I too would write giving him information about My condition. Many years later I saw him again in Kolkata⁴⁰ for a short time. When I was in Shahbag he visited once and asked Me, "How did You get into this divine state?"



⁴⁰ The British spelling of Calcutta has now been changed to Kolkata, to phonetically reflect the way it is pronounced in Bengali

CHAPTER 3

From Astagram to Bidyākūt

In the month of *Āshvin* (September-October), we learnt that Bholanath was to be transferred to Bajitpur. We decided to go first to Bidyākūt by boat,¹ accompanied by Madhu *babu's* family. Towards the evening our boat reached a dacoit-infested area that was carefully avoided by people at night. The moment we arrived at that area we saw a much larger boat at a distance crowded with men. They wanted to know where we were bound. When we told them they began to row quickly towards us yelling at us that they needed fire from our boatman to light their tobacco. Our boatmen rowed away at great speed carrying us, our luggage, and a goat that was to be sacrificed at the Kasba *Kālī* temple. The latter kept bleating so loudly that we were afraid it might attract the attention of the dacoits. There was a light drizzle, but in that faint light we could discern a narrow stream bifurcating from the river. I directed that the boat be taken that way and we succeeded in evading the bigger boat that was following us.² After travelling a long distance we came upon a fishing village where we spent the night. We reached Bidyākūt the next day. On hearing our experience, several people told us that we were lucky to have escaped the dacoits as several robberies had occurred in that area during the rainy season. Madhu *babu* and his family went to their home.

It was Mahashtamī³. After meeting My parents, I went to look up My *jethimā*⁴. She was the sister of Srimad Santadas

¹ Common mode of transport in that region

² Owing to shallow depth of the stream, the bigger boat was constrained to the river

³ The eighth day celebration of *Durgā pūjā* in the month of *Āshvin* – September 27, 1914

⁴ Elder aunt from the paternal side

*Bābā ji*⁵ and had recently lost her husband. It was the first time that I saw her as a widow. Seeing Me silent she smilingly remarked, “He was old wasn’t he? It was natural for him to die.” Later she would share all her joys and sorrows with this Body, whom she loved very much. With great enthusiasm she memorized the hundred names of *Sri Krishna* after hearing them from this Body. When she had to write a letter she would send for Me. The quality and speed of this Body’s writing improved to some extent as a result of writing these letters for her. If *jethimā* had any disagreement with the family, she would narrate it to this Body and likewise the other party would do the same.

When *jethimā* came to know that certain people would sometimes tell adverse things about her to this Body, she remarked, “I was surprised to know that this Girl listens to everyone but never divulges anything to others! It is really a wonder how She listens to everything so calmly. Saying anything to Her is as good as throwing something into the well.” *Jethimā* died some years later in Kashi⁶.

On occasions this Body would speak on spiritual or religious matters with great simplicity based upon whatever little She had heard or whatever came to Her *kheyāl*. She would speak spontaneously because planning and preparation were not Her way. She was friendly with people of all ages and they listened with rapt attention to anything that She said. Some later remarked, “We cannot express the amount of joy Your words give us.” Even little girls would enjoy listening to this Body.

In Bidyākūt I never sat down to recite *nām*, because the moment I did so I felt changes coming over My body. On occasions when the sounds of *kirtan* reached My ears from near or far I would sensing the altered state of My body go and lie down, so that no one else came to know or see these changes. Bholanath alone was aware of

⁵ A famous saint of Vrindaban who lived in the beginning of 20th century

⁶ Presently known as Varanasi

them, for I had not mentioned them even to My parents. These changes became visible to outsiders only in Astagram.

Another day while replying to a question, Mā said, “Sometimes at dusk, when I chanted *Harinām* while walking about in the courtyard, a strange thrill would pervade the Body and a light would appear at the corner of the left eye. As long as the *nām* continued I remained as one intoxicated and immersed in a state of supreme bliss, and the light, never too big and rather like a star, would stay with Me. When I stopped chanting, the light would disappear.” When asked the reason for this, Mā answered, “*Nām, mantra, jyoti* (light) they are all different forms of *Bhagawān*. You see, even that light is a form of God!”

Every month this Body’s mother would arrange *harir lūt* for Mākhan’s⁷ welfare. One day there were four or five small boys standing at the door of the prayer room chanting *Harinām*. Immediately this Body started feeling the changes coming over Her and She regained Her normal state only long after the chanting of *Harinām* had ceased.

Once when the village was gripped by a cholera epidemic, the villagers assembled together and went from door to door singing *kirtan*. When the group reached father’s home, a thrill went through this Body and She began to dance to the rhythm of the *kirtan*. Due to a lack of time the group could not stay long or there would have been a recurrence of what had transpired at Astagram. On two other occasions, while *kirtan* was being sung at home by an assembled group, this Body remained alone in the darkness of Her room and began to spontaneously roll on the ground in ecstasy. The manifestations were very similar to the ones experienced earlier and it was a matter of good fortune that there was no one around, so no one came to know of it. There was always the consciousness that no one should know. Sometimes the outward symptoms of the Body

⁷ Mā’s brother, Jadunath Bhattacharjee (1912-1983) was born in Bidyākūt and passed away in Varanasi.

were such that people generally attributed these *bhāvs* to be signs of illness.

Late one night sounds of drums and cymbals along with strains of *kirtan* floated in from a great distance and the Body developed the now familiar supra normal state. The room was dark and it was nearly dawn when She returned to normal. During this period Her mother came in once to ask if She wanted to go out, but due to Her condition She was unable to answer. Whenever She had the *kheyāl* that none should witness Her condition, She kept aloof from other people and was always able to ensure that the manifestations of Her various *bhāvs* occurred in private.

This Body enjoyed playing with small girls, and Her peers and elders would remark, “You don’t seem to have grown up at all. How can You go on playing with these children as if You were one of them?”

Everyone in the neighbourhood loved this Body. Women married, unmarried or elderly would greatly miss Her if they did not see Her for some time. When they were with Her they would not want to let Her go. When young brides of the area went to their parents’ place, they would tell Her, “We cannot enjoy our visits fully because You are not going to be there.” When I left Bidyākūt for a time, people would come running to Me, saying, “We hope to see You again when You come back, if we are still alive.” The Muslim neighbours too would begin to weep.

I noticed that wherever I went, whether or not these were places where I was known, everyone that I encountered, regardless of their creed, developed a great affection for Me and would keep asking when we would meet again. They could not forget this Body. This Body too told them that She would not forget them. If anyone acted in a distant manner towards this Body She would be on the verge of tears. And it happened several times that whenever She felt that family members, friends, or acquaintances behaved in an indifferent manner, She would make every effort to show that She was indeed one of them.

One day, a kinsman of father's invited this Body for a meal. The invitation was for a rather odd time. When I reached there the gentleman said, "It was a mistake on my part to invite You at such an awkward time." I replied, "You do not consider Me your kindred, that is why you say such a thing. If you regard Me like your daughter, I shall come and dine with you even after I have already eaten." He looked at Me for some time and then, probably seeing something unusual said, "**You look like a goddess and You talk like one also.**" On occasions, this Body would acquire a supra normal aura and that might have also been the case on that day.

Next door lived Ambikacharan Bhattacharya, an elderly uncle by relation. When he came home on holidays he would be disappointed if I was not around. At times he talked to this Body about his domestic issues and it surprised his wife and mother that he should do so with someone so much younger in age. Nevertheless it made them happy.

Behari Bhattacharya was also an uncle to this Body and he lived in the neighbourhood. He spent most of his time studying the *Gītā* and other scriptures. He had seven or eight children. When this Body was in Bidyākūt he would ask Her to do some of his chores instead of calling upon his children. He was happy with whatever She did for him. All the members of that family loved this Body. They would say, "All of us are sad when You go, but Your uncle feels it the most. He does not seem so upset when his own daughters go away to their in-laws' place."

In another home lived an elderly *didi* who was very fond of this Body. Her son worked in another town. I often went to her home and would sit or lie there quietly for long periods. In case I felt like reciting *nām*, I would do it there. Sometimes I also wrote letters for her and replied to Bholanath's letters. I would write one line a day, or at times more, and finish one letter in two or three days. Bholanath wrote of various matters but the desire to reply to them did not arise from within.

There was a married girl slightly older to Me who lived in another house and was very close to this Body. We spent many days singing

and playing together. As far as worldly matters went, there was nothing we did not know about one another. For Me closeness with anyone meant that there should be no secrets kept from one another. One day due to a certain incident I felt that she had not been telling Me the entire truth. That day I realised how simplicity and duplicity can exist side by side in a person; however, there was no change in this Body's attitude towards her. From childhood I had always followed the path of truthfulness. To always uphold the truth in speech, actions, and thought were My mother's instructions to Me.

My behaviour was always simple and innocent. At times it might happen that this Body would suddenly come upon someone just at the moment they were saying or doing something in secrecy. The person concerned misunderstood this Body's motive to be one of slyness. This was not any one's fault, for no one could imagine that such naïve behaviour was the natural way of this Body.

When I was small My mother had said to Me, "Do not look at a man's face when talking to him." Bholanath too had given similar instructions. I never looked at any man in the face since then, not even at My father or brother. I was never in the habit of talking unnecessarily or bantering with people, but at times this occurred spontaneously due to the circumstances.

One day an older cousin⁸ who was very fond of chewing *pān*⁹ asked Me to put the *pān* into his mouth as his hands were dirty from the work he was engaged in. I thought to Myself, how can I do so without looking at his face! But immediately the thought came to Me that I could look only at the *pān* when putting it into his mouth. That is what I did and I informed Bholanath about the incident later.

A Jewellery Theft

Some jewellery had been stolen from My aunt's¹⁰ home almost fifteen years ago. At that time a son of a relative used to frequent the

⁸ Upendra Chandra Bhattacharya, Mā's father's elder brother's son

⁹ Betel leaf rolled with bits of areca nut, lime, spices and catechu

¹⁰ Father's sister-in-law

home and, though everyone was fond of him, he was the one whom they all suspected of being the thief. He was accused and thrown out. When this Body was in Bidyākūt, the daughter of the people who had actually stolen the jewellery visited this Body and while talking, she revealed on her own that certain pieces of jewellery were at her parents' home. My aunt was also present at that time. When this girl began telling her story, My aunt asked her to describe minute details about the jewellery. I had not heard of the incident until that moment.

Later My aunt expressed her regret to this Body, "After fifteen years the truth has been finally revealed today and I have come to know who the real culprit was. How that poor boy had wept, saying that he did not know anything about it! The grief he suffered at being suspected made him later lose his mind. We have been discussing truth with You today and God chose to reveal the truth and erase our false suspicion of an innocent person."

At a Cousin's Wedding

There was a large gathering at the home of My father's cousin on the occasion of a wedding. Among the invitees were two young men who were related to this Body as grand uncles. One of them kept making jokes and the other, after putting sugar in the new bride's mouth, tried to put sugar into this Body's mouth as well. This Body moved away quietly, but a spontaneous sharp glance from Her eyes struck them like a bolt of lightning. It was not an ordinary glance but one that was brought about by their disrespectful behaviour. After the wedding they went home. Sometime later this Body came to know that the one who had tried to put sugar in Her mouth had died, and the other, for some trivial reason, had been severely beaten up. I was aware of other people's inner feelings towards Me, but never expressed My knowledge either in words or in action. I would simply laugh to Myself. I found that whenever any person harboured an ill will or behaved in an improper manner towards Me, they always came to some trouble.

On the occasion of the wedding of another cousin, two of the bride's brothers had accompanied the bride to her in-laws' home. Bholanath

was also there. According to the accepted custom among the young people, they kept aiming jokes at us. Bholanath told Me, "Try and harass them as much as You can." That day I managed to do so to such an extent that they were completely outmatched and said, "She is very, very clever; we have never seen anyone like Her." Later the newly married bride told this Body, "All my relatives say that You are brilliantly clever."

At the above mentioned wedding, the eldest daughter-in-law of the family was put in charge of the cooking and she asked this Body to help her. This lady had a reputation of being a good cook. When this Body reached the kitchen at the appointed time, She was told even before starting any work, "You may go, I shall manage myself." This Body's mother, who was also present there, said, "Since she is telling You to go, then go. If needed I will help her." This Body responded by saying, "It is late; come, let us finish the cooking together." But the daughter-in-law would not allow this Body to do anything and had her aunt taste the various dishes. So this Body left the place.

Later, when this Body sat down to eat, She found that the food was not good at all and told this to the lady who had prepared the food. The latter would not believe this and asked another person to verify. That person too said, "There is too little salt; and the food is bland. You are such a good cook, what happened today?" The eldest daughter-in-law was extremely upset and, had a fainting fit. Some of those who were present later told this Body, "Having first asked You to help her, she would then not allow You to do anything because she wanted to take all the credit herself. Look at the result!"

Touching of Idols

Whatever *kheyāl* this Body had was always accomplished in some strange manner or the other. Once She had a *kheyāl* to touch the idols of *Sitā-Rām*, *Rādhā-Krishna*, and some other deities in the temple complex. In spite of all the restrictions, She was able to do so quite easily, unknown to anyone. On another occasion, there was an

invitation to join the *Durgā pūjā* celebrations at the home of father's cousin, Durga Mohan Bhattacharya. This Body had never before visited this house or the temple within. A strong urge rose in Her to touch the image of *Durgā* in the restricted area of worship. There were a lot of people present along with a guard who protected the image and kept people out, but by some strange chance She succeeded in going in and even touching the sacred image of Durga.

Healing Sick People

If someone fell ill, sometimes a *kheyāl* would arise in this Body that if She touched or looked at them, the person would get well. This happened on many occasions. However, when this was not meant to be, there would be no urge to touch the sick person, or else some obstacle would prevent this from happening.

Connection with the Pious and the Virtuous

Whenever I saw anyone of any age, sex, ethnicity, or caste, who prayed regularly and was pious and devoted, a very special *bhāv* would arise in this Body towards that person. At the time there were several pious individuals in Bidyākūt and on seeing them there would occur a lightning like sensation within this Body and She was able to discern clearly how they were advancing in their spiritual path. On their part these individuals became aware of this Body in a very special way. Even when She was not before them, Her pure consciousness remained with them. In spite of the purity of their thought and attraction towards this Body, these pious men and women were not in a position to talk to or even come anywhere near this Body since She was a young married woman belonging to another family. Such a thing was totally contrary to the prevailing moral codes for men in those days. They were also not able to express the attraction and reverence they felt towards Her. She, however, was aware all the time of the interplay of this piety and virtue in their lives and this proved conducive to their spiritual advancement.

Visit to the Kasba *Kālī* Temple

After coming to Bidyākūt we visited the Kasba *Kālī* temple. On the way was Kheora village, the place where My grandmother's relatives lived.¹¹ In Srish *dādā's* home, grandmother's childhood friend Chikon *didī* was in tears to see Me, and embracing Me said, "I am seeing You after so many years, I can't hold back my tears of joy." Almost the whole night she cried and told Me all about herself, but this Body merely smiled. The next day we reached Kasba. A distant relative of ours, an uncle by relation and a very pious man, was also there. When paying our obeisance to the idol in the temple an unnatural condition came over Me. Both My mother and uncle noticed this but thought that this Body was praying for a child to *Mā Kālī*, and had been overcome by Her emotions. They were unaware that such thoughts never rose in this Body.

Postman Harish

When I was about five or six years of age and stayed at My maternal uncle's home, the local postman, Harish, a *shūdra* by caste, also stayed in the house.¹² He had a simple and loving nature and behaved as one very close to Me. Many propitious signs were visible in him. He always kept his eyes lowered when talking to people and everyone spoke well of him. On arriving in Bidyākūt from Astagram, this Body discovered that Harish had been transferred and was the postman there. He was very happy to see Me again after a long time.

Just as in the dark the beam of a torchlight reveals clearly the object upon which its light falls, so did this Body's glance reveal that

¹¹ Where *Mā's prakash* (appearance in this world) occurred

¹² Under the Hindu caste system, the *shudras* are the lowest caste and traditionally, their occupation was that of sweepers, cobblers, blacksmiths, maids, or practitioners of unskilled trades. Typically they were not accorded the same rights as the other castes and were forced to use different temples and public facilities and their association with people from the higher castes was restricted. Since India's independence, social reforms have been instituted to improve the lives of the *shudras* and discrimination is now very much on the wane.

Harish was transformed and advancing in his spiritual life. This Body saw clearly that there was something extraordinary within him. When She was young and had visited Her maternal uncle's home. Harish had often carried Her in his arms or upon his shoulders. Later when I went to Birbhum in 1932, I heard from people that he had advanced so much on his spiritual path that he had discarded his body in a state of *samādhi*¹³. A large number of people had received his blessings. His wife was now practising *sādhanā* at the site of his *samādhi*¹⁴.

From Bidyākūt to Ātpara

Bholanath was visiting my parental family home in Bidyākūt after three years. On the day that he had to leave there for Bajitpur, it was decided that My father would take Me to Ātpara (Bholanath's parental home). As the day of our departure for Ātpara drew near a pall of gloom settled on the home and the neighbourhood. This Body also shared this grave mood that had descended due to Her impending departure. It had been a long stay at Bidyākūt - so the thought of parting saddened everyone. A devotional fervour filled everyone as in *satsang*,¹⁵ though none knew or understood the term *satsang* at that time.

Even the Muslim girls in the neighbourhood were in tears as they accompanied this Body over a long distance.

Whatever outer manifestations arose in this Body due to the intensity of Her inner spiritual *bhāv* were often extreme. She became intensely indrawn to the point of becoming inert, almost incapable of moving. On the day of departure, somehow I left the house and went by boat to the steamer, boarded it and sat quietly. I 'saw' that I was

¹³ A state in which the mind is either completely focussed on its object of contemplation (*savikalpa samādhi*), or ceases to function and only Pure Consciousness remains, revealing itself to Itself (*nirvikalpa samādhi*). In such a state if a man leaves his body, he is free from the cycle of life and death.

¹⁴ In this case the word denotes a shrine where the remains of a very saintly person are interred.

¹⁵ Literally *sanga* (association) with *sat* (truth), association with great souls or discussion on spiritual topics.

back in Bidyākūt with My mother and neighbours experiencing their state of melancholy. Then I lay down like one intoxicated. Whatever was the dominant inner feeling of the moment was revealed outwardly through the entire being of this Body. Later I learned that everyone there had a similar feeling, and that it was unlike anything they had ever felt before.

At the end of the journey by steamer, the night was spent at the home of an acquaintance and the next day a porter and a palanquin were hired for the onward journey. This Body's father walked beside the porter, who was taking rest at intervals, while the palanquin bearers went ahead carrying this Body and later used a path through a garden. I told them to stop, but they would not listen. A little later they were forced to stop as they could not determine the correct route. There were three narrow paths ahead and I pointed to one and told the bearers to go that way and bring back whoever they met on that path. One of the bearers went and soon returned with a man who enquired as to where the palanquin was headed. By the manner of his speech I could make out that he was a gentleman. Since I was a married woman, how could I speak with a resident of the village? It was not customary. This is what I did - I stretched My hand out of the palanquin and on the ground wrote the name of Bholanath's elder brother. This man then guided us to the house. Much later, My father arrived with the porter.



As this Body was the youngest in the family at that time She did all the house work by Herself. When Ashu's mother did any work, this Body felt that She should have been doing it instead. She was so fully engaged in household duties throughout the day that She hardly ever paid any attention to Herself. The family consisted of Ashu's mother¹⁶, Ashu's elder brother, Ashu and his sister.

This Body strictly followed the norms for married women and kept Herself veiled. Even if anyone criticized Her regarding a delay in carrying out some work, She would accept it cheerfully. It was the rainy season and I would sometimes get wet while working. Due to

¹⁶ Promoda Devi, wife of Bholanath's eldest brother.

this I developed inflammation of the tonsils and fever. The symptoms grew worse and even swallowing barley-water or milk became painful. Medicines were arranged and everyone took great care of Me. Bholanath too came from Bajitpur. Gradually I got better.

About this time *kirtan* was held in the neighbouring home one day and this Body began to go into ecstasy. She had not yet recovered fully, so those around Her thought that this was a new symptom of the illness. Another day the boys of the house offered *harir lūt* and that day too this Body faced a similar condition. In the meantime there was a theft in the house that resulted in Bholanath making arrangements to move the entire family to Bajitpur before he left.

Neighbours Helping Out

Two or three girls of a lower caste (*shudra*) family living nearby were always eager to help this Body. She had just recovered from Her illness, so thinking She might catch a cold if She worked early in the morning, the girls would come very early and secretly do all the work like washing the kitchen utensils so that no one came to know. If they ever found some good ripe mangoes they would keep them for Me. Sometimes these girls would make *khīr* (thickened sweet milk) and bring *muri* (puffed rice) and sugar, and then call Me quietly and entreat Me to eat some. Finding no way out,¹⁷ this Body would take a part of it and then mix all the things together and hand it to them to eat.

At times they would wash My hair or My clothes, and say, "You do not pay any attention either to Yourself or to Your food. You do nothing but work and work for twenty-four hours a day!" At times, if I told them, "You do so much for Me, but there is nothing that I can do for you." They replied, "Just the fact that You laugh and talk to us like this make us happy." They were very poor. On the days when I heard that they had had nothing to eat, I would give them some rice from the handful of what I used to keep away every day. If they came when I was having My meal, I would eat some and give them the rest

¹⁷ In those days, it was unthinkable for a high caste *Brahmin* to eat food prepared, or even touched, by a *shudra*. For Mā, the purity of *bhāv* was above any caste consideration.

Mā in Bajitpur

In the month of *Āshār*¹⁸ we left for Bajitpur.

Ashu's mother used to address the wife of the Court Superintendent as *Didi* (elder sister). On My addressing this lady the same way, her daughter Ushā¹⁹ said to Me, "No, You cannot call my mother *didī*, call her something else, because we want to call You *didī*." From that day I called her mother *māshimā* (aunt) and I addressed Ushā as *didī*. Ushā *didī*'s mother and the rest of the family were greatly attached to this Body and called Her by Her name²⁰. Ushā *didī*'s mother told Me one day, "The first day that I saw You returning home from the pond after Your bath I took You to be the wife or daughter of some wealthy person." Later Ushā *didī*'s father was transferred to Dhaka and Ushā *didī* left for her in-laws' home. At the time of leaving she said to Me, "Now I will find out how much You care for us. I hope that we meet again soon."

In the month of *Āshvin* (September-October) a severe cyclone struck and while it raged, this Body sat quietly in Her room completely lost in reciting *nām*. Bholanath came in and called Her. On emerging from Her absorbed state, She found the cottage walls shaking and said, "Let us move to another place." The moment we came out of our room, the hut collapsed. The storm increased its fury, so we left our dwelling and took shelter in another. It was found later that many of the cottages had collapsed. A few days later Ashu's mother left for Ātpara while Ashu stayed on with us.

Mā receives Instruction on Wearing *Tulsī Māla*

One day a few people were singing *kirtan* in the home and, like before, on hearing this She went into a deep state of rapture and fell to the ground. Bholanath came in and saw Her in this condition and it

¹⁸ June-July of 1918

¹⁹ Daughter of Rashbehari Dutta of the Nawab Estate of Dhaka, her husband was Janakinath Guha.

²⁰ Nirmalā

took a long time before She became normal again. The recurrence of this state after four years²¹ worried Bholanath. There was a *munsiff*²² in Bajitpur who was a *vaishnav*²³ and a pious man. He often arranged all night *kirtans* and participated in them. Bholanath consulted him regarding this Body's mystical state and he said, "This is good. Ask Her to wear a *tulsī māla* (rosary) round Her neck." Hearing this, this Body said to Bholanath, "Ask him if it should be worn outside or inside." The *munsiff*, on hearing this, said, "She has no need of a rosary."²⁴

Mā at *Kirtan* in Bhudeb *babu*'s house

One day, there was *kirtan* in the home of the new superintendent, Bhudeb *babu*. This Body did not want to go, but on the insistence of the superintendent's wife, She did so as Bholanath's instructions to Her were to comply if anyone insisted. *Kirtan* was being sung in the outer section of the house. I was talking to this lady when I realised that My body was becoming numb. I felt as if her voice was coming from a long way off. Somehow reaching the veranda, I lay down on a wooden cot. A little later I got up very slowly, as if in a state of intoxication, and the superintendent's aunt brought Me back home.

Worship of Goddess *Kālī* in Bajitpur

An employee named Gyān Chakraborty and his wife Amiya used to live with us. Amiya was quite young and the two of us became very close, like sisters. After some time Amiya moved to another house.

²¹ Mā's exalted divine state was exposed to the public in Astagram around the last two quarters of 1914 and again in Bajitpur towards the end of 1918. In the intervening period of Her stay in Bīdyākūt and Ātpara She consciously avoided such exposure in public.

²² A judicial officer named Rebatī Babu. Since one of his legs was amputated, he used crutches. His home was in Nabadwīp.

²³ Follower of Lord Vishnu.

²⁴ The use of rosary is to assist a person in repeating one's *mantra*. However, when one's inner door opens up leading to divine ecstasy then external aids to remember God lose their significance.

One night I was sitting reciting *nām* when I found My body assuming *padmāsana* on its own. The *bhāvs* similar to those experienced in Astagram, began to occur again within this Body but they soon stopped.

In the mean time Bholanath had resolved to do the annual worship of Goddess *Kālī* himself in Bajitpur. The purchase of the necessary articles began. When the rice arrived I cleaned it and put it into a new container, when suddenly a crow flew in from somewhere and pecked at it. That rice was put away and a fresh consignment was bought and cleaned. This incident was considered a bad omen and an obstacle in the performance of the *pūjā*. Due to this I was now unable to cook the food offerings to the deity. It was decided that Amiya would do the cooking. The *pūjā* was to be held in an open space next to the house adjacent to ours. Due to the unavailability of a suitable priest, a neighbouring (*brahmin*) lawyer was asked to perform the *pūjā*. This individual was an advanced *tāntric*²⁵ who performed *pūjās* that included animal sacrifice and the offering of alcohol. However, in Bholanath's family the worship of Goddess *Kālī* had always been conducted in a purely *sāttvik* tradition²⁶; so, at his earnest request, the priest finally agreed to follow the *sāttvik* tradition. In the evening father accompanied by Mākhan (Mā's younger brother) arrived and the *pūjā* took place later on that night.

Amiya was preparing the *bhog*²⁷ and everything except the rice was done. The *pūjā* was nearing completion and the priest said, "Bring the *bhog* quickly. It will be needed for the *yagna*²⁸ as well." On being told that the rice was still to be prepared, he said, "In that case, I shall begin the *yagna*."

In the meantime, after cooking the rice Amiya had arranged it on two stone platters along with small portions of the other dishes that

²⁵ Worshipper of Tantra - a particular path of *Sādhanā* laying emphasis on *japa* of a *mantra* and other esoteric practices that relate to the powers latent in the human complex of physical, astral, and causal bodies in relation to the cosmic Power usually thought of as the Divine Feminine.

²⁶ As opposed to animal sacrifice and wine.

²⁷ The food offered to the deity.

²⁸ Sacred fire.

had been prepared. Standing near one of the doors of the room where the *bhog* had been prepared, I saw Amiya leaning against a pile of firewood, fast asleep. This Body sat down on the threshold in such a manner that no one could enter the room without stepping across Her knee. The place where the *pūjā* was being held was a short distance from where I was sitting and in-between there were two cottages, one next to the other, with fences for maintaining privacy.

In spite of the intervening space I could hear the chanting of the *mantras* clearly and also see the flames of the *yagna*. I saw a bright glow like the lustre of the full moon in the midnight sky, lighting up the entire house, its light falling upon this Body as well. The lamp in the kitchen appeared dim in the bright moonlight. Suddenly, there appeared from the right side of this Body a shadowy form of a tall, fair figure with a sacred thread on his shoulder, glowing and radiant in a red hue. The figure sat down before the two platters of food that were kept there to be offered to Goddess. He touched each item three times with his fingers formed in a particular *mudrā* (esoteric mystic gesture) and tasted them. I looked on, but soon he merged back into this Body from where he had appeared.

After this Bholanath hurried in and carrying the two platters in his two hands proceeded to where the worship was being performed. As he walked with the offerings, one individual walked ahead sprinkling water mixed with cow-dung²⁹ and on the side another followed holding a lantern. A third person also accompanied them holding a stick. In spite of all these precautions, a black dog suddenly appeared from nowhere and despite all efforts to prevent him from getting close, came and brushed against Bholanath.

Extremely disturbed by this ritual defilement, Bholanath put the two plates down at the base of the mango tree nearby and went and bathed in the pond. Then, on returning home, he told this Body to prepare fresh food since the dog had desecrated the *bhog*.³⁰ I told him

²⁹ To sanctify the path leading to the place of worship

³⁰ These precautions were normal for orthodox Hindu *pūjās* and were based on ancient injunctions that ensured that the esoteric rituals were successfully performed in a way that the Gods would accept the offering and bestow blessings

that sun-dried rice had to be bought from the market because there was none at home apart from the rice that had been pecked by the crow. Of course at that hour it would take too long to go to the market to buy the rice and then cook it for the *pūjā*, so, with no alternative left, Bholanath agreed to have the stored rice cooked for *bhog*. He exclaimed, "This must be Mother Goddess *Kālī*'s wish, or why should such a thing happen? Where is that rice? Hurry and arrange for it to be cooked; there is very little time."

The rice was prepared, and then a search began for plates. Bholanath ran to the base of the mango tree and found that the food had not been touched by anything and the two plates lay where he had put them. Not knowing what to do, he picked up the plates, threw their contents into the pond, washed them, bathed once again, and then with the freshly cooked food arranged on them, carried the plates with great *cāre* and offered them before Goddess *Kālī*.

Later, when taking *prasād* (the consecrated food offered in the *pūjā*), I related to him what had taken place earlier, asking him to inform the priest of the incident as well. The moment the priest heard about it, he eagerly asked, "Where is that *bhog*? I want to have it, because that is the real *bhog*, no matter if it was touched by a dog. The other *bhog* that was finally offered was merely an external one."

When he heard that the original *bhog* had been thrown into the pond, he was deeply aggrieved, but said, "There needed to be someone deserving enough to have that *mahāprasād*³¹, but as this was not the case things had to come to pass as they did." When people heard about this incident many laughed it away. Earlier too there had been gossip about this Body's strange behaviour during *kīrtan*.

Mā at Needlework

Once I had a *kheyāl* to learn tailoring in order to stitch a *panyābī*³² for Ashu³³ and a vest for Mākhan. I visited a neighbour to learn from

³¹ Food, offered to God which has been specially accepted/blessed

³² A long shirt with loose sleeves a k a 'kurta' in other parts of India

³³ Bholanathji's nephew, younger son of Revati Mohan Chakraborty

her, but even after two days no progress was made. The next time I visited her she vaguely described how to cut a shirt, and then said, "I don't know how to do it well." She mentioned the name of another person who she said could teach Me, but when I went to that woman, she too said that she didn't really know how to do it and did not tell Me anything further. That very day I sat down and tried to guess how to go about it. I then cut the fabric and stitched a *panjābi* for Ashu. When he put it on I found that it fitted him quite well. When I saw the *panjābi* that the lady whom I had initially approached had stitched for her son, I saw that it had not been made well. She remarked, "You have made the *panjābi* very well. When You know stitching so well, why did You come to me to learn?" They thought that I already had some knowledge of stitching. **No one realised that if a wish to do something arose within Me the means to achieve it would also present itself quite easily.**³⁴

There was a young servant called Akshay who worked at the court as well as in employees' homes. He used to stay and work at our home also. The boy was gentle and a sincere devotee. He would not eat or drink without completing his morning prayers, no matter how late it was. One day seeing this Body crocheting an *asan*³⁵, the boy asked with great humility, "O Mother, could You make me one to use when singing *Hari kirtan*?" On Bholanath's guidance he bought the required spool of thread and this Body made an *asan* for him. Hearing of this some people remarked, "What kind of conduct is this, making an *asan* for a servant?" This boy worked in Bhudeb *babu's* home too. When visiting Dhaka I once went to Bhudeb *babu's* home, and saw an *asan* similar to the one I had crocheted for Akshay. I was informed that Akshay had given it to Bhudeb *babu*.

When I was busy working I paid no attention to My body. One day I had to get up on a stool to do something and while getting off My foot got caught in an awkward position and I fell. I paid no heed to

³⁴ This expression of Mā enables the Divine Power to take control of any situation in place of will power. Please consult the section entitled "Divine Power and Will Power" within Chapter 4 for a better understanding of this topic.

³⁵ A small mat used to sit on the floor.

the pain but completed the work that I was doing. A couple of days later when putting on My clothes I found a blue coloured bruise on one side running from knee up to My thigh, with that area quite numb. It healed by itself in a few days, but it never occurred to Me to tell anyone about it.

Play of *Avidyā Māyā*³⁶

In answer to another question, Mā said: "Most people of My age called Me *didī* in Bajitpur. There was a much older woman who fondly called Me *Sitā*. This woman said to Me one day, "It is time for the annual *tahuri* (extra bonus). Don't You want to have some jewellery made, like an armlet or bangles?" This Body merely laughed, not paying the matter any attention at all. That lady thought I was trying to keep it a secret from her. She used to be very intimate with Me, but that evening I saw that she was no longer behaving with Me in the same easy manner.

Some days went by and I happened to learn from Bholanath that at this time of the year the annual accounting was completed in the court of the *zamindar* (landlord) and all the employees received some extra money in the form of *tahuri* and *māmuli*. That was what the lady had referred to. The next day, on Bholanath's instruction, I went to her and told her that I had not known about this practice, but by the lady's reaction it was obvious that she did not believe that this Body could be ignorant about such a thing that was so important to most people's domestic life. This Body came away quietly. Such are the ways of this world. **How often do people invite pain for themselves by not recognizing reality and by mistaking the untruth for the truth? This is what is *avidyā māyā*.**

After this incident this woman left for her own village. In the past she would always come and see this Body before leaving, but this time she did not. Once in her village she was frightened to go before a deity and became mentally deranged. When her husband's vacation ended, he came back to Bajitpur and spoke to Bholanath of his wife's

³⁶ Illusion springing from ignorance.

condition. This Body heard this and later, when there was the *kheyāl* regarding this woman, the latter recovered from her illness without any treatment

Mā Cooking for a Feast

Bholanath was on very good terms with everyone in Bajitpur. One day the *munsiff* of the collectorate where Bholanath worked invited a number of people for a feast. The invitees ranged from the lawyer to several other employees of the office, and the duty of preparing the entire meal fell on this Body. About two hundred and fifty people had been invited! How this Body prepared so much food in such a short time seemed extraordinary and invited many admiring comments. This was the first time that this Body prepared *pulāo*³⁷ and various other dishes in such large quantities.

An awestruck Maid Servant

A young girl of twelve or thirteen named Sarala used to work on a part-time basis at our home as well as in some other homes. On days when special dishes were prepared I would ask her to have her meal at our home. For *Durgā pūjā* she would be given clothes of her liking. On the days she did not wash the utensils properly I would wash them again. As a result of this she usually took a lot of care in doing our work. She would laughingly say, "You never say anything but You are very good at getting work out of people. The others talk a lot and I quietly slip away, but I can't do that with You." Some would tell her, "How is it that you clean Ashu's aunt's utensils so well? Don't we also pay you?"

One day she committed a minor theft behind My back. Suddenly out of My mouth came the words, "So it was you who did this!" Speaking in this manner, this Body took the maid-servant to the place where she had hidden the stolen article. She was completely taken aback for she had just finished hiding it before entering My room.

³⁷ Rice cooked in clarified butter, with spices and other ingredients

Since that day she remained in awe of this Body and not only performed her tasks better but sometimes did extra work

Bholanath's Puppy

One day Bholanath brought home a beautiful white puppy. Slowly it became the watchman of the home. Once it had diarrhoea and at night whenever he felt the need to defecate, he would convey this almost like a human being. I would take him out and then bring him back in again. The pup remained ill for three or four days. His behaviour was to some extent like that of a human child. He would bark when hungry and quieten down when I went to him. When he grew a little older I noticed that he would stay out of others' sight until everyone had finished their meals, but from time to time he would come in quietly to check if everyone had eaten.

Curing Ailments

Once there was a frightening outbreak of cholera in Bajitpur. Bholanath too contracted the infection. He could not urinate and his condition worsened. There was no one in the home besides Me. Suddenly a *kheyāl* came to Me that if My left hand thumb nail died, Bholanath would recover. I said to Myself, "So be it." Slowly his condition began to improve, while My thumb nail gradually stopped growing.

One morning I was sitting by Myself when I had a vision of this Body's father suffering acutely from asthma. He could hardly breathe and appeared as if dead. He had a chronic problem with asthma. This Body went to Bholanath and told him about this to which he responded, "Do what You think will be the best." In those days I did My utmost to follow Bholanath's instructions. In cases where there was something I was unable to accomplish and I felt greatly distressed, I would go and tell him about it. By then he too had come to understand this Body's ways.

Later that day, sitting quietly, I again envisioned Myself going to My father and telling him something for his recovery. The thought

came automatically, "He will now live." But it also became clear to Me how and when he would leave his body. When I met him later My father told Me that at that particular time he had indeed been suffering very badly from asthma in Kasba. He said that a person had visited him at that moment and told him about an amulet. On procuring and wearing the amulet he gradually recovered.

Once Ashu had high fever accompanied by blood dysentery. Bholanath was easily frightened by the smallest ailment and was also very soft-hearted. He was greatly distressed by Ashu's illness and was almost in tears. I said, "He needs nursing. What is the point in crying?" He probably thought that this Body was without any feeling or perhaps that to Me Ashu was just someone else's child. In the meantime Bholanath had to leave on official work for some other place.

This Body spent all Her time nursing Ashu alone. The thought arose that if special care is not given, he may not live. I stayed up every night, taking him outside to the toilet several times and helping him. Ashu was then about twelve or thirteen years old. After some time he recovered.



CHAPTER 4

Ushā didi and Janaki babu in Bajitpur

Ushā *didi's* husband came to Bajitpur on a transfer, and a few months later Ushā *didi* arrived as well. She took great joy in talking about the past. They lived in the house next to ours and we could talk to one another from inside our own rooms.¹

I kept everything—the rooms, the bed, and all the other things—scrupulously clean, washing the clothes with soap. Seeing the bed sheet and other things to be as clean as if laundered by a washerman. Ushā *didi* would sometimes put her baby on the bed and laugh. One day the baby wet the bed and Ushā *didi* washed and cleaned everything as a result. On seeing Me laughing she exclaimed, "You can very well laugh! Here I am toiling as a consequence of my own actions!" I told her, "**Such is the nature of man; he creates his own destiny and brings suffering upon himself by his own actions.**" Ushā *didi* was simple in nature but intelligent.

One day after a religious ceremony someone came and gave us two plates of *naivedya*². Ushā *didi* gave some to her daughters, took some for herself, and kept the rest for her husband. Seeing Me putting the other plate away, she asked, "You did not take any?" I replied, "Let Bholanath come, it would not be proper for Me to take it first." Ushā *didi* said, "From now on, I too shall not take anything before giving it to my husband." She would often ask for My suggestions in matters like washing clothes and other household matters. There was never any outward expression indicating that I had special knowledge

¹ The huts were built on raised ground mounted on bamboo frames with walls made of woven bamboo strips and straw and the roof was thatched.

² Offering of fruits and sweets at the time of worship.

about things, but whatever was needed at any particular time just came to Me and was carried out automatically

One day there was *kirtan* at a nearby home. Ushā *didī* said, "Let us sit near the fence and listen" We did so, and after coming back, when I was serving my cousin³ his meal, I found that My hands and feet were cold, My body was turning numb and the plate of rice was almost slipping from My hands. Whatever I tried to hold seemed to slip from My grip. Somehow I staggered to another room and then began to roll on the floor in ecstasy, after which I lay in one corner in a stupor. Neither My cousin nor Ushā *didī* were aware of My condition. It was only after a long time that I was able to raise Myself up from the floor. The next day when Ushā *didī* asked Me I told her that at times such things happened to Me

Weddings of two Sisters in Dhaka⁴

Two sisters of this Body were getting married in Dhaka. We went there for the weddings and, on seeing the would-be bridegroom of the older sister, I told My mother that he was unsuitable. My mother and other relatives disapproved of My expressing such sentiments prior to an auspicious event, but I still insisted, saying, "What am I to do! I am telling you what I see." Whatever this Body feels always finds its full outward expression. My mother laughed, saying, "I don't find anything wrong with the boy; why are You saying this?"

After the marriage ceremonies were completed, it so happened that this Body did not participate in the *āshīrbād* ceremony. When My sister Surobalā came to seek My blessings before leaving for her in-laws home, the words slowly came out of My mouth, "Do not remain in this world for long." It was learnt later that her husband was mentally unstable. Three years after her marriage, Surobalā died.⁵

Soon after the weddings several of us accompanied the younger sister and her husband to the Dhakeswari temple. There, while paying

³ Nishikanta Bhattacharya (Smritibhushan) was Mā's cousin (maternal uncle's son). For sometime he lived with them in Bajitpur. He was elder to Mā

⁴ 1921

⁵ August 1924, at the age of 18 years and 8 months

our obeisance to the deity, this Body entered into a deep mystical absorption for some time. First, *āsanas*⁶ formed on their own, then came about different postures of obeisance. After this the Body slowly composed Herself into a quiet, steady position. Everyone was avidly observing these processes. This was the first time that these transformations occurred inside a temple. After this, whenever this Body was in the presence of divinity in any form - seeing, hearing, or even remembering - a change would come over Her.

The Ascetic Shivānanda

In Bajitpur, like in the earlier days, I would sit at night whenever possible and would often find that My breathing had stopped. There was no fixed time for this, it could happen even when I was moving about. I informed Bholanath about these occurrences.

One day a *sādhu* (ascetic) named Shivānanda came to the Sub-Registrar's house. On hearing about My yogic trances he came to our home one evening. I sat in an *āsana* calmly and some *kriyās* (yogic activities) began to manifest themselves in the Body. After a while the *sādhu* left. Later, at his request, Bholanath and I went to the Sub-Registrar's home. The *sādhu* placed a small mat for Me where he used to perform *pūjā* and I sat down on it. Usually, when I sat at night, *kriyās* would manifest for some time and then the Body would calm down. The same happened that day too. Waves of sublime joy flowed within and around Me. When the Body became a little composed, we returned home.

Bholanath said to Me that the *sādhu* wanted to do *Shiv pūjā* here, to which this Body agreed. All arrangements were made for the *pūjā* and for his meal. After completing his *pūjā* the *sādhu* called Me and, sitting on the cot said, "Now You perform the *pūjā* on my *Shiv-linga*." On Bholanath's instruction I spoke to the *sādhu* after covering Myself properly and told him that I had never performed *Shiv pūjā* before. He replied, "Please sit down, I shall tell You how to proceed." Changes had started happening to this Body even before I sat on the *asan*, and

⁶ Yogic postures

seeing My state he said, "You don't need to do anything more, just put the flowers, the sandalwood paste and *bel* leaves on Shiva's head" When about to do *āchman*⁷, My hand touched the ground and would not rise. Witnessing My abnormal state, he anxiously repeated, "That is enough! There is no need to do anything more" After eating his meal, the *sādhu* left, taking his *Shiv-linga* with him. Afterwards it was learned that he had told some people that this Body was under the influence of *Ānanda Bhairavi*⁸

Performing *Lakshmī Pūjā*

On coming to Bajitpur, one day this Body asked Bholanath to bring Her a *ghot* (*ghara*)⁹ like those used for *Lakshmī pūjā*. Bholanath searched for it with little success and reported back, "I could find only one that fits Your description, but it is old. Should I bring that?" This Body replied, "Yes, that is the one I want." When the *ghot* was brought it was found to be smeared with vermilion and sandalwood paste from previous rituals to such an extent that one could hardly see the colour of the metal. This Body said, "See how this *ghot* has been used for *pūjā* over a long time?" With great care She cleaned it for *Lakshmī pūjā*



Quite some time later, after coming to Shahbag, this Body often went into *samādhi* and was hardly conscious of how the days passed. Many a Thursday would go by without Her being able to perform the traditional rituals of *pūjā*. Late one night She told Bholanath, "Let us go out and pick some mango leaves for the *pūjā*" Bholanath exclaimed, "So late! It is not right to pick leaves at night, and what about the other ingredients?" But for this Body there was no difference between day and night. She was totally absorbed in the mystic state,

⁷ The act of purifying oneself by sprinkling a tiny amount of consecrated water from the palm of the left hand into one's mouth by using the ring finger and thumb of the right hand. Before commencing worship these actions are repeated thrice along with the uttering of a *mantra*

⁸ One of the forms of Lord Shiva – female aspect

⁹ A round metal container with an upturned rounded rim

Her eyes at times open, at other times closed or half shut, sometimes laughing like a child, at others teary-eyed and Her face flushed with a red glow. She would keep standing in a strange enchanted posture at times. No words would emerge from Her mouth, while at times there would be only incoherent sounds. But the *pūjā* had to be performed, so this Body said to Bholanath, "You do not have to pick the leaves." So saying, She went outside accompanied by him and stretched Her arms upward saying, "This Body will pick them. Everything is perfectly balanced here, there is no such thing as right or wrong, or auspicious or inauspicious moments, where this Body is involved, there are no strictures of any kind."¹⁰ When it came to actually performing the rituals of *pūjā*, She was still in a trance-like state and took a long time to complete the act of consecration

When Atal *babu*¹¹ came to Shahbag I told him, "This Body is unable to do *Lakshmī pūjā* every Thursday (as was traditional). Would you like to take this *ghot*?" He accepted it with great eagerness and thereafter he and his wife did their *Lakshmī pūjā* with it.

Yogic Kriyās Manifested by *Harinām*

Continuously for about a month, this Body sat on the ground at night reciting *Harinām* and experiencing various yogic *kriyās* in Her body. After some days it was noticed that while reciting *nām*, She would continuously emanate the sound 'hari' while inhaling (*pūrak*) and 'bol' while exhaling (*rechak*) in a synchronized rhythm. Simultaneously, the Body would spontaneously assume a special *āsana* and then automatically spin around in circles while swaying rhythmically from side to side. After some time these motions would stop and the Body would become absolutely still and calm. The eyes would be fixed in a remote stare as if immersed in deep meditation. The breath was suspended, resulting in something like *kumbhak* (yogic retention of the breath). At that time this Body had not heard from anyone about the *kriyās* of the *prān vāyu* (life force or vital energy) or about *pūrak*, *rechak* or *kumbhak*.

¹⁰ Mā giving hint to Her being the Supreme

¹¹ Atal Bihari Bhattacharya, a professor at Rajshahi College

At times Her legs would stretch out fully and then gradually without the help of hands form *padmāsana* (lotus *yogic* posture) or some other *āsana*. At times the legs would stretch out straight with the upper body bending forward and the palms resting upon the two big toes and the head and the rest of the body would rest on the thighs.¹² Some days numerous *āsanas*, such as *gomukhi* among others would form after which the head would fall forward to the ground and the arms would loosely rest at the back. Whatever *āsanas* the Body formed were done automatically without the aid of the arms and hands (as there was no volition to assume the poses). In certain *āsanas*, the body would fold completely forward with the head, chest, and stomach on the floor. These *kriyās* would continue with the head turned to one side and one cheek touching the floor, then the other cheek; the forehead, nose, mouth, and chin touching the floor, while the arms lay limp at the back or stretched upwards and then fully out in front. In this manner countless *yogic kriyās* and *pranāms* occurred and then eventually everything reverted back to normal. But the precise rhythm of breathing of *pūrak*, *kumbhak*, *rechak*-would change with each *āsana* and flow exactly as required for different *āsanas* automatically. The movement of the body as it spontaneously formed various *āsanas* would take place purely as a result of the different pattern of the breath.

While remaining in these postures, the activities within the Body would all of a sudden become calm and completely still. In the beginning this Body would be in a state of anticipation and several questions would arise: Who was watching whom and from where and how? What was all this that was happening? What was to happen after this? These were spontaneously yet very deliberately manifested. When totally calm, this Body would sit quietly for some time and then lie down. On getting up in the morning, My body felt light with a wave of exquisite joy coursing through My entire being. Day and night I remained immersed in sublime bliss.

Alone at home, I would hurry through My housework, possessed by an all-consuming longing for the night when I could sit by Myself.

¹² Paschimottanāsan.

The more these *yogic* activities manifested themselves in this Body, the greater was the joy and the less was the desire to eat and sleep, which became almost completely forgotten. Although Bholanath never stood in the way of anything that this Body did, he would express his concern at seeing these developments, particularly as this Body had not been initiated. Hearing him express these concerns, She would laugh.

Mā's *Dīkshā*

A few months after coming to Bajitpur, while sitting on the northern bank of the pond, this Body had a *kheyāl* which brought about certain questions. How does a human being seek God? How does one realise Him? **I would have to enact the play of *sādhanā***¹³. **Another day a thought came up, what is 'dīkshā' and how does it come about?** Accordingly, the meaning of *dīkshā* (initiation) and the process by which it occurs were manifested distinctly within.

In reply to questions regarding initiation, Mā said, "Whatever comes about..." Ashu's mother (Bholanath's sister-in-law) had received a letter from her *gurudev* when this Body was very young. That letter had been kept safely. After noting the address, Bholanath wrote to him requesting that he visit us. Receiving no reply he then sent a letter to Ashu's mother asking for the updated address, but there was no reply to that either. In the mean time, the *kheyāl* regarding *dīkshā* began to manifest itself within this Body as a kind of *līlā* (divine play). Since for Her every thought is revealed to its fullest, this thought expanded itself to reveal that when the desire for *dīkshā* is intense, the Lord Himself manifests in the form of *dīkshā*. Just as the seed is an intrinsic part of the tree and the tree is inherent in the seed, similarly the seed is a proof of the tree and the tree of the seed - a natural revelation.

¹³ Austere endeavour/spiritual practice for the purpose of preparing oneself for Self-realisation.

It was the night of *Jhulan Pūrnimā*.¹⁴ In the evening a married woman from the neighbourhood came and asked whether I would go to see the *jhulan* swing festival, but I declined. After Bholanath had eaten, I also ate a little hurriedly. I normally didn't take My meal so early but I was overcome by a singular sensation. Then, sitting on the floor a short distance from his cot, I told him, "Tonight I feel a special kind of *bhāv*, I shall sit here."

A couple of days earlier, on observing various *kriyās* manifesting themselves through this Body, Bholanath had expressed concern. "You have not yet been initiated. I do not understand what is happening to You. We are *Shaivites*¹⁵ and *Shāktas*¹⁶, yet You recite the name of *Hari* and undergo all these mystic states. At least You can recite the names of the deities worshipped as per our family tradition!" I agreed and after deciding on the name '*Jai Shiva Shankara Bom Bom Hara Hara*' asked for Bholanath's permission for this, to which he consented.

The lamp was burning in the room and it was about ten or eleven at night. I noticed that the *yogic kriyās* which had manifested earlier at My reciting *Harinām* not only continued in the same vein when reciting Shiva's *nām*, but also increased while evolving into still newer activities. This Body sat steadily facing the north-east forming a particular *āsana*. While She cleaned the floor through a symbolic gesture, a *yagna-mandal*¹⁷ took shape automatically-although She had never seen such a thing being made before. While still seated in the particular *āsana*, Her upper body folded forward lying limp on the

¹⁴ The festival of *Jhulan* is celebrated to mark the divine play of Lord Krishna and Rādhā sitting on a decorated swing. The celebration takes place in the month of Sravan (July-August) from the eleventh day of the new moon till the full moon. It is culminated by tying *raakhi* (decorated hand bands) on the wrists of brothers. This particular date for *Jhulan Pūrnimā* was Monday, August 7, 1922.

¹⁵ Followers of Shiva.

¹⁶ Worshipper of the Divine Energy - *Shaktī* - the dynamic Real of the Supreme Being, one form being *Kālī*.

The power (*Shaktī*) of the immutable Shiva, Shiva and *Shaktī* are both alternative conceptions of the same unity.

¹⁷ Design drawn on a plain surface upon which specific wood pieces are placed and fire lighted for *yagna* (the sacred fire ritual that is part of the initiation ceremony).

floor in front. Then She turned to face the east. Along with the changed rhythm of breath, this Body was suffused with an ineffable, divine delight. A vibration arose inside, below the navel, in the form of a *mantra-bīj*' (mystical sound) and travelled upward. The respective *pūjā* took place at the proper time¹⁸ along with the appropriate *āsanas*. For instance, the hand moved to the middle of the *mandap* or *mandal* and drew particular *yantric* letters (mystic design). Then the various aspects of worship - the appearance of fire, materials for *yagna*¹⁹, the *vedic* rites and oblations, the *mantras* - all self manifested, and the Body performed all the rites as and when required.

Then once again the Body became still and inside Her the *akshar* or *bīj* (the mystic syllable) began to resonate, rising at first indistinctly with the breath and vibrating inside from below the navel. As the indistinctness gave way to clarity of sound,²⁰ this Body's eyes shut temporarily. After a series of complicated *kriyās* of the mouth and tongue, this resonance, coursing up from the navel through all parts of the body with increasing vigour, finally enunciated itself in a loud and clear voice through the mouth. Then the *mantra* was written into the *sthandil*²¹ and the oblation was completed by the *mantra* itself. This was the revelation of a special aspect of the *Shatchakra-bhed*²² as is mentioned in *yogic* scriptures. **Unless one can overcome the outward and inward inertia (*jaratā*), the rhythm of the *nām*, the enunciation of the '*bīj mantra*', the remembrance of or meditation on the Supreme cannot flow in the correct manner.**

Once the oblation was completed, an ineffable joyous thrill ran through the Body. Entering a realm of supreme bliss, the Body became motionless. A question rose from within: 'What was the *bīj*?' In

¹⁸ Precise astrological moment.

¹⁹ Oblation offered to the Deity by reciting *mantra* into the sacrificial fire.

²⁰ This is classified as '*pashyanti vak*' (subtle sound) arising in the astral body in unison with the gross body. There are four stages of sound as per *yogic* scriptures, known as *para* (indistinct) below the navel, *pashyanti* (navel), *madhyama* (at the heart) and *vaikhari* (sound that comes out of mouth).

²¹ Vessel meant for containing the fire for *yagna*.

²² The penetration of the six mystical *chakras* within the body corresponding to the specific *bīj mantras* and deities.

answer, its meaning, characteristics, tangible and intangible *bhāvas* (divine moods) appeared from within, manifesting themselves in sequential order in all forms within this Body, as well as in the form of sounds in My ears. As I sat, I found that the thumb was approaching the finger joints and, after hovering around, it reached the right spot to perform the *mudra*, and the *mantra* began to be recited—*japa* had begun. That night was the first time that the *mantra*, *japa*, *pūjā* and *yagna* all manifested in this Body. The next morning vibrations could still be felt in the veins and nerves even within the area of the stomach. However, these gradually faded with the activities of the day.

The previous night Bholanath had fallen asleep after watching two or three *yogic kriyās* of this Body. In the morning he asked Me, "What were You doing last night?" In response I told him, "Do not ask Me any questions regarding this. So far I have not kept anything from you. However, today there is no urge from within to tell you about it. What can I do? If you still want to know, let Me see if there are any words to express the experience. But if I do so, there is no guarantee of what might befall this Body." Bholanath exclaimed, "Even I cannot be told!" He remained deep in thought for a while. Then, perhaps thinking it might be harmful for Me to disclose these matters, he said, "Very well! You need not say anything."

Later that morning, I tried to sit by Myself for a while. After the entire household had finished their meal, I bathed and sat down without partaking food or drink, in the manner of one initiated who is preparing for *sandhyā*²³. This was the first time that I did so during the day. For a while I sat silently; then, the moment I started *japa* I found that My hand was drawing back. With My mind vacant, I sat there, conscious that the prayer rituals must be completed. After quite some time I realised that the kind of tapping sounds that I had experienced the previous night along My spinal column at a point slightly below the waist had appeared again along with the altered

²³ Specific prayers and rituals performed by the initiated Hindu at the 'junction' (*sandhis*) of the day-dawn (morning), noon and sunset (evening).

breathing activities. At this the Body settled down in a particular *āsana*. Then various *yogic kriyās* began appearing.

Sprinkling water to the left of the *āsana*, I prepared the area for the *pūjā* and then washed both My hands in a vessel. The flowers were picked, the sandalwood paste ground, the *navedya* (food offering) arranged, and the incense stick and lamp lit while all the time I was sitting motionless in the position of *siddhāsana*. Everything required for the *pūjā* manifested from within this Body and revealed to the Ātma (Self). Finally, remaining in that position, the hands began rotating, first touching the head, and then every part of the Body, finally dropping to the ground in such a way as to form an *asan*. Sitting on My upturned hands the upper body fell forward with the head resting on the floor. This Body had never seen anyone doing such an *āsana* before.

Sitting straight and still, *mantras* were pronounced on their own and *kriyās* such as *āchman*, *jalashuddhi*²⁴, *sūrya-pīṇām*²⁵, which are parts of the *sandhyā*, were all carried out one by one. Then, with the sense that all Gods and Goddesses were within Me, the hands moved over the Body performing *pūjā*²⁶ to the various deities by adopting various *mudrās*²⁷ at certain focal points of the Body²⁸. Incense, a lit lamp, and *navedya* were also offered. Sometimes, after sitting in the same position for a long time, the upper Body would fall forward with the head resting on the ground. At times the Body sat absolutely still as if frozen and then an uninterrupted flow of *mantras* and *stotras* (mystical hymns) emerged from the lips.

When the *pūjā* was completed this Body lay on Her back and from within, carefully carried a deity from the *brahmatalu* (crown *chakra* at Her head) down to Her chest and then lowered it on to the ground in front of Her, placing it on an *asan*-which also self-manifested. She then began to do *pūjā*. Afterwards, the deity was lifted in the same

²⁴ Purification of the water through recitation of *mantra*.

²⁵ Salutation to Sun God.

²⁶ Ritualistic *tantric* mode of worship.

²⁷ Special hand gestures.

²⁸ Uttering different *mantras* known as *nyasa*.

manner with utmost care from the *asan* and brought back to the crown *chakra* of the head, whereupon it again merged within the Self. The hands then touched one by one all the different parts of the body

It came to be known many years later from persons well versed in *shastric*²⁹ rites and rituals that all the various processes of worship performed by this Body at that time were in accordance with scriptural injunctions. This Body, like an automaton, accomplished perfectly all the necessary steps.

By the time all this was completed the day had neared its end and there was no time for lunch, so I began to prepare supper. After feeding Bholanath, I sat down once more with the feeling that the day's work had not finished. As on the earlier occasion, different *kriyās* took place spontaneously after which all arrangements for *pūjā* were automatically manifested. The worship of various deities (that emerged from within) took place with their appropriate *bīj* and *mantras*. These deities are but different forms of the Supreme One for which different *pūjās* are performed according to their distinct manifestations. Later, the *kriyās* for completing the evening prayers occurred by themselves. By the time I finished My meal, I found the night had almost ended. I lay down for a short while before getting up to take care of Bholanath, and then sat down again for the morning prayers. The same type of *kriyās* appeared as had manifested the night before, after which the morning *sandhyā* was carried out.

Starting with the self-initiation on the night of *Jhulan Pūrṇimā*, numerous deities in numerous forms revealed themselves, and innumerable Gods and Goddesses manifested through countless *bhāvs* in this Body. Among these deities were many which were hitherto unheard of. Before the *pūjā* began, a *bīj* would come from within and later emerge from the lips. Simultaneously the full appearance and characteristics of the deity associated with the *bīj* would also manifest in this Body accompanied by different rhythmic breathing, the *āsana*, *mudrā*, meditation, and *pranām* (prostration). There was a time when I would see only the colour yellow, sometimes deep and at others faint. The divine mood was revealed

²⁹ Pertaining to the laws, rites and rituals as described in the Scriptures

no matter what direction this Body looked or the manner of worship She undertook. The only reality She perceived was That - the very essence of every form, mode of being, and expression. Whatever existed was That. This aspect remained throughout, in whatever paths of *sādhanā* were revealed.

Sometimes, on seeing a particular deity, the question would arise as to their identity, for their worship was not common within the community. Immediately a satisfactory explanation would emerge from this Body's lips, as well as the revelation of the deity's various characteristics. This Body accomplished every act of worship without any external material. Often the *pūjā* was accomplished only with *mantras* and without any outward ritual. Whatever was needed at any point of time manifested on its own. These aspects are beyond the comprehension of the ordinary mind.

From the night of the *Jhulan* initiation this Body no longer accepted invitations to other people's homes. Later another mood arose of not accepting anything from anyone. But as Bholanath did not like Me to refuse the things that were customarily given to married women, like conch-shell bangles, vermilion and betel-leaf, I accepted those³⁰. Even after I stopped talking, neighbours would take Me to their homes to help them with cooking when they invited people. I went and did whatever was needed but I would not eat anything. This upset them and after some time they stopped calling this Body to help with the cooking.

A couple of months after the *dīkshā* it was revealed from within that the day on which there was no shadow to be seen, the body would

³⁰ White conch shell bangles - symbolise purity and faithfulness, just as the saffron robes of a *sannyāsi* symbolise renunciation. Iron bangles - represent subtle protection of the body, similar to people wearing certain stones in ring(s) to appease or strengthen planetary effects on their body. Vermilion is a symbol of marriage and men should not look upon married women with a desire of sex. The red colour represents creative power. Wearing specific bangles, putting vermilion and offering betel-leaf is mainly prevalent among married Hindu women in eastern India.

cease to be. Well, how nice! Along with this the *kheyāl* came: So this Body will not be seen when it ceases to cast a shadow! Some days went by. Suddenly one day I saw Myself as a glowing luminous figure. This Body was a light in the darkness, literally a light by which one could make out one's way in the dark. The Body's bright glow could be seen even in the light of the sun or moon, just as it is possible to make out the flame of a lamp or the beam of an electric light in the light of the sun and the moon. I could see My own Body as a full-size luminous figure in whichever direction I looked. The quality of this light was incomparable and indescribable.

As the light of the sun or moon creates shadows, this light created yet another form of light—sometimes bluish, sometimes yellowish and sometimes of a crimson hue. Sometimes the white light was more dazzling, at other times the others dazzled more, but all the time there was a dazzling luminescence. Simultaneously, the realization came from within that a state in which there is neither body nor shadow must be what one would call the divine form of pure consciousness! Instantaneously there was a flash of revelation like the sun suddenly appearing out of the clouds. A dazzling luminosity engulfed the entire universe of which this Body's luminosity was also a part.

Before this, when the *yogic kriyās* were being experienced, at times there would be a temporary inclination to stand looking at the sun. Then, on turning the eyes from the sun and on blinking, the whole world appeared to be pervaded by the brilliant red glow of the sun; the colours appeared to be different in the morning than in the evening. There are no words to explain this satisfactorily, but the experiences were extraordinary and complete in themselves. On closing the eyes the entire light of the external world could be seen within, sometimes even in a dark room. Whatever this Body looked upon whether in the sun or moonlight, trees, animals, humans acquired a white lustre which would disappear after some time. These visions of light continued for some days during which time there appeared many kinds of *yantras* (mystic geometric diagrams) of various sizes.

Revelation of Ma's True Identity

On a Monday, seven days after *dīkshā*. I sat down as part of My domestic routine for the morning prayers. There was no significant sign of any *kriyā*. After performing a few rites I got up, but as My limbs were unsteady—as if in a state of intoxication. I started the day's cooking while being seated. After everyone finished lunch I sat down again to do the *sandhyā*.

During the day while at *pūjā* I usually kept the door partly closed. After a while Bholanath and Nishi *babu*, My maternal cousin, entered the room. I continued to sit, veiled and absorbed in *pūjā*. Nishi *babu* said to Bholanath, "Don't you say anything? Indulging in such rites before initiation is not good. Why don't you ask Her what She is doing sitting like this?" So saying he left the room, but then returned and said to Bholanath, "Ask Her what She is doing." By then the *yogic kriyās* had begun and I kept sitting in the same absorbed manner. My cousin was unaware of the *kriyās* taking place in My body and, while sitting on My right with Bholanath, he kept urging, "Go on, ask Her!"

This Body heard this clearly and then suddenly, without changing position, I turned My head towards them and said, "What is it that you want to ask?" So loudly and forcefully had I spoken and such was My demeanour that it startled and frightened Nishi *babu*, who drew back hurriedly and with folded hands asked in an awed voice, "Who are You?" But in that instant this Body had returned to Her calm and smiling self, saying, "What! Are you frightened? No, no, do not fear, do not fear, do not fear!" and the right hand went up forming an *āshīrbhād mudrā* - gesture of protection and reassurance. After this the Body, while still in the same *āsana*, turned from a north-facing to an east-facing position.

My cousin was older than Me and I called him Thakur *bhai*. According to the prevalent norms, I never spoke to Bholanath in his presence and always kept Myself carefully veiled. However, at that moment My sense of modesty seemed to have been blown away like the wind blowing clothes and I was hardly aware that My clothes

were in fact in a state of disarray. This Body seemed to be observing Herself from the outside as if She were a different entity.

When Thakur *bhai* and Bholanath asked, "Who are You?" Slowly the words emerged, '*Purna Brahma Nārāyan*'³¹ With the two of them earnestly discussing between themselves whether or not a feminine form should be *Nārāyani* and their repeatedly asking Me "Who are You?", the words came out one after another: '*Mahādev, Mahādevi, Nārāyan, Nārāyani* and so on.'

Bholanath asked Me, "If You are indeed *Purna Brahma Nārāyan* and all else that You say You are, why are You speaking in this unnatural manner?"

The answer came, "At present this Body appears to be in a human form as perceived by You, so the behaviour is in accordance with that."

Again Bholanath asked, "What were You doing?"

To which I responded, "I was engaged in *sandhya pūjā*."

Bholanath objected, "But You have not been initiated!"

Again the answer came, "From your point of view that occurred on the night of the last *Jhulan Pūrṇimā*."

Bholanath then queried, "Who am I?"

The answer came, "You are That - *Mahādev*"³²

"When will I have my initiation?"

The answer came, "In the month of *Agrahāyan*."

Bholanath asked, "On which date?"

The answer came, "On the 15th"³³

All the details were given in answer to his questions. Both Thakur *bhai* and Bholanath then asked, "Who will give the initiation?"

This Body pointed to Herself, saying, "I"

They then consulted an almanac to find that it not only corroborated these details but that it was also a very auspicious day for initiation.

³¹ The Supreme Being, with and without attributes and beyond. Refer Appendix II

³² A correlation may be established with the installation of *Shiv-linga* at the *Siddheswari* holy spot in Dhaka by the name of *Mahādev*. Refer sub-heading "Seven Days at the *Siddheswari Kālī* Temple" in Chapter 6

³³ Friday, December 1, 1922

The two of them again consulted one another and Bholanath asked, "Well, tell us what will be the star on that day?" The answer to that too came out instantly, but since he was not conversant with the names of all the stars, Bholanath did not quite grasp it. So the words then came out, "Janaki *babu*, who lives next door, has not yet left for work, go and ask him." They were still debating whether or not to fetch him when this Body made as if to go Herself, saying "So shall I call in Janaki *babu*?" Fearing that She would go out as She was, with Her clothes in such disarray, Bholanath hastened out and brought Janaki *babu* back with him.

On his arrival, Janaki *babu* confirmed that the star She had named - Rohini - was correct. Hours went by while the three of them discussed, deliberated, and asked questions. At one time, they asked this Body, "What is the *Rohini* star?"

The answer given was, "Whoever *Rohini* is - I am the same."

Janaki *babu* asked once again, "Who are You?"

Slowly and calmly came the reply, "*Purna Brahma Nārāyan*."

Janaki *babu* then said, "You are *shaitan* (the devil)!" Much later he repeated, "You are *shaitan, shaitani* (the she devil)!"

This Body then started laughing aloud and uttered the words, "What I have said is correct. Whatever you may all say, you are just testing Me."

Then they said, "What is the proof that You are indeed *Purna Brahma Nārāyan*?"

"You want to see?"

On speaking these words, a wonderful change came over this Body. Thakur *bhai* and Janaki *babu* continued to talk earnestly some distance away. This Body asked Bholanath to come and sit nearby and when he did, while reciting a *mantra* She touched the crown of his head with Her hand. Immediately, with the sound of 'Om' on his lips, Bholanath became absolutely motionless while sitting in an *āsana* on the ground. Having lost all sense of the outside world, he sat with eyes upturned and half opened, so totally motionless that Ashu, returning from school and finding him in that state for quite sometime, started crying. This Body sat quietly and amusedly observed these events.

Thakur *bhai* consulted Janaki *babu*. Soon Janaki *babu* came up to Me in an agitated manner saying, "Now please bring Ramani *babu* (Bholanath) back to a normal state, we beseech You." A little later this Body once again touched Bholanath on the crown of his head and gradually he more or less returned to the condition that they desired. Bholanath said, "I cannot describe where and in what a blissful state I was all this time." The day was drawing to an end and, donning once again the sense of modesty and arranging Her clothes, this Body reverted to Her household duties.



At this point Mā was asked about the state She had induced in Bholanath, was this the real thing?" Mā replied, "This was merely a touch, a step towards self realization. But the experience was certainly not a mere illusion or a magic show."

Then Mā continued to narrate, "Continuously weeping and earnestly requesting with folded hands, they pressed Me repeatedly to bring Bholanath back to normal. Although this was done, was he able to express fully what his demeanour seemed to indicate? Everything cannot be expressed. The Supreme Being is unknowable, inexpressible, indescribable, and perfect. Don't think that this was only a transitory experience. Remember that this entire creation, in whatever condition is wholly under His control.

Janaki *babu* was Ushā *didī*'s husband, a man of simple and peaceful disposition. I learnt later that it was in order to vex Me that he had repeatedly called me a 'she-devil'. He apparently had thought that I was possessed by some supernatural spirit. This belief of his later vanished completely. This Body had never before appeared openly before him. That was the first time that we met and conversed. Afterwards he would come to meet this Body in the *āshram* at Dhaka and laugh over his delusion. Apparently he had been surprised and startled by Her moods and trances. He later developed a deep regard for this Body and profound faith in Her.

The question was put to Mā in great earnest, "Mā, the words 'Purna *Brahma Nārāyan*' that You uttered, inevitably brings to mind the question whether this is a state attained by *sādhanā* or are You that

Ultimate, Absolute Self?" When pressed for an answer, Mā replied, "Oh! this Little Girl is what She is and so also Her revelation. Is this state achievable by *sādhanā*? Are you thinking only of the four-armed form³⁴?" Soon after She said solemnly, "Try to know Me-where there is no doubt or controversy. Is it possible to transcend doubt with this mind of yours?"

Mā in the Play of *Sādhanā*

"There had been no earlier knowledge of the essence of *Brahma* (the Supreme all-pervading Divine Reality), or of any Gods and Goddesses. This Body had neither heard about them from anyone nor read about them in any book. This was the first time that these things had automatically emerged from Her mouth, just as earlier the special *mudrās*, *āsanas*, rituals, and *kriyās* had manifested in Her body while performing formal *puja*. There had been no astrological knowledge of the stars or almanacs either. When Bholanath and Nishi *babu* entered the room this Body had been engaged in the *sandhyā pūjā* and the associated *kriyās*.

That night, after everyone had their meals, I sat down again. After the usual *kriyās*, I became still. The hands formed a new *asan* on the ground and I sat on it, after which appeared all the preparations for the evening *pūjā*. I noticed everything was new that day. the seated posture, the rituals etc. From then onwards the *āsanas* that had appeared during one part of the day were not repeated in the other part; *pūjā*, *japa*, everything would be different. Various deities would manifest themselves with their respective forms, qualities, *bīj mantra*, and meditation. But the *mantra* of the first night stayed with Me all the time, although the *bhāv* for *kar japa*³⁵ gradually receded.

Whatever appeared once, in its entirety, did not reappear. With various *āsanas*, *mantras*, and *stotras* emerging from the mouth, the eyes would close and the hands would complete the worship on this

³⁴ As per the traditional iconography of Lord Nārāyan

³⁵ Doing *japa* by touching the tip of the thumb to the central portion of each section of the finger in a certain manner

Body's head. The *kheyāl* was that I was the worshipper, the *tantradhārak* (associate priest), the deity to be worshipped, the seeker, the spectator, and the listener. These different *bhāvs* developed in an uninterrupted sequence, acquiring full prominence and perfection in the Body, day after day

The manner of *Vaishnavites*³⁶ applying *tilak* while reciting *mantras*, the *Shāktas* and *Shaivites* way of applying vermilion, *kumkum* (red-powder) and sandal-paste, or the way *brahmachārīs* adorn themselves with *vibhūti*³⁷, as well as the actions and mannerisms of *sannyāsīs* manifested themselves in this Body at the proper time, in complete harmony with the corresponding *mantras*

The divine moods of that period cannot be expressed in words. It can only be said that the worship of many different deities with their specific forms and characteristics manifested in totality within this Body. During this period if someone asked Me anything regarding these matters, I would sometime shrink within Myself like the mimosa, becoming absolutely quiet. If anyone were watching, the *kriyās* would withdraw within the Body. As a result these phenomena remained hidden from people, however, sometimes the little that needed to be manifested at any particular time was spontaneously revealed. While worshipping these deities, the *āsanas* and *mudrās* associated with each deity would form on their own. The *kriyās* would begin before the *pūjā* and not only continue through its duration but also remain as long as necessary, even after it had ended.

As this Body spent most of the time alone in Her room, engaged in these spiritual practices, She had little contact with people and so hardly anyone visited the home. When this Body performed the household chores, Her looks and gestures reflected the spiritual state She had attained during the *pūjās*, while at the same time She was withdrawn. So no one could understand Her extraordinary mood, though Her physical condition often revealed the potency and power of Her spiritual state.

³⁶ Followers of *Vishnu*

³⁷ Sacred ashes from a sacrificial fire

When this play of *sādhanā* was continuing in Bajitpur, I would feel in the beginning a shiver go slowly up the two subtle veins inside the nose and settling itself steadily at a spot between the two eyebrows over a tiny area of My forehead. It would then gradually travel to the crown of My head followed by a slight sensation of heaviness. This Body would become absorbed in a profound inner yogic state, incapable of concentrating on any household work. At such times, She would quickly bathe and sit down deeply absorbed for some time, after which She would lie down. Later, on rising, She felt as if nothing external had any attraction for Her, wherever She looked She felt indifferent and disconnected. Try to understand that the intensity of the inner emotions makes one oblivious to the things of the external world, and **unless one becomes oblivious of the external world, the doors to one's inner world cannot open up to the full extent.**

Granthī-chakras of the *Shat-chakra*

Regarding the *granthī-chakras*³⁸ in the *shat-chakra*³⁹, the *bīj-mantras* (mystical sounds syllables) that lie hidden at the root of each *granthī* (knot) have different Gods and Goddesses with their varied images, characteristics, and forms. But, from a human perspective, a person will experience the divine qualities of specific deities only to the extent permitted by the *sanskārs*⁴⁰ that he or she was born with or will be born with. When the *sādhak* (spiritual seeker) is established in complete union with the deity the need for specific rituals to that particular deity gradually wanes. Also, the attraction to the components of worldly consciousness-sight, taste, smell, touch and sound (and

³⁸ For details see Appendix III

³⁹ Chakras are psychic centres that cannot be described fully from a materialistic or physiological standpoint. It is a Sanskrit word that denotes circle and movement, conceptualised as a wheel or a disc. There are six mystical chakras (*shat-chakra*) within human subtle body located along the spinal code as per *Tantra sādhanā*. As the *sādhak* evolves through the six chakras he ultimately establishes himself in the Sahasrara Chakra - in his inherent Self, the all-pervading Supreme, the Eternal.

⁴⁰ Impressions, dispositions, psychic traces carried over from previous births

their gratification) - as well as fragmented emotions, materialistic tendencies, and the consciousness of the physical body evaporates as the self prepares to merge in the vast ocean of divine bliss. Gradually the truth about that which is manifest, as well as that which is not, slowly emerges as the Self proceeds to establish Itself in Itself.

Appearance of Living Gods and Goddesses

Several days went by absorbed in different *sādhanās*. At one time the *kriyās* continued all through the night. I sat for a while and then, upon feeling that all the *kriyās* had ended for the night, rose for My meal. Afterwards I lay down for a few minutes. In the morning, after completing the daily housework, I sat down for the daily *kriyās* and on their completion found Myself profoundly absorbed while sitting in a special *āsana* for some time. I then had a desire to lie down and so I lay there. After a while I 'saw' inside the home of an ordinary householder, the living figure of a Goddess-just like a human being-seated on a lion. After this, whenever this Body sat for *sādhanā*, this figure would often be seen standing to the left, leaning against the lion. This went on for some days. I would lie there as if in a daze, gazing at her. When I got up it was often late. I did the cooking, fed everyone, and then sat down again.

A strange new sensation began coming over Me, and after several different *kriyās* manifested, I would feel like lying down quietly. From that position I 'saw' again on a portico living human-sized figures of various Gods and Goddesses. I knew within Myself that they were Divine Beings. They were different forms of prevailing deities like *Mahādev*, *Durgā*, *Saraswatī*, *Lakshmī*, *Vishnu*, *Brahmā* and also divine couples like *Lakshmī-Nārāyan*, *Shiv-Parvatī*, *Rādhā-Krishna*, *Sitā-Rām* and many more. Their dynamic expressions and comportment clearly indicated that they were indeed alive. Then one by one they gradually disappeared at that place. I looked on as if I were watching a magic show. There was no concern for the Body. Later I 'saw' many temples with different deities surrounding a *nātmandir*⁴¹. The entire place seemed an abode of bliss with the figures

exuding supernatural power, lustre, and beauty. The Body was intoxicated with joy. A long time passed in this way, eventually this vision vanished. When these living deities thus manifested themselves, their respective *mantras* and characteristics were also manifested in this Body.

Where and how boons are granted was also revealed. Those who attain this state through *sādhanā* are granted supernatural powers as a blessing by the divine grace of the specific deity to whom they pray. At this time a worshipper obtains boons according to his/her past *sanskāras*. There are so many things to say about that.

Another day, after a similar experience, a feeling of oneness with the deities seemed to pervade My whole body for a long time. At times various gods and goddesses appeared to be observing Me with pleasure and grace. Their ineffable manner and expression are indescribable. There were so many other similar experiences.

I sat for *sādhanā* at night as usual. After the *kriyās* the whole Body felt inert and extremely detached, I lay down. Then I 'saw' this Body walking towards a house in which were installed myriad figures of divine couples like *Rādhā-Krishna*, *Shiv-Durgā*, and *Sitā-Rām* to name only a few. A short while later I returned. I was observing events on a distant plane, similar to My earlier manner of going in person from one home to another, while the body remained stationary at one place. That night many types of *bhāv* found expression in the Body.⁴² For a long time this Body lay on the bare floor. When She got up to have something to eat, the night was almost over.

Neighbours' Advice

One afternoon after the *kriyās* I was sitting silently when a few women from the neighbourhood came knocking at the door. I opened the door and sat down again. These women used to look upon this

⁴¹ Sacred dancing hall attached to temples

⁴² Mā's astral body simultaneously performed *kriyās* or witnessed gods-goddesses in different spiritual planes

Body as their younger sister, and I called them *didī*. They had heard that I kept Myself behind closed doors and that I hardly ate or slept. They thought that I was under the evil influence of *Kāl* or *Mahākāl*⁴³ and they did not venture to visit Me lest that same evil eye cast its spell on them. Out of fear they even stopped using the path in front of our cottage that led to the pond, using the back lane instead. Because of this our cottage had become isolated and this Body could have all the privacy She desired.

The women who had come started giving various kinds of advice saying, "Haven't we taken initiation and don't we practice the required rituals and prayers? When unwell, we have something to eat before our prayers. You could do that too!" They also asked, "What have You achieved? Why do You carry on in this manner?" I smiled, not saying much.⁴⁴ One of them said, "With Your husband's permission You can surely eat something and then do all this." I replied, "If My husband tells Me to do so on his own, only then shall I try to do so." She further told Me, "If You take initiation from my *gurudev*, he can lead You directly to attaining divine grace." They said many other similar things, but as I barely responded, they left.

Getting up, I went about doing the cooking and then served Bholanath his food. While he sat down for his meal he suddenly said, "From tomorrow have something to eat after Your morning prayers. You can do the rest later." On hearing this I reported My conversation with the neighbouring women. He said, "This thought has come on its own; from tomorrow do things this way." I agreed. At that time I was going through a temporary phase of accepting Bholanath's instructions, but only if these were conducive to enhancing the spiritual practices that I undertook. This Body would accept food only if it were within these parameters; if not, She would go without food.

⁴³ Custodian of Death (*Kāl*) or destructive manifestation of Shiva (*Mahākāl*)

⁴⁴ When the mind is mingled with the body consciousness, the awareness of the true Self or *Ātmā* is not perceived by human, this is the true ignorance. All paths of *vādhānā* are but to know 'one's true Self' and when that happens external contacts and needs have little significance.

A Dog in the Play of *Sādhanā*

During this period a dog proved to be of considerable help. I have mentioned this dog earlier as well. At night I would notice that until this Body came out of Her room after completing all religious *kriyās*, the dog would remain seated just outside the door. While all other family members slept, this dog kept vigil through the night. It would guard any food left uncovered against cats and other domestic or stray animals.

External Items for Worship Losing Significance

During the *pūjā* this Body felt no inclination towards outwardly using flowers, *bel*-leaves, sandalwood paste, *koshā-kushī*,⁴⁵ utensils to hold flowers, water, lamp and other such articles. When required, all these would manifest themselves to view and be used in the correct manner.

On the occasion of the solar eclipse Bholanath sat down to do his *japa*. I arranged a set of *koshā-kushī* for him and sat down beside him. Having performed *āchman*, he put the *koshā-kushī* before Me but I had no inclination at all to perform the ritual with external water.

While all this was happening, even Ushā *didī*'s visits became infrequent, for her husband did not want her to associate much with this Body in Her present condition. Later, at the Dhaka *āshram*, husband and wife would laugh amusedly when reminiscing about those days.

Service to Husband in the *Gārhasṭha* Stage

After a bath one morning, I sat down for My *pūjā*. Bholanath was about to leave for work at the Collectorate office and I did my *pranām* to him. It was My daily duty to do so and also to take his *chāranāmṛta*.⁴⁶ During this period the *chāranāmṛta* would be set

⁴⁵ A special shaped copper vessel used for holding water during rituals.

⁴⁶ The water used to wash the feet or toe of a deity or revered person. This was a traditional practice for Hindu wives in those days.

aside and at the end of the prayers I would first drink it and then have My food. If I ever forgot to keep aside his *charanāmrita*, I would await his return from the office, have it, and only then eat food

Since it is essential in the householder stage to serve the husband as a deity⁴⁷, I suddenly said one day, "I want to do your *ārati*"⁴⁸. Please remain here." As I spoke these words an unusual and ecstatic state came over Me and, as if in a stupor, I performed *ārati* while ecstatically swaying, standing, rolling on the ground, and sitting before him. He then left for office.

This Body then sat down for Her regular worship. Along with the change in breathing She spontaneously formed an extraordinary *āsana* by lying on Her back with the legs in a position of *padmāsana*, the head arched all the way back and the chest pushed out so that the Body assumed the shape of a bow. The head moved from side to side and upward, arching back even more as the tongue moved from side to side and then stretched out to reach the ground, touching it three times. In the same position, the arms came up by the sides of the head, touched the legs which were in *padmāsana* and then went to the middle of the chest. Remaining in this position⁴⁹ there began the rituals of worship with *mudrās*.

After the *pūjā* I found that the Body remained in the same position. The thought rose: how was the Body to get back to its normal position, for surely with any movement at all, the muscles would sprain and the bones break? Soon after this however, the breathing started changing and gradually the Body returned to normal. Each stage in the process took a considerable time, and it was almost twilight by the time the whole process ended; so I did not eat that day either. Just to obey orders, however, I drank a little *charanāmrita*. I then lit the lamp in the room and kept water ready for Bholanath's use on his return, and then proceeded to do the cooking. When Bholanath arrived,

⁴⁷ Mā also said that just as the wife sees her husband as a God, so should the husband relate to the wife as a Goddess.

⁴⁸ A devotional ceremony symbolized by waving of lights, incense, flowers etc. in circular motion before the object of adoration.

⁴⁹ A very difficult yogic *āsana* - extension of *matsyāsana*

again the urge to greet him with *ārati* arose which I did. Later he had his meal, and on his asking Me to have mine too, I ate to obey him.

I sat down again and noticed that My breathing was laboured, requiring much exertion. I felt heavy in the chest and restless and agitated. I told Bholanath that this was probably the result of My taking food. He said, "From tomorrow do whatever is favorable for You. I don't understand all these strange processes that are occurring within You. People say all kinds of things. They say that I am overly indulgent to my wife. I do not report such gossip lest it makes You feel uncomfortable, but I do not know what I should do." This Body told him, "I shall try as far as possible to follow whatever you ask Me to do, but this much I can assure you, there is no harm in any of the things that I do. If you object to them, I am unable to tell you whether or not it will augur well." This response increased his anxiety.

The fact that, even without eating all day, I would still scrupulously carry out all My household duties made some people speculate wildly. They remarked that I must be quenching My thirst with water from the *ghot* that I filled daily for the *Lakshmi pūjā* since no one could possibly stay without food or drink in this manner. However, because I always kept the door closed they could not verify the truth. I would hear these rumours and smile; after all, one can talk only to the extent one's intellect is able to understand. No one is to be blamed for not comprehending what lies outside their frame of reference.

Nature of Fear

At one time I had a *kheyāl* that I would abstain from performing *pūjā* for three or four days during menstruation, just like other women. But I noticed that even in that condition, the breathing process and the *pūjās* functioned internally in the usual manner; only the outward manifestation of *yogic āsanās* did not occur to the full extent. Day and night the Body remained as if in a state of intoxication.

During that time, one night I clearly saw a huge dark figure close to My body. Normally one would feel frightened by such a vision; but with this Body, the moment the idea of fear occurred, other questions arose such as - Who was that? Whom was he trying to

frighten? All are but different forms of the Supreme One. **Fear is nothing but a reflection of the propensities that we bring forward from our *sanskārs*.** In a little while, smilingly, the figure vanished at that very spot.

In the morning, while still menstruating, I sat down to My prayers after My bath and the thought occurred that, according to scriptures, the rituals should not be performed that day as well. But at the same instant another thought also arose questioning the very relevance of bodily impurity when taking His name or remembering Him; after all, He is the eternal Truth, the eternal Purity. As I sat quietly thinking these thoughts, I found that the *kriyās* and rituals manifested themselves as usual—both outwardly and inwardly. When the internal *kriyās* genuinely begin, their outward manifestation is but natural.

A Glowing Symbol of Shiva between the Eyebrows

On closing My eyes I saw a small *linga*⁵⁰ between My eyebrows. In whichever direction I turned I still saw a steady nut-shaped incandescent light between My eyebrows. I could see it even when My eyes were open. Gradually, the intense light moved closer to My eyes, finally disappearing in the centre between My eyebrows. This indescribable light of divinity was clearly revealed, while the Body remained motionless and serene. After this, whenever there was a desire to see this form, it appeared before My eyes. Engaged in such things, the day drew to an end. I did My cooking, gave Bholanath his food, and when I sat down again at night the *kriyās* appeared as usual.

The next day it was late by the time I sat down after Bholanath had been fed and all My work completed. The *kriyās* once again manifested themselves. A large intense light appeared between My eyebrows as I sat in the same *āsana* for a long time and concentrated on the light. Later, when I opened My eyes, the light continued to glow steadily on My forehead. After a long time it disappeared from that very spot. When I sat down at night the light reappeared between the eyebrows, then the colour began to fade gradually and something like a ring could be made out around the light, which kept changing

⁵⁰ Oval shaped form of light, the classic symbol of Shiva

its colour—red, white, yellow or black. This play of colours continued for quite some time, finally vanishing in space. This Body remained profoundly detached, but not unconscious. Thus, in varying *bhāvs* the night came to an end.

After that, almost always, wherever I looked I saw a glow around everything—be it a person, carriage, or house, whether the object in question was deemed bad and good. In all objects irrespective of place or time I saw the brightness of the sun just as when it radiates from behind a tree.

The Spontaneous Activities and Revelation in the Play of *Sādhanā*

It is possible in the illumined world of *sādhanā* that that upon which one's thoughts and words are focused becomes revealed and takes form. When the *Kundalinī*⁵¹ is aroused, with the opening of the *chakras*, many-hued lustres manifest like yellow, blue and so on.

Some people, when they single-mindedly do *japa*, can see with their internal eye a great number of sages in their astral bodies sitting around them. At times one sees hills, mountains, rivers, seas, or other beautiful scenes of natural beauty floating before his eyes. Yet again, one can see these as pictures on a screen, appearing and disappearing through layers of consciousness. These scenes differ from person to person according to the different propensities (*sanskārs*) they bring with them from their previous births. Just as people differ in their appearances, inclinations and nature, so also does the practice of *sādhanā* differ from one person to another. Seeing figures or scenes like the ones mentioned can assist a person in the path of *sādhanā* in many instances, however, where there remains no conflict between the subtle and the gross aspects, it is a different matter.



One day Mā was asked, “When requested to give details about their path of *sādhanā*, those whom we consider highly advanced

⁵¹ The primordial cosmic energy located in the individual is usually thought of as lying coiled up like a serpent at the base of the spine—*muladhara*. On it being aroused, the play of the different *chakras* begin.

spiritual beings seldom do so. Even those who have only seen or heard of such spiritual practices can say but very little. How is it that on being questioned "You tell us about these matters in such detail?"

Mā replied, "Well, then listen. When a *sādhak* is engaged in *sādhanā*, it naturally does not occur to him to ever speak about the details of his progress, for if it did, he cannot be practicing genuine *sādhanā* as speaking about it would only give rise to the desire for recognition and thus become an obstacle on the path of spiritual achievement. The path of *sādhanā* is an indomitable journey towards complete annihilation of desire and immersion in one's goal. Understand also that one's revelation is proportionate to one's stage of advancement. But where everything is possible (in the Supreme) how does such a question arise? Better not to take this Body into account for here everything is incoherent."

Again She was asked, "Yes Mā! Hearing the above explanation we are able to understand; but when the Supreme manifests as the new-born infant state where the knowledge about all matters is complete, there exists no question of before and after. So, where do the stages of advancement in the revelation of one's true Self through *sādhanā* come? How can we follow Your words?"

Laughing, Mā said, "Whatever this Body was when, in your perception, She manifested as a new born, She is the same as what you see now. Do you think this has been achieved by *sādhanā*? Is that what you believe? You judge for yourselves; whatever you infer, it is that. This Body does not have the inclination to disclose everything. Now it is up to you - whatever you understand."



Mā continued, "Next morning, as I sat quietly after the *kriyās*. I noticed that My fingers were engaged in various movements. A little later, the same thing happened to My toes. This went on for a long time. Again keeping the wrist between the eyebrows and looking upwards in *trātak* (fixed gaze), the wrist contracted to the point that it was non-existent and many similar *yogic kriyās* manifested. Just as *āsanas* were formed without the help of hands, similarly with the help of the *pran-vayu* (life-energy) the hands moved automatically

assisting in the different *kriyās*. Within the Body more *kriyās* were activated through new rhythms of breathing that developed. After this, starting from the shoulder joint and moving down the arms to the tip of the fingers, *kriyās* were performed bit by bit in various ways. All the while this Body gazed unblinkingly at all that was happening. At night diverse kind of *kriyās* also took place.

The next morning, when I sat again, similar activities manifested. When sitting at mid-day, after the above mentioned *kriyās*, I found that whatever images appeared in the mind. I saw their reflection outwardly in whichever direction I turned My eyes. Similarly, whatever came before My eyes, I began to see a glowing white replica of it all around Me with the feeling that all was pure lustrous consciousness. After these various *hīlas*, the force of *pran-vayu* pushed Me up to a standing position, and a little later I bent forward and touched the ground with My hands as though crawling but with the legs kept straight. I found that along with the motion of the breath, the intestines in the lower abdomen began to stir and move upward and there came the feeling that the air was inhaled freely from all the openings—the nose, mouth, ears, eyes and even through the passages of urination and evacuation, as if it were passing in and out without any obstacle through an open-ended zigzag shaped pipe.

After remaining in this state for a long time the Body became steady. The sun was yet to set and as soon as I went out I turned eastward and then faced the sun while My hands performed the activities of *surya-pranām* (Salutation-Sun). The eyes were at first closed, and then they opened. Standing still, I was quickly opening and shutting My eyes repeatedly when I noticed a powerful glowing radiance of various lustres enveloping the entire space around Me. I was absorbed in this for some time. Then this Body moved away from that place.

Once *kriyās* began at a particular place, it was not possible to leave the spot, despite a desire to do so, until the activities were completed. This is the result of the action of *mahashaktī* (divine power). All of these things happened after the self-initiation during the play of *sādhanā*.

Once, as I sat steadily, I found that due to the breathing process My tongue kept arching back inside My mouth and no amount of effort could keep it in its place. Then I felt as if the tongue was being torn from underneath and gradually turning further and further back, until it seemed to get stuck to the palate.⁵² A thought came to the mind without any anxiety or restlessness: how would the tongue get back to its normal position, and would speaking be possible? After a long time the tongue returned to normal but there remained a sense of pain under it for few days.

These different *kriyās* began manifesting themselves shortly before the play of initiation, and continued over five or six months. I have mentioned only very particular ones, although many others were manifested during this time.

I found that after this period the formation of spontaneous *āsanas* decreased. However, whenever I sat still, the *pranayāmā*, the tendency to lie on the ground and the mood to sit absorbed in silence increased. Bholanath noticed that there were no fixed times for this Body's bathing, eating, sleeping or resting; there was no attention paid to the Body at all. I did not lie down at all in bed at night, time no longer mattered, and there was no difference between day and night. Days used to pass in a state of strange excitement. All household duties were carried out automatically. There was no irresponsibility or lapse in My behaviour with others, but everything was done in a detached way. It is impossible to express in words the *bhāvs* and the state of the mind during that period.

There was a *pundit* in Bajitpur who was seventy or eighty years old. Bholanath went and related everything about this Body's condition to him and he said "All this is exceptional. It is called *antaryog*. These are signs of a person whose inner self has awakened. Do not ever stand in Her way; leave Her to Herself. The manifestation of the many different *mudrās* and *āsanas* is not possible without a *Guru's* guidance. That they form on their own is indeed supernatural and extraordinary." Bholanath came home and related all this to Me.

⁵² Similar to *khecharī mudrā* – a difficult *yogic* process that usually takes years of practice and can induce *samādhi*. Refer to Glossary for details.

When the *āsanas* first started to appear, the Body moved like a machine, in its own *bhāv*. I noticed that My clothes would get disarrayed and smeared with dust and earth, as would the Body. In spite of being fully conscious of this, there was no inclination to put My clothes in order. After My bath when I sat for *sadhana*, I would leave My hair down and the long hair would become entangled with the hands and feet as a result of extreme body movements due to formation of spontaneous *āsanas*; it would sometimes get torn, as well as dusty and dirty. But there never was any thought or effort made to prevent this from happening. At times the limbs became bruised and the clothes would tear, but I was unconcerned and merely observed everything. After some days while bathing in the pond, I kept the hair loose but tied it afterwards even though it was wet. Some months later those parts of the hair that remained tied up began to rot and fall off. As the roots of the hair remained always wet, large sores developed at the nape of the neck. There was neither the time nor *kheyāl* to pay attention to the burning sensation.

When the urge to lie down increased it was seen that in tune with the transformation of the breath changes in *bhāv* would occur, making the Body profoundly still and calm. The phenomenon is indescribable, sometimes it occurred even while sitting. If a loud noise was heard when sitting in this manner, this Body would get startled like a little child and immediately a childlike emotion would come over Her. This was expressed in crying, laughing, or running about like a child. A few days later it was observed that if a person hit another or even if someone were beating the ground, this Body would feel the pain. Just as the water in a container forms ripples when shaken and then settles down, this Body reacted in the same way. **She experienced a feeling of oneness with everything around Her as if nothing had a separate identity.**

This feeling of completeness stayed with Her day and night. All the necessary mundane duties and functions were carried out at the right time. This Body would get up like a machine, do all the household work, and on completion, come and sit down again. But it was the

same feeling of absolute wholeness and unity with all that ran through Her both inwardly and outwardly.

With the same intensity a flow of a strange extraordinary *kriyā* continued flowing through the Body all day and night continuously for a number of days, along with a sensation of being touched between the eye-brows. This Body remained in a blissful state of divine awareness at all times.

One night while sitting quietly this Body noticed that Her fingers moved from head to toe and then like a sculpture formed a third eye between the eyebrows and a complete image within this Body. Everything cannot be explained! How beautiful were the various types of *kriyās*, revelatory of such a divine blissful image-calm and solemn, which cannot be expressed in language. Later, it so happened that this divine, blissful *darshan* encompassed the totality of nature and beyond; whatever existed in form or formless in the universe-starting from the Gods, divine incarnations, saints and sages down to human beings, plants, and animals-whatever was natural or supernatural, seen or unseen, with form or without-were all one supreme Reality. A *sādhak* advancing in his or her spiritual path first begins to sense the vastness and omnipotence of God and later the all-encompassing divine form and formless which manifests as '*Mahāprakash*' (the supreme enlightenment) All this was revealed as a *līlā* within this Body. The night came to an end.

Mā on *Pūjā*, *Pāth*, and *Japa*

On further questioning, Mā said, "Whether initiated or not, every person must practice *japa*, *pāth*, *bhajan*, *kirtan*, and *prārthana* (prayers) as per one's faith or belief. It is essential to make time everyday to worship regularly and in seclusion, forgetting the outside world. Regular practice, willingly or unwillingly, gradually develops in one devotion and attraction to the spiritual life, for the effect of good actions is inevitable. *Japa*, *yogic kriyās* and other methods of *sāadhanā* when practised correctly, automatically induces accurate breathing *kriyās* and the formation of *āsanas* that are precise and in

accordance with one's innate tendencies and *sanskārs*. This is the absolute Truth. These lead to the destruction of the body's inertia (*jaratā*). Greater concentration in one's *nām*, *japa* or *kriyās* develops in deeper and more intense devotion for one's object of worship. Love is the root of inward reflection and divine absorption. It is important to hold firmly to your faith so that you will receive the grace of the particular deity to whom you dedicate all your actions.

If you want to hear more about *japa*, then listen. When you make a conscious effort to concentrate on your heart or throat while practising *japa*, there remains the sense of activity (*rajas*) and hence the flow of thought is to be kept in check with effort. Practising *japa* is distinctly different from *japa* happening on its own. Purity of the body and mind are essential conditions for *kriyās* and *mantra-japa* to happen on their own.

When *japa* happens spontaneously, regardless of your intentions, it swells up from within making you oblivious to the external world, and carries you irresistibly, as if on a wave, absorbed in its blissful flow. Without the practice of utmost purity of the *mantra* and corresponding *kriyās* in the body, *kantha-japa*⁵³ cannot happen on its own. Then the uvula works on its own incessantly like the pendulum of a clock, irrespective of whether or not you are conscious of this activity. This may be called *ajapā-japa* or '*kantha-japa*' as it happens effortlessly in the throat. Normally the inability to experience effortless *kantha-japa* is due to attachment and involvement with worldly matters.

When there is *purnāhuti*⁵⁴, one crosses the boundaries of limitations of form, quality and *mantra* and progresses into the vast heavenly bliss of the Self. As the *sādhak* acquires greater *shaktī* and singularity of purpose, he or she may experience bliss. However, single-minded diligence needs to be maintained or the experience of bliss may be lost. Next the *bhāv-granthīs* begin to unravel.

Just as a human being breaks into laughter when he feels an intense urge to laugh, so too do *mantras* and related activities emerge

⁵³ Repetition of *mantra* with uvula in the throat

⁵⁴ Successful culmination of all activities

effortlessly and unconsciously from deep within according to the *sādhak's* *sanskārs*. This is called *mantra-chaitanya*. The source of scriptural *mantras* can be likened to the way a baby learns to speak. In the beginning a baby keeps uttering syllables repeatedly until the sounds emerge suddenly as words from the baby's mouth. In the same way, a *mantra* can suddenly emerge from the mouth of a *sādhak*. At that moment the *mantra* is revealed to the worshipper.

First a student learns to read, then to write. Thereafter he learns to compare the two in order to make sense of his knowledge, and then he begins to question what he has been taught. Similarly when the *mantra* is spontaneously revealed to a *sādhak*, he is eager to seek answers to various questions like—What is this *mantra*? Where is its source? What is its meaning? At this time, consciousness of the outside world diminishes. As more doors of the inner mind open, more is revealed about the form, nature, and meaning of the *mantra* as well as the deity whose name he is repeating. This is referred to as *mantra-pratyaksha*⁵⁵ and *tattva-pratyaksha*⁵⁶.

*Irha (Ida), Pingalā and Sushumnā*⁵⁷

Mā continued: Earlier when long and intense continuation of breathing *kriyās* (*pranayām*) within this Body used to take place, they gradually receded to twice or thrice a day. Likewise the range of *āsanas* decreased to two or three types. The rest of the time passed lying motionless on the floor or sitting absorbed in the same position. **There was but one all-pervading Being; the inside and outside were simultaneously dissolved in the sublime joy of the Omnipresent.**

One day while observing the innermost flow of breath, a question arose from within: "What are these?" Consequently it was revealed to be of *Irha, Pingalā and Sushumnā*. When informed, Bholnath

⁵⁵ Revelation of *mantra*

⁵⁶ Revelation of the divine essence of one's object of worship

⁵⁷ Esoteric subtle channels running along the right, left and through the centre of the spinal column from the base of the spine to the top of the head of the subtle body, through which the awakened Kundalini energy passes.

asserted that those were the names of subtle channels (*nādis*). Then different *bhāvs* and *shlokās*⁵⁸ flowed continuously from the lips. I saw Myself as one all-encompassing Reality, speaking, listening, and observing in silence.

Clairvoyance

On arising from bed one morning the Body could clearly hear the playing out of certain incidents that would occur the day after the next. Circumstances developed in such a way that those events did indeed take place as foreseen.

This prophetic activity of hearing about something that is yet to happen is an aspect of a revelation without conflict or effort, an aspect that exists beyond the mind. To the yogi or *sādhak* this revelation may appear to occur as a result of an effort of individual will, but where duality ceases questions like 'who?' or 'what?' do not arise.

Divine Power and Will Power

One day the *kheyāl* came to enquire, "How does this happen?" (what causes things to happen as they do?) and this Body's mouth pronounced the answer, "Things, events, situations occur due to the interplay of *mahashaktī* (divine power) and *ichcha-shaktī* (will-power)." Normally in a human being there is the interplay between these two forces where the 'will power' plays with one's desire, and the 'divine power' stands above one's desires and doubts and carries out the inevitable results of one's *karma* and *sanskārs*. The *līlā* of *mahashaktī* indicates permanence, unrestricted manifestation and absolute power to do anything. The nature of *ichcha-shaktī* is to exert intelligent thinking in order to fulfil desire. In other words *mahashaktī* denotes an absolute power beyond the ever-changing mind, whereas *ichcha-shaktī* denotes the exertion of individual will power within the context of the ever changing desires of the mind due to a sense of incompleteness and need.

⁵⁸ Sacred Sanskrit stanza/verses or hymns

On the path of *sādhana*, once success is attained by conducting activities perfectly with one's will power, then the play of divine power is experienced by oneself. At that stage all diversity in the world starts to dissolve into one undivided state of being and nothing remains for the *sādhak* except the single objective of one's goal. One has to wait for the final grace of *Mahashaktī* for merging into absolute Unity, as no final solution is possible by *ichcha-shaktī* alone. Just as no smoke can be seen without fire, so also, these two complement each other as different aspects of the Supreme One.

Revelation of the Self

After the initiation many revelations were pronounced from within. The answers would emerge slowly one word at a time, at times clear, at others indistinct—something like the four sounds⁵⁹ merging into one another in the utterance of the *pranab* (Om). Do not take the word 'indistinct' in the ordinary worldly sense. At times the words came out fast, at others slowly. There was no indication from one moment to the next as to what was about to come. There was no desire to rationalize, inform, or ask anyone about these matters. This had always been the way of this Body and to go against the flow never occurred to Her. Very rarely one or two words were mentioned to Bholanath if he was nearby. Along with the spontaneous utterances, everything was clearly revealed.

There was the constant *kheyāl* that whatever was seen, heard or spoken was the 'Self'. The self was not this limited 'I' - that can be burnt or melted—burnt by *vivek* (the process of self-enquiry) or *vairagya* (intense discrimination resulting in renunciation), or melted by devotion. Sometimes it came to this Body's consciousness that 'If this is I; that too is I'; but the awareness was always firmly present that there is nothing but the 'Self'. Therefore, to this Body, 'you and I' are but one and the same. There had come a time earlier when the feeling was, 'This is I, that too is I' and again, 'This is You, that too is You'. **But outwardly the Supreme Being was always expressed**

⁵⁹ a, u, m and nasal half n

by this Body as 'That', meaning 'there is nothing but That alone.' Two or three months went by in this manner and then it became only 'That is I, and, I am That.' This was what emerged as the final revelation.⁶⁰



Jyoti in form of a crescent seen on Shree Shree Mā's forehead, photograph taken around second week of October, 1926

⁶⁰ This is a Mahāvākya (Great declarations), such as 'Tat tvam asi' for details see Appendix IV

A Stage of a *Sādhak*

There comes a stage in the life of a *sādhak* when he expresses openly whatever he sees. The thought of keeping anything from anyone does not occur to him. When the *bhāv-granthīs*⁶¹ become unravelled, the outward symptoms are very beautiful. There is an overwhelming emotional state where harshness and tenderness are manifested simultaneously; this as well as many supernatural aspects are observed. Whether harsh or tender, the real *bhāv* is that which overwhelms the heart of the ordinary person. These experiences are treasured by seekers of grace. At this stage of the *sādhanā*, the entire illusion of the present and the future disintegrates slowly, and both harshness and tenderness are manifested in extremes. But if the *sādhak's* conduct is not completely honest, then the two characteristics cannot be simultaneously expressed.

Just as a grieving person remains heedful of his or her clothes and bodily functions despite his or her state of sorrow, so too the *sādhak* must maintain propriety in his or her outward behaviour as well as maintain an uninterrupted and steady state of *sādhanā* within in order to overcome the emotional obstacles and reach the goal.

An Arabian Saint

One afternoon this Body was lying on the ground in Her usual manner when She 'saw' a Muslim in a fakir's attire standing outside a temple gazing at Her. On noticing this, the Body sat up and a query arose in Her mind, "Who is he?" Immediately the answer came, "A saint from an Arab country." In the evening this Body told Bholanath, "Today I saw a saint from an Arab country." With some concern he remarked, "You saw an Arab saint! We are Hindus, I do not understand why You see such things. He would be a Muslim!" There was a trace of irritation in his voice as he said this.

⁶¹ The various deep emotional impressions stored as knots in one's *sanskār* within the psychic nerve system

Reaction to *Pranām*

Around this time when anyone prostrated themselves before this Body, the feet withdrew of their own accord. When a person prostrated in reverence without attempting to touch the feet, the right arm of this Body would rise in a gesture of blessing and words of blessing would come out of Her lips spontaneously.

An employee of the *Nawab* in Bajitpur addressed this Body as 'Mother', but this Body never spoke to him. He often visited our home and was very friendly with Bholanath. Since his wife was childless, his father was urging him to remarry. One day he suddenly thought that he must *pranām* (prostrate) before this Body and touch Her feet when She sat for worship. At that time no one would do this and therefore he asked Bholanath for permission. Unable to refuse his earnest request, Bholanath asked this Body to grant it. She acquiesced, "Since you both desire this, let it be so." Later when this Body had just completed Her *kriyās*, this individual came and fell reverently at Her feet and began trembling on the floor. Bholanath was startled and exclaimed, "What is this? What is happening to him?" and repeatedly he urged this Body to remedy the situation. The man soon became normal though his body continued to tremble. He confessed that he was so overwhelmed with a sublime joy that he forgot to pray for his wish to be granted. Bholanath inquired what his prayer had been and then told me that the prayer was to beget a good and healthy child without having to remarry. It was learnt later that a son had been born to him and his wife.

Kshetrapal's Exorcism

Having witnessed My various yogic states, Bholanath one day brought an exorcist named Kshetrapal to the house and requested, "Please see what the matter is. Why is all this happening to Her?" One night, with an air of one who knew all, Kshetrapal made arrangements for exorcism by burning incense and lighting a lamp in the room where Bholanath and I stayed. I sat in a corner in My usual

absorbed manner, while Bholanath stayed on the other side of the room. After about an hour, Kshetrapal rose from his worship and said to Bholanath, "I don't seem to find anything." Saying this, he filled the hookah with tobacco and left the room.

When he returned he was about to hand over the hookah to Bholanath when suddenly he began to tremble violently and fell forward in an act of prostration with the words, 'Mā, Mā' on his lips, and then lay unconscious on the floor. Seeing him remain in this condition for some time, Bholanath became anxious, exclaiming, "What is happening?" and urged Me repeatedly to bring him back to normal. I just sat there laughing. Seeing this, Bholanath said sharply, "Bring him back to normal immediately!" Sitting where I was, some sounds came out of My lips. Kshetrapal sat up, and a little later said, "From the time I finished my worship and went out I felt a strange sensation coming over me. I do not know what happened after coming inside. My exorcism will not be effective here." After he left, Bholanath and this Body's cousin laughed a great deal over his discomfiture.

Spinning Thread on a Spinning Wheel

For some time spinning thread on a spinning-wheel had become popular in most homes.⁶² Bholanath said, "Everyone is getting spinning-wheels, should I get one too? You have a lot of time to spare nowadays." I assented and he brought home a spinning-wheel. There was someone in the village who taught the local people how to use the spinning-wheel for a charge of six *ānnās*, and so Bholanath asked Me if he should bring this man home to teach Me. I replied that he could be called in case I failed at spinning thread on My own. Then I began to try. While spinning I found that the *bīj-mantra* kept flowing automatically with My uvula along with the humming noise of the spinning wheel. Some thread was spun in this manner, and when compared to that spun by others Bholanath found that it was finer

⁶² Popularized by Mahatma Gandhi to counter the use of imported cloth, as a means of boycotting British textiles

and far superior in quality. Two lengths of cloth were made out of these threads.

In the mean time Janaki *babu's* sister came there and I saw that she had spun soft towels using the spinning wheel. This Body expressed the desire to make similar articles, but Janaki *babu's* sister said that she had not brought the tools that were needed for this with her. Gesticulating, I asked her what these tools were and then, after procuring them, made similar napkins on My own. Later on with the change of *bhāv* such activities ceased to be significant.

Some Incidents

A short while after this, Ushā *didī's* daughter developed fever. While I was doing My midday *kriyās*, Ushā *didī* came to Me with her daughter in her lap and said, "Look, sister, how feverish she is!" I took the child in My arms and passed My hands lightly over her whole body and told Ushā *didī* that if she wished she should bring the child daily at this time for the next three days. The child's fever started abating from that day. The next day when she was starting out with the baby to come to Me, her husband forbade her to do so, saying, "I do not approve of this; I won't allow my daughter to be taken to Her." Greatly distressed, Ushā *didī* informed Me. This Body was silent and the child's fever increased over the next two or three days, whereupon Ushā *didī* came to Me and humbly beseeched, "Sister, I have committed no offence, please cure the child by Your merciful look." This Body kept silent but learnt later that the little girl had recovered.

It was not usual among Bholanath's brothers and sisters to keep in touch through letters and inquire about one another's well-being, so this Body tried to maintain the bond amongst them by corresponding with all of them. However, when the spiritual play started in the Body there was hardly any inclination or time for such matters. The thought of wanting to find out about anyone's welfare just did not occur. In the meantime, Jamini, Bholanath's youngest brother, wrote of his impending imprisonment due to a law-suit. When he heard this news

Bholanath came to this Body and said, "Whatever You say seems to come true; can You tell me where Jamini is at this moment?" I answered, "He is in jail." Hearing this Bholanath became extremely agitated. A few days later, Jamini wrote to say that the case had been settled amicably. Bholanath questioned Me, "What made You say such things about Jamini? See, he is not jail!" When Jamini came to Bajitpur later he corroborated the fact that he had indeed been in police-custody the day that this Body had made that statement about him.

News arrived one day that Bholanath's eldest brother-in-law, Sitanath Kushari Mahashay, was seriously ill in his home in Dougachchi and desired to see Bholanath. That day Bholanath came and asked this Body, "Tell me, what is his actual condition?" I replied, "It is serious, but he will be alright once you visit him." On Bholanath's reaching there, his brother-in-law's condition gradually improved and he recovered fully. Since then, whenever I met Kushari Mahashay, he would prostrate himself, touching the feet of this Body. Once he took this Body to his home, made Her sit in front of him, and recited the verses dedicated to the Goddess *Chandī*. Age-wise he was slightly older than this Body's father. He felt honoured to have been instrumental in orchestrating the marriage of this Body to Bholanath.



CHAPTER 5

Mā Reveals to Bholanath his house from Past Life

For some days Bholanath's health had been indifferent. One day while conversing with this Body he said, "Your predictions always prove to be true, tell me, will I ever own a house? I do not want to continue working at a job any longer."

I told him, "But you already have a house."

Bholanath asked, "Where?"

I replied, "The house in which Gokul Thakur lived was once yours."

When he asked about its location, I said, "You will have it when the time is right. Rest assured about that."

Much later, when we came to Dhaka from Bajitpur, somebody mentioned the property of a recently deceased *brahmin* named Gokul Thakur that had remained unoccupied.¹ This property was situated near the Ramna *Kālī* temple and had a broken temple on its premises.

The Initiation of Bholanath

Soon it was the month of *Agrahāyan*. I learned later that Bholanath had remembered My prediction that he was to be initiated on the 15th of *Agrahāyan*² and consequently had been wondering if that would indeed come to pass.

During the early hours of the morning of 13th *Agrahāyan*,³ Bholanath dreamt that his father, his mother and his *Ishtadevi*⁴ appeared before him and blessed him by touching his head. Later

¹ Ramna *āshram* was later built on this land.

² December 1, 1922.

³ Thursday, November 30, 1922.

⁴ Tutelary Goddess, the chosen deity of one's worship, literally 'beloved'.

that morning he informed Me about his dream. On the 15th morning he left for work quietly without completing his ablutions or telling anyone. When this Body started Her daily prayers, mystical chants and hymns emanated loudly from Her mouth. Suddenly there was a *kheyāl* and She sent a servant to Bholanath's office requesting him to return home. He refused despite being sent for twice, but capitulated when he heard that this Body would be coming to fetch him Herself! After Bholanath reached home he was told to bathe. Once he had done this, a *mantra* as well as specific procedures of *japa* manifested themselves spontaneously from this Body, just as the *āsanas*, *mudrās*, and *yogic kriyās* were accomplished in Her. According to you, the *guru's* teachings lead to Enlightenment; in fact, you consider these as *Mahāvākyas*⁵ that bring instant revelation. You should understand that this was precisely the case with Bholanath's initiation: Everything is present within oneself—the *Guru* as well as the *shishya* (disciple). All along this Body has been playing the game in this way and you have seen that whatever is necessary manifests itself whenever needed. All these utterances are also instantaneous revelations as per the momentary situation.

Different Aspects of the Play of *Sādhanā*

There was a time that whenever this Body worshipped during the day or night, various *shlokās* would flow from Her lips while She lay on the floor absorbed in a deep mystic state or sat steadily upright. Sometimes, along with the transformed breathing, the Body would form certain *āsanas* and rise up from the ground in that posture, supported by her thumbs or little fingers while swaying gently in the air like a swing. At times I was fully aware that the Body was suspended in air without any support whatsoever. At other times it was only supported on the big toes and remained in that position for hours together with the hands folded between the knees. You must understand that a *yogi* is able to achieve many supernatural feats by means of his or her *yogic* powers. It is with the help of certain breathing

⁵ Most significant words or phrases containing and conveying the essence of self-realization. 'A brief biography of Bholanath is included Appendix V.'

kriyās that the body is able to keep itself suspended in the air without any support. From time immemorial, innumerable *āsanas* have been accomplished in this way by *yogis*. Indeed, there are more than 84 lakhs⁶ of these, for everything is ultimately limitless.

For hours the pupils of the two eyes would remain fixed between the eyebrows, or on the tip of the nose, or looking downwards. At times, with both arms raised, the fingers and toes would form various *mudrās*. Besides the five types of *drishti*⁷ (in which the eyes move in a very controlled manner upward, downward, level, and cross-eyed



Shree Shree Mā during *sādhan-tīlā*

⁶ Equivalent to 84 million.

⁷ Literal meaning is focused attention/sight/gaze, here it refers both to certain *yogic* movement of the eyes as well as on a deeper level to the source of sight—that is the self.

in both directions), many others also occurred while the Body and face remained motionless. Any one of these could last a long time. The *drishti* and the *āsana* would be unwavering with complete stillness. Then the *drishti* would move from wherever it had been fixed and return gradually to the centre of the eyes, that is, withdrawing to the root of sight. In other words to the source in the subtle body from where the sight originates—a process to self-discovery.⁸ Sometimes this process of *drishti* would reverse its outward focus through space whether—in a straight line, in an upward, downward, or sideways motion, or it would slip to the source of vision. It was a strange movement. Sometimes the *drishti* would travel circumventing objects like the surrounding walls, roof, and floor, while at others times it would encompass numerous spatial activities without any hindrance. It was like seeing one's own body in space or seeing the vision of divine images, appearing or disappearing without the need of a gross substance.

The first few days of the month of *Pous* (mid-December to mid-January) went by. One afternoon as I sat on My *asan* until sunset, words emerged from My lips. They were spoken in a completely different voice, initially in Sanskrit and then in Bengali. A *kheyāl* came from within querying, "With whom was this conversation taking place?" On its own the answer emerged like a flash of light illuminating a dark room, "From You Yourself." The two sets of words, merging the internal with the external, revealed instantly an eternal truth: All that exists in the entire universe, from the greatest to the tiniest particle, whether manifest or not, is but One undifferentiated whole. The nature of this revelation cannot be expressed in language. When a person single-mindedly follows a spiritual path according to his *sanskār* and reaches its culmination, he experiences an instant

⁸ As per the Holy Scriptures like the Upanishads and Vedas, the source of *dṛishti* is Ātmā (self) and not the physical eye which acts as an instrument only. It is often said "I was inattentive so I have not seen" - this denotes an aspect of mind - but the one who observes it and is able to narrate - is the self (ātmā). Further meditating on this aspect leads to the destruction of sheath of ignorance, revealing the self as Self - the Supreme (the *ātmā* as the *Paramātmā*).

revelation of that which is ever present—the identity of the *jīvātmā* and the *paramātmā*⁹

A mood of stillness and serenity overwhelmed this Body and just as *bīj*, *mantra*, *stotras*, and *kriyās* had earlier emerged spontaneously from within, so now did words emerge from Her lips to the effect that She would not speak to anyone other than Bholanath, and that to only for practical exigencies; She would not retire to bed at all that night. She would fast for the next three days; She would not *pranām* anyone other than Bholanath and numerous other instructions.

When asked to comment on people paying obeisance to Her She answered cryptically, "From the time of creation - all manifestations, namely divine incarnations, saints, *yogis*, *sādhak*, gods, men, plant life, animal life, even to the smallest insect and similarly all action, inaction, grace and lack of it, dissolve into the Absolute eternal One.

When the Self reveals Itself as the source of all manifestation, then who is to be paid obeisance? All that you see that seems separate and distinct is 'That'. What you cannot see is 'That'; it is That again in attainment, nonattainment, joy and sorrow, in this form or that. The one and only Self is also That. In this situation, who is to pay obeisance to whom? The *shlokās* (sacred verse) invoking the Gods: *Brahmā, Vishnu, Maheshwar*¹⁰ - is merely an expression of 'That' - one absolute undifferentiated whole. When creation takes place, whose creation is it and who is the creator? It is all That. What is this *Līlā*? It is 'That' as the player and 'That' as the play. After this realization no one remains to be saluted, for the one who salutes and the one who is saluted are one."

However, even after such a realization there arose from within, strictures concerning the daily routine that would aid this Body's *sāadhanā*: eating only the fruits that fall naturally from trees, living in the manner of sages, and consuming no more than three morsels, and later only three grains of food daily. "How could this come up again?" you may ask. Well, the previous all-pervading state is still veiled by one's own self, even though the veiling and the veil are but aspects of

⁹ The embodied soul and the Supreme Soul

¹⁰ The Lords of Creation, Preservation and Destruction

the Self, an expression of the Supreme's total power. This power is manifested in a multitude of practices, for instance those of the *rishis*, *Vaishnavs*, *Shaivas* and *Shāktas*. However, if you confine yourself to any one of these then you limit yourself. Ultimately one must embrace all. But when you are a seeker you have to pursue a particular path.

At this point in our conversation, I questioned Mā, "If *sādhunā* is infinite, then can we ever reach our goal?"

Mā responded, "The finite exists in infinity and infinity in the finite; everything is everywhere. Realisation can come at any stage; however unless you attain the totality of knowledge of the infinite, it is not a full attainment."

Established in this state, it is possible to play with any one aspect of the infinite. A passive mood may be seen as a pretext. Since the pretext is nothing but the Self, where else can the pretext come from? It is after all a play and a beautiful one too. Just as there is joy and laughter, so too is there apathy, right in the mix. However this inertia is not inertia in the worldly sense, for it is without any obscurity or contradiction-but fully revealed. However there is a stage. Just as sometimes a deaf or lame person cannot bear the label deaf or lame, so too if you address the realised Soul as the Supreme, he becomes apathetic. It is possible to play with anything, for He controls everything; He is submissive to Himself. It is the total manifestation of the One within duality, so also in duality it is the One - then where is the question of duality?"

I found that this Body did not sleep that night, and for three days stayed without any food or drink. The Body was in a state of complete well-being. From that time onwards speech stopped on its own. Do you know what this was like? Being established in the Self is a state beyond joy and sorrow-steeped in sublime bliss. To be fully established in this state is to realize completely that everything is contained in and controlled by 'That'. It is a sense of playing finely with One's own Self where even the question of play itself does not arise as there is only 'That' without another.

Within this context this Body played the role of a *sādhak*. At the completion stage of the *sādhan-līlā* when the time came for Her

identity to be revealed, the question arose 'Who am I?' Where the act, the action and the doer - all three are indivisible and fully manifested. This revelation was like the sun on a clear, cloudless sky. What became evident in this state was that speech would not be forthcoming in an ordinary manner. The Body became calm, serene, and silent. This was not the silence that occurs when speech is restrained, since only divine words would emerge, and these too in an extraordinary manner. This Body would communicate with Bhojanath in an indistinct fashion for practical purposes. Later, the words of the inner and outer worlds erupted by drawing a *kundali*¹¹. In this way the communication ceased, giving way to a state of silence which was only broken occasionally when speaking with the help of the *kundali*."

I then questioned Mā, "After that revelation, what was the need of the *kundali* and *moun* (silence) for You?"

Mā stated, "It was to demonstrate the unfolding process of revelation in the path of full attainment of the Absolute. Comparisons are never complete. For instance, the crown prince must be trained in a particular manner to be king, but once he sits on the throne, the question of training no longer arises."

I asked, "There are so many paths to realization and so many doctrines. What are we then to understand by the unfolding process of revelation?"

Mā replied, "Ah! These are special activities of a unique state - the Supreme. All traditions, doctrines, paths are within 'That', which is the eternal source of the universe! This (indicating Herself) is but the form of the One you take to be the Supreme Being. It is but you yourself who exists in every form, so why do you view these as separate? My child, remember, there is uncertainty and sorrow in duality. Why don't you try to think that HE who is the Lord of the universe is also my *Guru*; HE who is my *Ishta*¹², is the *Ishta* of

¹¹ Three circular lines, one over the other, drawn on the floor around one's sitting posture with the help of the knuckle of the right ring finger while uttering the *mantra*, to ensure that the outside propensities do not affect the inner tranquility. Once the speaking from within the *kundali* is finished, with the similar action the lines are erased.

¹² One's tutelary Deity, literally means 'Beloved'.

the universe. Therefore the entire universe is contained in my *Guru-Ishta*, which embodies the universe in its endless forms, manner, and moods. It is the supreme path in which no path is left unaccounted for. If you understand this then only you can visualise. The Blissful One is steeped in His own pleasure ”

Once a *sādhak* advances on one’s spiritual path to the point where the veil of ignorance is torn asunder, he is established in the state of total enlightenment of Purity, Consciousness, and Absolute Being, where the external and internal are one and the same. Then any question concerning the origin of *sādhanā* will not arise because everything is contained in THAT; there is infinity in the finite and finite in infinity. That is what it is! As for this little Girl of yours, it was because this divine play of *sādhanā* was destined that She obscured Herself to move with the flow of spiritual practice.

I queried, “Mā, why do You say ‘That’? We don’t know of any ‘That’. The one that we know...”

Mā exclaimed, “It is only for you that there is all this talk of ‘That’! Knowing THAT is to know your Self.”

She continued, “Gradually, at the end of three years, *hasta-kundali*¹³ ceased and the same practice commenced using the feet. Later when the absolute state became all encompassing, it was easy to move about freely among people.”

I probed, “Why then did these manifestations of *bhāvs* appear later?”

Mā clarified, “Ah! How is it that you do not ask about actions like lying, sitting, walking, moving, laughing and joking? Yes, there was a time when this aspect was not there. Remember the various *bhāvs* are the same to this Body. These are not expressions of an ignorant or *confounded state of mind*. Divine moods may or may not be manifested, for anything is possible within *līlā*. My son! You are Me, and I too am you. ‘Again, see there is no question of ‘you’ and ‘me’ Whatever anyone says is equally acceptable without confusion. Action does not bind, nor does inaction, the same can be said for selfless action and a renunciation of action where there is no condition, no binding.

¹³ Speaking only on special occasions from within the kundali

At that time there was a great all-embracing *bhāv* in this Body to play in Her own *kheyāl*. Then this play extended to many methods of *sādhanā*. Speech ceased spontaneously with My disinclination to communicate with the external world, while a ceaseless flow of *japa* continued internally like the process of breathing. It was not in the ordinary sense of keeping silence or refraining from speech. Normally silence is observed to keep the mind fixed on the Supreme. The instant the mind wavers, silence gets broken.

No sooner had the three days of *fasung* ended than all arrangements for midday meals were made automatically. As I sat for meals, portions from various food items were offered at the beginning. After meals, these consecrated portions were immersed in water¹⁴. This practice continued for some days ”

I queried, “For whom were these offerings made?”

Mā responded cryptically, “You have to surmise for yourself who at that level is the object of such an offering. When you first receive initiation from your *guru*, you continue your *sādhanā* by following the *guru’s* instructions without necessarily understanding, and then gradually you evolve. When the spiritual teacher and disciple are perceived to be separate, these activities remain a requirement. But when the separate identity merges, the concept of spiritual practices become inconsequential. Now you need to find out at what stage this Body was in during Her *sādhanā līlā* in the above mentioned situation.

These events occurred around the 13th or 14th of *Pous*.¹⁵ From then onwards for about three years, I abstained from talking. I would remain absorbed in Myself. During this period predictions about worldly events would emanate from this Body’s mouth like the earlier emanation of *mantras*. Sometimes I would ask questions regarding these matters and then listen to Myself for the forthcoming answers.

Seldom would I leave the home. If anyone touched Me, the body would sit down in a benumbed state, as if electrocuted. Then, a little

¹⁴ It is a Hindu custom to offer small portions of one’s meal to the Gods who look after human welfare and the life force in the form of *pran*. On finishing one’s meal, water is sprinkled on the offering while reciting a *mantra*. Thereafter this portion is disposed.

¹⁵ Thursday, December 28, 1922

later, *mantras* would emerge from the mouth and this Body would arise in a trance with the sensation of the shock lingering for quite awhile. Day and night She remained suffused in a sublime joy. Even when the body received some physical injury it seemed a part of that joy which radiated the internal knowledge that in this blissful, detached state a *sādhak's karma* is eradicated without creating any new *karma*. After all, worldly joy plants the seed for suffering and greater attachment to *karma*. This kind of reasoning continued within Her constantly and She remained absorbed in an exquisite delight. During this time, particular *āsanas* and visions of different deities ceased completely. Inside and outside were suffused with the divine joy and there was no question of recollecting or forgetting anything.



Bholanath observed all these stages very attentively and would ask, "What is the ultimate outcome of all this?" Despite the fact that this Body could see the past and future like seeing Her own reflection in a mirror, She never felt the slightest inclination to inform Bholanath.

One day Dr. Mahendra Nandi of Kalikachcha, a reputed doctor and saintly person, visited Bajitpur. He had heard various stories from people about this Body, losing Her sanity, being under the influence of an evil spirit, or suffering from hysteria. When Bholanath took Me to be examined by him I sat silently about three feet away. I was unveiled for the first time before an outsider. He looked steadfastly at this Body and later told Bholanath, "Her *bhāvs* are of a very high order. You should not mistake these to be some disease, and worry about it. Most of all do not ever obstruct Her." This incident occurred shortly after *dīkshā*.

For about five and a half months before this Body adopted silence, the Body became the site for the manifestation of varying forms of *japa*, *pūjā*, *āsanas*, and other *yogic kriyās*. When a particular *kriyā* appeared, changed form, and then ceased to appear, no loss was felt nor any doubt or concern. The Self (*Ātmā*) can be experienced only in a state of freedom from doubt. During the normal process of *sāadhanā* for a *sādhak*, when the meditation, *pūjā*, *japa* of any particular deity reaches its culmination, then his related *sanskārs* are

destroyed, the *chitta*¹⁶ attains purity. Then many types of revelations are possible. If the *mantra-chaitanya* manifests itself fully in essence (i.e., the deity of that *mantra* is realized within) opening the door to enlightenment, then the *sādhak* loses any attachment to these external spiritual activities. When *yogis*, while practising their *yogic kriyās*, are truly established in their *yoga*, all doubts are dispelled. When those who practise *japa* and *pūjā* lose themselves in the intensity of their devotion to their respective deities, they distance themselves from these formal rituals; while for those who seek Him through knowledge, when they advance beyond all mental reasoning they realise that 'you' and 'I' (object and subject) are the same.

Together with the cessation of speech, the number of *kriyās* gradually decreased and then stopped completely. This Body remained abstracted in Herself during the time left after completing the daily domestic chores. Then irrespective of whether or not the initial *mantra* stayed in Her consciousness, it was repeated automatically in the throat by the action of the uvula making a sound like the ticking of a clock. When this process began this Body was inclined to query the nature of this activity. The answer emerged on its own: 'The sound is that of the *bīj mantra*.' This process continued with each breath. Sometimes there would be no *kriyā* but a change in breathing. Later, when this process ceased, it was seen that the automatic repetition of *japa* on its own and its consequent cessation made no difference to this Body, for after all, both activities were the same. Both the external and the internal activity resulted in identical progress. But supposing, for example, one of you agitatedly approached this Body during an emergency, such as an accident - then all of a sudden this *japa* would reappear momentarily in the throat. You must know that this Body is never in any state of agitation. You can take this to mean that the Self (*Ātmā*) stood behind the revelation of the *bīj mantra*, maintaining absolute equilibrium. Later even this stopped. Things continued in this manner.



One day, on going to Ushā *didī's* home, I found her reading a book. Through signs (as I was in *moun*) I asked her what book she was

¹⁶ The plane which is even subtler than the mind.

reading. She replied, “*Mahābhārat*.¹⁷ She asked if I would like to read it and handed Me one volume which I brought home. I had no habit of reading books and no inclination towards reading either. When I first went to live at Bholanath’s home He had given Me a book but, seeing that I read only a few pages very haltingly and struggled to understand the simplest language, he never again tried to persuade Me to read any further. That day, when I opened the book I had brought from Ushā *didī* and tried to read, I found that the moment I looked at the letters of the alphabet the *bīj mantra* stopped inside My throat. When I fixed My mind on the *bīj mantra* I could not make out the letters even by looking at them, nor was there any urge to find out what they were. Looking at the letters made Me feel like I was choking and I could hardly breathe. Then I would heave a sigh and start panting. If I looked at a letter again I could make out a glow around it, then another faint glowing letter would appear beside that which would be white and lustrous. At times when looking at one particular letter I noticed that the next one would disappear completely and the *bīj mantra* resumed once again. It was not possible to read a line and so I returned the book. **Actually, once the real *japa* takes over, then there is no further inclination to speak, read, hear or see anything.**

When I was attentive I could make out that the *nām* continued even while I was eating. When My hands were busy doing some work the divine name would still continue. Whether I paid any attention to it or not, it continued, accompanied by the ticking sound. Gradually it was seen that the duration of *samādhi* kept increasing and the *bīj mantra* did not continue all the time. I was not aware when it would stop. If I tried to bring it back it would not occur properly, but would keep eluding Me. Then all of a sudden it would appear again. You should understand from this condition that if one sincerely pursues one’s goal steadfastly, then even though many obstructions arising out of one’s *sanskārs* appear to distract, the person’s sincerity guides him to his goal.

¹⁷ An ancient historical epic depicting the story of Krishna, the Pāndavas and the Kuru dynasty. A literary and spiritual classic that chronicles events and achievements spanning eight centuries.

An unusual *bhāv* seemed to overwhelm Me increasingly day by day and gradually became constant. It seemed that the awareness of the *bīj* was also wafting away from Me slowly. It is to be understood that as long as those who practise *sāadhanā* are attached to their physical world¹⁸ and are limited by their *sanskārs*, the *nām* and form remain separate. As these *sanskārs* start to wane, these persons are drawn to the state of *mahāyoga*¹⁹ through the spontaneous repetition of the *mantra ajapāyoga*²⁰, much like the way in which insects are drawn irresistibly to the fire.

Let Me tell you something more. Earlier, on rare occasions when this Body became restless for some reason, the *mantra* would appear in the throat on its own, momentarily, and then having completed its work would disappear and the restlessness would die down.

From your point of view, something else was noticeable at times. A small disc would appear and rotate before Me, annihilating anything that might threaten to disturb the uninterrupted flow of *bhāv*. No other mood could withstand the force of this divine *bhāv*. Thereafter there remained no more question of seeing any external worship, feeling any sensation, or participating in any activity separate from this divine *bhāv*. There was no place for worldly sorrow or fear, and an immense, lofty serenity pervaded my entire being, as if I was the undifferentiated whole within Myself. I noticed that the Body, like a mechanical doll, would carry out all household chores meticulously. Even guests were attended to perfectly without having to resort to speech. I would be sitting, when suddenly the Body would get up without any thought of where it was going or what it was to do and the hands would move forward automatically to accomplish whatever task was necessary at any given moment of time. The *kheyāl* arose “Where is the mind? What is mind? **The belief in something else other than God - this is mind.**” An intense delight welled up from within—the essence of the Self, Bliss Absolute! In that state, this Body continued all

¹⁸ Feeling of body consciousness, name, form, quality, emotions, wants and desire.

¹⁹ Union with one’s *mantra* or self.

²⁰ Uninterrupted recitation of *mantra* even while sleeping, just like breathing.

household activities, but there was no question any more of exerting one's own mind or effort in doing anything.

Just as when a child while dancing in joy is heedless of where she will put her next step and is completely absorbed in the intensity of her joy, so too did this Body seem to 'play' during that time. Even this comparison does not seem to fully work here. Outsiders would think that this Body was using Her intelligence and judgment to perform Her duties. How could they possibly comprehend how I did the work or in what state the mind was? Nor was there the slightest desire on Her part to try to make them understand.

Over those five and a half months, by the time this Body sat down for a meal after completing the daily spiritual activities and domestic chores it would be nearing dawn. The Body never felt ill or tired.

During this period Kshetrapal²¹ brought over his sick son one day. This young boy, without telling anyone, would at times go out of his house and wander about in the woods or in desolate houses. Kshetrapal tried to cure him of his strange habits through various treatments, but to no avail. Deeply dejected, he finally brought his son here. The boy came and from a distance made his obeisance. For a very brief moment this Body's glance rested on him. Later the boy recovered.

Shiv Pūjā in Mā's Name

Hearing of Her condition this Body's father came to see Her one day. On seeing him there was no inclination on Her part to make obeisance to him. This surprised him.²² When Bholanath told him of Her condition and Her various stages, he said, "If I had any idea of this earlier, I would have taught Her Sanskrit." Soon after, it was *Shivrātri* and he performed the *pūjā* to four or five *Shiv-lingas*, one of which was dedicated to this Body. When Her father started his worship, different Sanskrit hymns began pouring out of Her lips even though

²¹ This individual is different from the exorcist mentioned in Chapter 4

²² Such a thing would be unimaginable in a traditional Hindu household

She was not informed that the *pūjā* was performed in Her name. He was wonder-struck at Her behaviour.

Dissolution of Bondage of the Finite at the Appearance of Infinity

In one corner of the room where we lived, separated by a curtain, I had set up an altar to Goddess *Lakshmi*. From the beginning I would sit there and perform the daily rites. I sat there in the mornings and evenings even when all other *kriyās*, except *japa* had stopped. After sitting on the *asan* for a while My eyes would close and I would be immersed in the sublime joy of Supreme existence. My upper body would droop forward in a blissful mood with my head on the ground, and remain there, unmoving. Between the eyebrows I felt a sensation much like a touch and there appeared what seemed to be the sky with a glow of different colours which came one after another, at first a deep hue and then gradually fading, finally vanishing altogether. This revelation would come with one eye shut.

During this stage there were only four neighbours whose homes this Body would visit. Also She would not touch anyone. There was a girl living in a distant house who was getting married, and Bholanath instructed Me to go there. I told him that I could go only after a certain date but the wedding was to take place earlier. Bholanath remarked disappointedly, "That means You will not go!" But as it happened, the date of wedding was postponed.

The day after the wedding, according to social custom, I joined others and applied vermilion on the forehead of the married women. Immediately I felt a sensation like an electric shock and My Body began to tremble. I sat down in a rapt state for a while before I became normal again. Previously, I discovered that I could not endure any physical contact with another person for long; the Body would withdraw itself automatically. Much later I found that touching the ground had the same effect upon My Body. In order to attain the Infinite, one has to initially keep oneself within limits but with the

touch of the Infinite, the boundless pouring into one, the bond of the finite loosens itself spontaneously.

Speaking Through the *Kundali*

One day when I was observing silence Bholanath received the news that his brother Jamini would be arriving. Bholanath asked Me worriedly, "Jamini is coming after a long time and You are not speaking. What kind of a situation is this?" On his arrival, when Jamini came to touch My feet, I drew away from him and he left almost in tears. Returning later, he asked in a grieved voice, "You will not even talk to me?"

This Body was standing, but then sat down in an *āsana* with *mantras* erupting from Her lips. After sitting steadily for a while, with the right thumb touching inside the knuckle of the ring finger, She drew on the ground with that finger—from left to right while holding Her breath—an unbroken circle. On top of that circle was drawn a second and then a third circle enclosing Her *āsana*. All the while, although the upper part of the body moved, She remained firmly fixed in Her seated posture. Then I heard from within, 'This is called *kundali*.' Hitherto I had never heard of a *kundali*. Now while doing *kundali*, *mantras* continued to pour from My lips. Then very slowly the words came out, "What do you want to hear? What would you like to say, tell Me."

This was the first time that I spoke with the aid of a *kundali*. When the need to communicate was over I would automatically wipe out the imaginary lines of *kundali* thrice with My palm while reciting *mantras*, and then rise from the *āsana*.

After this, whenever there was a need to talk with anyone, the *kundali* was drawn automatically. But the inclination to respond was not always there even when questions were asked. On certain occasions, however, My speaking through the *kundali* would happen spontaneously at any given time or place. It might occur after a gap of 15 or 20 days, or as long as two or three months. People would come running the moment they heard that I was talking, but the words sometimes stopped before they arrived. The ones who heard were

overjoyed, those who could not, returned disappointed. Things continued in this manner for three years for as long as My observation of silence continued.

During these three years we came to Dhaka. Before I ventured into speech and discourse once again, it so happened that while walking in Shahbag, all of a sudden I stood still and formed a *kundali* with the big toe of My right foot and talked to someone. Then, after I had spoken, I wiped it out.

Bholanath's Illness

While speaking about Bajitpur Mā said, "Bholanath was not well for a few days. Usually he would return from the office in the evening, but one day he returned early in the afternoon and said that he was not feeling well. When I finished cooking I called him to take his meal. He ate very little and then went to lie down. When I finished eating and went to the bedroom he told Me that he wanted to go to the toilet, but the moment he tried to get up from the bed he fell to the floor and his body lay still, not breathing. I was keeping silence in those days and so did not call out to anyone.

In the meantime, Sanskrit *mantras* and *shlokās* kept pouring out of My mouth and in this condition, I began to pass My right hand over Bholanath's head and the rest of his body. Then kneeling down and bending over, I rested his head on My left arm. I noticed then that the weight of Bholanath's gross body was less than that of a small child. He was still not breathing, his body was like a log of wood. Along with the *mantras*, a loud sound emerged suddenly from My mouth.

It was odd that no one next door heard the noise, nor that anyone came out to check; whereas Thakur *bhai*²³ and Janakī *babu* heard the sound while they were in company with others at a distant location. They were the only ones to hear it. There was something in that sound that reached only the people for whom it was meant. When they arrived and saw Bholanath's condition, they said, "He is not conscious. This is the end. What is the use of calling a doctor?" While they were still

²³ Mā's maternal uncle's son

discussing his condition, Bholanath exhaled very slowly. When he was slightly better he was taken to the toilet and passed stools that were as black as coal-tar. Those present expressed deep concern thinking he was nearing his end. I did not allow anyone to touch Bholanath that night and kept him lying in his bed. With care and nursing he gradually began to recover

Ushā *didi* addresses Her as Mā

Ushā *didi* would leave her household chores to come and sit with this Body, but here (referring to Herself) there was no communication. One day when she came I sat down in an *āsana* and through the *kundali* spoke to her on many topics which made her very happy. Another day when a similar conversation was ensuing she suddenly said, "Whenever I see You, You appear like a *devi* (goddess) to me; I feel like addressing You as *Mā* instead of *Didi*." I replied, "Very well, let it be so. Do you know what I see? **I see that not only You, but the people of this entire world will address Me as Mā.**"

When later she stopped coming to see Me, eventually I went to her home Myself. She could often surmise My intentions from My body language. The moment she saw Me she said, "You must have come to find out why I have not been coming to see You. But what am I to do? I feel so very happy to be with You and feel like coming all the time. But when I am in Your presence a feeling of detachment overwhelms me. I have children to look after and I cannot afford to feel this kind of indifference. I am a family person, so I have forced myself to stop visiting You." With gestures I conveyed to her that she had nothing to fear; everything would be alright and that she should continue to come to Me. After that she resumed her visits.

Consequences of Taunting

One day an old woman, while passing by our house, said rather tauntingly, "First and foremost a *Brahmin*, she is now also the God of all Gods." The moment these words were heard this Body looked

at her with a sharp glance and when her eyes met Mine she froze. The very next moment I laughed and she became normal again, saying, "Please do not take any offence." From then onwards, she became closer to this Body.

During the period that silence was maintained, it would be seen that the persons who committed deceitful acts would be corrected if a sharp glance from this Body fell on them. On the other hand, those who were simple and truthful were blessed by Her benign and compassionate look and were consequently very joyful. The two different looks came spontaneously. All the while there was nothing that could be called external or internal, presence or absence, union or separation. There was only an all pervading calm.

Transformation of a *Sādhu*

A few months after this Body had started observing *moun* (silence), a *sādhu* visited the area where the lawyers resided. Bholanath spoke to him about this Body, whereupon he expressed a desire to meet Her. On hearing this I said, "Let's see what happens. He can come if he truly desires to do so." It was learnt later that his company was not desirable.

One evening the *sādhu* came and Bholanath seated him on a wooden cot. I was seated in My usual spot, quiet and absorbed in the Self. Bholanath said, "The *sādhu* wants to talk to You." I gestured My consent. Sometimes I would convey what I wanted to say to Bholanath in this manner. Then from a north-facing posture I changed to an east-facing one. The *sādhu* asked Me a great many questions about himself, but since this Body had no *kheyāl* of *kundali*, no answers were forthcoming. After some time spent in this manner, he said again, "I have attained the *siddhi* (supernatural power) of the deities *Kamalā* and *Bagalā*."²⁴ At that point, Sanskrit *shlokas* (verses) began issuing from My mouth. I drew a *kundali* on the floor and with an intense, sharp glance looked at the *sādhu*. Loud, angry words issued forth from My mouth, "What have you achieved? Tell Me, what have

²⁴ Two of the ten forms of goddess *Dasa Mahavidya*

you achieved? You make money by fraud, by stealing, and by giving people useless amulets” Many of his secrets thus tumbled out, attracting some people from neighbouring homes. Completely taken aback, the *sādhu* got down on the floor and closed the door partially. With folded hands and in a very soft voice he urged Bholanath, “Quiet, quiet!” Then, looking at Me in utmost distress said, “I have committed a grave sin, please forgive me. Tell me how to attain spiritual perfection. I have achieved nothing at all.”

By now the urge to speak loudly had gone; I said, “Then you must promise that you will change your ways.” He agreed and I told him the various rituals by which he could attain success in the spiritual path. I had never seen anyone doing the practices that I revealed, they came automatically. On getting this guidance the *sādhu* expressed his appreciation, and after prostrating himself, he left.

Ashu’s Sacred-thread Ceremony and Bholanath’s Promised Worship of Goddess *Kālī*

In the meantime Ashu’s sacred thread ceremony was performed. This Body was alone and in a state of silence. Nevertheless the work connected to the ceremony was carried out by Me in a disciplined way, like a machine. People were often amazed by the efficiency with which this Body performed all the work, and because this Body paid particular attention towards maintaining purity in all Her actions, Bholanath and others called it a mania for cleanliness and sanctity.

Along with Ashu’s sacred-thread ceremony two *manasik Kālī pūjās*²⁵ on behalf of Bholanath were performed to Goddess *Kālī*. On this occasion too, this Body performed all the work with great devotion and strict adherence to the scriptures. About ten or twelve days before the ritual, the room where the *pūjās* (rituals) were to take place and the surrounding areas were cleaned thoroughly. The earthen floor was smeared with a mixture of fresh mud and cow-dung.²⁶ The ingredients for preparing the *bhog* were sprinkled with water mixed

²⁵ Making offerings to the deity to ensure that one’s prayers are granted

²⁶ Cow-dung has antiseptic qualities and when mixed with mud it works to bind the earthen floor.

with cow-dung. All required articles, including the spices to be used for cooking the *bhog*, were cleaned, sorted, washed, and dried in the sun on a space smeared with a mixture of fresh mud and a little cow-dung and then kept carefully in the cleaned room. All this work was done only after bathing and before partaking any food or drink. On the day of the *pūjā*, I did not step beyond the cleaned area nor touch anything that had not been previously washed. Observing the purity and sanctity of the arrangements, the priest was extremely happy.

Mā in Bidyākūt

During this period I visited Bidyākūt once. Having heard this Body’s state many people from the village came to see Me. One person asked, “How can one attain God?” I replied, “One can attain God only with a fervent desire to do so.” Another asked, “How can one acquire calm?” I replied to him, “In order to acquire calm it is necessary to be restless and yearn for it intensely.” One scholarly individual was very pleased by his religious discussions with this Body, and many others expressed their delight after getting responses to their questions.

Surobalā and Hemi, sisters of this Body were also there. Surobalā had been ill for a long time and had come to Bidyākūt for medical treatment. This Body’s mother told her, “Pay your obeisance to your *didi*, and ask Her to cure you of your illness.” But Surobalā was unable to utter these words. One day as I sat in a rapt condition in an *āsana*, mother brought her and insisted that she should pay her obeisance to this Body. Surobalā bent forward to do *pranām* but would not get up. On seeing this, Hemi called mother and when the latter touched her she found her to be almost unconscious. On mother’s instruction this Body helped her up. Surobalā said, “I cannot describe in words where I was all this time.” At this mother concluded that Surobalā was not to live for long. This Body too indicated the same.

I knew that Surobalā would not live much longer and was momentarily moved almost to tears at the thought, but later considered that all this was nothing but the Supreme’s play. The sorrow was

merely the result of our identifying ourselves with the body I found then that this feeling of sorrow and My tearful attitude were superficial, somewhat like strands of hair being blown by a breeze. In the human mind the bondage of *sanskārs* are stored in the *bhāv-granthīs* and often displayed at appropriate moments or in situations that are conducive. Just as perspiration brings about a cooling effect momentarily on the body, so too tears and laughter result in the loosening of the *bhāv-granthīs*, paving the way for genuine tears and laughter for the sake of God. Due to inertia, the opening of these knots is slow and halting for ordinary people. For this reason their tears or laughter cannot continue for long and the loosening of the bonds does not come about easily.

In the single-minded pursuance of *sāadhanā* when there is a reason to laugh or cry, the emotions envelop the *sādhak*, overwhelming him for the necessary time to unravel these knots. All knots remain open in those who are advanced on the spiritual path. Both tears and laughter manifest themselves in an unnatural manner in their bodies, and at times, like the sun and shade, they occur simultaneously. Laughter and tears were manifested in this Body in a similar manner.

Once mother developed very high fever and although this Body was observing silence at that time, She had to do the entire work of their household for twelve or thirteen days. With Her mother's condition getting worse, one day She found Her father sitting by himself dejectedly and, on seeing him thus, She went to Her mother and looked fixedly at her for some time. From that day onwards Mother started getting better.



CHAPTER 6

Bholanath's Posting to Shahbag, Dhaka

Bholanath received an unexpected message from the head office of the Collectorate in Dhaka with the instruction to leave Bajitpur. Anxiously he travelled to Dhaka along with this Body and, not finding the situation there encouraging, he considered sending Me elsewhere. This Body suggested to him to wait for another three days and to see what came up. Within this time, he received his posting to Shahbag.

On the 28th of *Chaitra*, 1330,¹ we reached Dhaka and arrived at the garden known as Shahbag on the 3rd of *Baisakh*, 1331²

A few days after our arrival there I said to Bholanath, "I 'see' that there is a Siddheswari here. Is there any tree around by that name as well?" He pointed to some big trees near Shahbag at the Buroburi tala, to which I replied, "Not these."

Every evening we would visit the neighbouring Ramna *Kālī* temple to observe the *āī alī* there. One evening Bholanath's friend, Baul Chandra Basak, accompanied us on our way back home. Conversing with him we learned a great deal about the Siddheswari *Kālī* temple. Bholanath requested him to take us there some day.

In the month of *Āshār* (June-July) Bholanath and I visited Siddheswari accompanied by Baul. At the temple gate we saw a giant *Pipul* tree that had been partially uprooted by a storm and was now growing in a slanting position. Immediately this Body remarked, "This is the place and this is the very tree that I 'saw' when I was in Shahbag but there must have been more trees here earlier." In response Baul confirmed, "Yes, there is a belief that a banyan, a

¹ Thursday, April 10, 1924

² Wednesday, April 16, 1924

pipul, and a sandalwood tree had grown together to form a tree which came to be known as the 'tintiri' tree." I now knew that this indeed was the Siddheswari tree. Baul informed us that a *pyoti* (light) can be seen in this tree depicting the radiant form of Siddheswari *Kālī*. Sometimes it moves back and forth between the tree and temple and dwells within the deity established as Siddheswari - another form of the radiant *Kālī*."

The days passed by in Shahbag and I continued observing silence. One day a neighbour's family came for an outing with their children. On seeing Me they exclaimed, "She is so pretty but probably dumb, as She does not talk?" They were eating something and this Body offered them some salt. At this they remarked, "We never asked for salt. How did She know that we needed it? Look, She is smiling. Poor thing! She seems to be deaf as well." Returning home, they told others about this incident.

Afterwards on making inquiry about this Body, the elders in that family brought a sick boy of eight for healing to Shahbag. The boy was an invalid. Through gestures I told them to bring him another day, and when he came back the second time this Body took him on Her lap and kept caressing his entire body with Her hand. The boy lay there quietly. Later they left and I came to know that he had recovered fully. One day when he came to Shahbag I saw him running about.

Change in Diet

In the month of *Āshār* (June-July) this Body's diet began to change. One day, while having a meal, I discovered that I could eat only three morsels of food. This became the regular pattern of My eating and it continued for several months. I would eat once during the day and once at night, and in between not even take a drink of water. All household duties were carried out as usual. Even on days when there were fruits instead of rice, this Body accepted only three bites of fruit, no more could be eaten even if one tried.

Seven Days at the Siddheswari *Kālī* Temple

In the month of *Bhādra* (August-September) arrangements were made for another visit to the Siddheswari *Kālī* temple.³ We reached Siddheswari just before dusk, and after cooking rice and other dishes, offered them to the deity. This type of offering had never been done before, but Bholanath told Me to do it in whatever manner came from within. And I did so. The night was nearly over and I stayed on there the next day. This Body's father would spend the days at the temple and Bholanath came in the evening and spent the nights there. After two or three days, Baul too began to spend the nights there.

At that time this Body stayed alone in the small room adjacent to the main temple. At dawn after bathing She would wrap only a single piece of cloth around Herself and enter the room to spend the entire day and night there, either lying on the floor lost within Herself or just quietly sitting in silence. Occasionally She would walk inside the temple. She would come out of the room only once at night to offer some fruits to *Kālī* and partake a small quantity Herself before returning to the room.

When seven days had passed in this manner, after partaking the fruit offered to *Kālī* at the end of the night, I said to Bholanath, "Let's go out," and we went to the place where *Mahādev*⁴ has now been installed. Baul had spent the whole night sitting at the temple door, but he did not hear us when Bholanath and I stepped out.

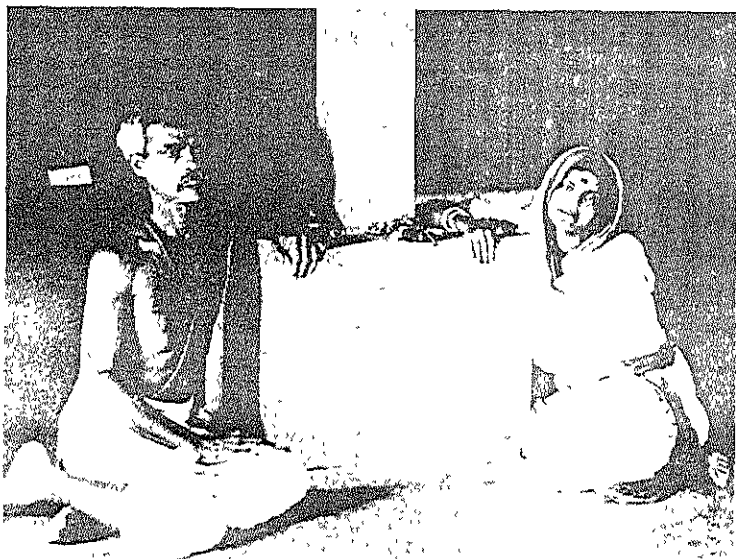
This was the first time that, in the worldly sense, I saw that place. It was like a waste land, with a small raised area and a white-ant mound; nearby to the side was a large pool of rain water. It was raining heavily and Bholanath and I were drenched as I circumambulated the small raised ground three times. I then placed My right palm on the centre, pressing it as I sat down. The arm sank into the ground right up to the shoulder. Seeing this, Bholanath exclaimed anxiously, "What

³ Monday, September 8, 1924

⁴ A correlation may be established with the installation of *Shiv-linga* named *Mahādev* at the holy spot in *Siddheswari* with Mā's revelation that Bholanath was none other than *Mahādev*. Refer sub-heading "Revelation of Mā's Identity" in Chapter 4

is happening! It is going in all the way!" and he pulled this Body up by Her arm to a sitting position. Immediately warm reddish water gushed out like a fountain from the hole thus made. This is the spot where the *Shiv-linga* is now installed. After about half an hour Bholanath hurriedly took Me back to the *Kālī* temple.

When My arm had sunk into the ground it had come into contact with an object which I brought up and which Bholanath then threw into the pond adjoining the Siddheswari *Kālī* temple. In the morning we returned to Shahbag. After three days this Body told Baul to seal the spot where the arm had sunk in with certain ingredients, and also instructed him to ensure that the spot was maintained properly. Later, when a thatched hut was erected⁵ and the foundation was raised all



Shree Shree Mā and Bholanathji sitting on either side of the altar at the holy spot in Siddheswari, the pillar on the altar is of the height of Shree Shree Mā's sitting posture

⁵ For the celebration of *Bāsanti pūjā* in March, 1926

around, the place looked like a *kund* (pit). Later still, when the hut was replaced by a tin shed, this *kund* was filled up and a pillar, the height of this Body in a kneeling posture, was erected. Afterwards a *Shiv-linga* called '*Mahādev*'⁶ was installed at this spot.

Game of Wit with Sri Kushari

On being questioned again, Mā resumed, "The question of custom and conditioned behaviour remains as long as one continues to think in terms of what is mine versus what is yours. That too left Me gradually." When this Body's relatives, in the worldly sense, saw the change in Her manner of talking and behaving with them, they felt upset saying, "You seem to belong to everyone now and we no longer feel You as one of us like we did before. The world seems to have taken You away from us!"

Bholanath's brother-in-law⁷ came to Dhaka, and in the course of conversation he said, "We now always find You completely absorbed in Your own self. We do not get to talk to You, we only see Your body. Tell us, which world do You live in?"

Laughing, this Body replied, "Why, I am where I have always been. Everything is the same. Where can one go or come?"

He said, "We do not understand such profound sayings. We just want You to talk to us and behave with us as before, like a daughter-in-law of the family."

This Body said, "But this Body is behaving with you as before, sitting near you."

He said, "We certainly receive Your care and affection, but somehow we feel that You are beyond our reach and different from us in every way. This makes us miss You in spite of the fact that You are here before our eyes." Once again he asked, "Tell me, the state that we see You in, how has it come about?"

⁶ Appears to be Bholanathji's *sādhana* spot in his past life where he attained *siddhi* (realisation). While raising the foundation, no one was able to break the white-ant mound out of fear. Mā sent Bholanath from Shahbag to do the job.

⁷ Bholanath's third brother-in-law's name was Kalī Prasanna Kushari.

By way of an answer this Body said, "If you wanted to see a temple along with its spire, you would have to stand at a distance and look up; only then could you see the complete structure. Later, on entering the temple you have *darshan*⁸ and pay your obeisance to the deity; and if you are able to experience it in the proper manner then, like touching a touchstone, you become one with it."

He asked again, "This state that You get into, please tell us what it is like!"

In reply this Body said, "Can you explain one thing to Me? How beautiful does this flower that you see before you appear to you? And what is your feeling towards it?"

He kept silent. Gradually his affection for this Body increased. Such were the discussions held during the days he spent in Dhaka.

He had come to Dhaka once before, when this Body was observing silence. Talks were carried out by way of the *kundali*. He would often banter and make fun of this Body. On seeing Bholanath after his arrival he joked, "So where is the God?" Laughingly, he spoke on a great number of topics and asked Me, "The three mouthfuls of food that You take, perhaps each one of them amounts to one *pāo*⁹ of rice?"

Later this Body sat within the *kundali* and spoke to him at length about dharma and spirituality and also about the condition of this Body. While in conversation, he suddenly said, "I did not notice it was so late! Well, if You have the power, let me see You burn me to ashes!" and laughing heartily, he prepared to leave. It so happened that Bholanath and I were to go to town about that time too, so the three of us set out together.

Since coming to Shahbag I had noticed that every Thursday a Muslim gardener placed incense and *shinny*¹⁰ at the two *mazhārs*¹¹ that were located in the garden. That day was also a Thursday and when we were about to go out, the Muslim gardener came and asked Me for some incense sticks and then left upon receiving them. Sri

⁸ Seeing or experiencing the presence and blessing of the deity, or saint

⁹ A *pāo/poa* is approximately 250 gms

¹⁰ An offering made by mixing flour, banana, milk, sugar and coconut

¹¹ Burial place of a Muslim saint or fakir

Kushari too lit a few incense sticks and held them in his hand while chatting amicably as we walked. We walked a long distance along the main road in this manner. As the sun was very strong he held his umbrella over this Body's head so that we were walking under the same umbrella. Bholanath was on the other side of the road. Suddenly Kushari *mahashay* gave a start, "Ah! From where are the embers falling on my head? Are You really burning me to ashes?" he exclaimed "Indeed, I now have enough faith in Your power. Please do not turn me to ashes!" Saying this he looked at the umbrella and found it partly burnt. In trying to understand what had sparked the fire, he and Bholanath deduced that while bantering about My turning him into ashes, sparks from the smouldering incense sticks in his hand had landed on the material of the umbrella and burnt it, causing some embers to fall on his head

Ramna *Kālī* Temple¹²

I often went with Bholanath to the Ramna *Kālī* temple¹³ in the evening to watch the *ārātī*. I would sit inside and sometimes just lie there quietly. By the time we returned home (to Shahbag) it was ten or eleven at night. One night as I sat there till quite late, I 'saw' four or five *sannyāsīs* (ascetics) whose *samadhis*¹⁴ were under the Ramna

¹² The Ramna *Kālī* temple was founded about 500 years ago by Swami Gopal Giri of Badrinarayan Joshi Math when he came to Dhaka. It was popularly known as '*kāt ghar*'. Around 300 years ago, Swami Haricharan Giri built the steeple of the main temple which rose 37 meters or 120 feet above the second floor. It was a landmark structure and could be seen from a great distance. The main deity of this temple was Goddess *Bhadrakālī*, yellow complexioned, beautiful, with a pleasant demeanour, sitting on a wooden throne. Sri Sri Mā had given an indication that Bholanath in one of his previous lives had established this temple.

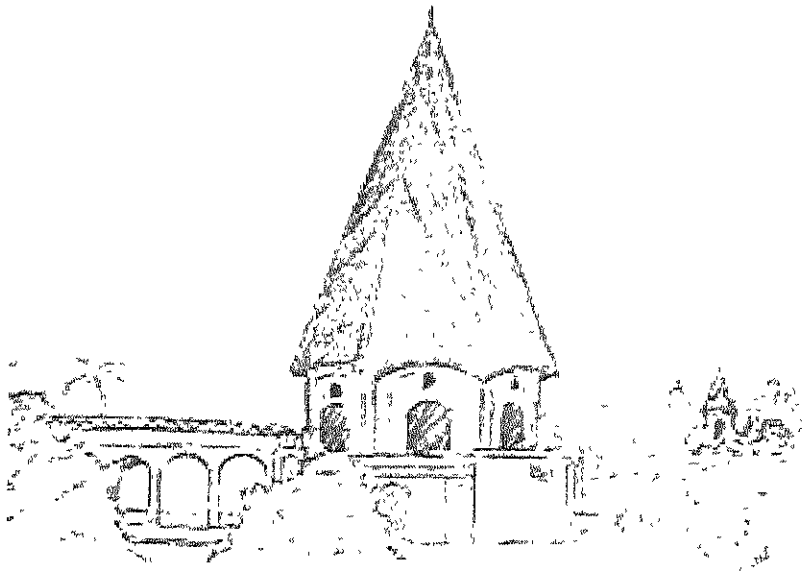
The Ramna *Kālī* temple and the nearby Sri Sri Mā's Ramna āshram covering an area of 2.22 acres were razed to the ground by the Pakistani Army by canon fire at the dead of night on March 27, 1971. Soon after the army had to surrender nearby. This place is highly sacred and needs to be rebuilt. This information has been taken from the Archive on *Mātrī Līlā*.

¹³ Located half a kilometre east from their home in Shahbag.

¹⁴ Special ritualized grave sites where the remains of holy men and women are interred and venerated.

Kālī temple and also in the Ramna *āshram*, moving about in their astral forms. One day we came to know that the temple doors were to be closed at ten every night. From that day onwards I left the temple early or sat in one of the outer rooms.

I would go to the temple on new-moon nights, spend a few hours there and then return home. One night the priest of the temple requested, "Please do not leave before the end of the *pūjā*" On such a night I happened to meet Rajendra Chatterjee and Radhacharan Biswas, the Sub-inspector of Police.



Sketch of Ramna Kali Temple and the Dilapidated Temple at the background

In the Guise of a Guest

Rajendra Chatterjee came to the Ramna *Kālī bāri* regularly to spend many hours doing *japa*. One morning on our way to town, Bholanath pointed out his house to me. This Body said, "Let's go there." Entering

his home I found that he was engaged in *pūjā*, making the daily offering to the deities. This Body came out of the room, made a *kundali* on the floor, and sat down inside it. When he completed the *pūjā* She spoke to him in a childlike way, "I felt like coming to your home and having some of the food offered to the gods as *prasād*" Happy to be able to serve *prasād* to a married woman¹⁵ he replied that he was honoured but we would have to wait a while.

We proceeded to our original destination and on our way back stopped at his house once again. There we found that they had bought some particular items from the market to cook a more elaborate meal. His wife explained that since the daily offerings were meagre, they felt unable to offer that to this Body. After having our meal, we returned home. This was the first time this Body ate at someone's home since adopting silence.

One evening Rajendra Chatterjee came to Shahbag and stayed late listening to this Body speak. Expressing great joy at Her discourse, he exclaimed, "If I, Rajendra Chatterjee, spread the word in town, Shahbag will be filled with people." This Body dissuaded him saying, "There is no need for that. **People will come when the time is right for them to do so**" It was too late to go to the *Kālī* temple and so he made his obeisance at its door and returned home. Later he confessed that this was the first time since coming to Ramna that he did not enter the temple.

Prior history of the Ramna *Āshram*

On *shashthī*¹⁶ of the autumn *Durgā pūjā*, after visiting Ramna, Dhakeswari, and spending the night at Siddheswari *Kālī bāri*, I returned to Shahbag early in the morning. Radhacharan had accompanied us on the trip to Dhakeswari and Baul was with us in Siddheswari. On *ashtamī*,¹⁷ arrangements were made for Rajendra

¹⁵ It was considered auspicious to offer a meal to a married woman as she represented a particular aspect of the Goddess

¹⁶ The sixth day in the waxing phase of the moon in the month of Asvin (September-October)

¹⁷ The eighth day in the waxing phase of the moon in the month of Asvin (September-October), the date was October 6, 1924

Chatterjee to perform *pūjā* to the broken *Shiv-linga* inside the derelict house¹⁸ near Ramna *Kālī* temple. That day, during the *pūjā*, many Sanskrit verses poured spontaneously from this Body's lips.

Radhacharan, Bholanath, and I sometimes visited this abandoned house, some days we would go with Baul. From the *ashtamī pūjā* day onwards, I would sometimes send fresh milk and bananas on Mondays through someone, and occasionally accompany them. This was done to fulfil the desire of the ascetics who lived there long ago and whose *samadhis* were there. You should understand that the *āshram* that stands there today also came to be established as a result of the intensity of their *sankalpa* (determination), just like I arrange to have your wishes - that I accept - carried out through someone else. Remember that all those closely associated with these ascetics are the very ones who have been working on establishing this *āshram* and will continue to do so. The time spent there by this Body is also in fulfillment of their wishes. You too are accomplishing whatever you can accomplish through this little Girl.¹⁹

One Monday, Bholanath, Baul, and this Body took about half a dozen bananas and fresh milk in a new vessel to the dilapidated *Shiva* temple and left it there uncovered. Seven days later Baul came to Shahbag in the evening with his wife and, going to the temple around nine or ten at night, found the milk and the bananas left in the vessel exactly the same as when they had been kept. We also went to see. The place was generally dirty, but not a single ant could be seen near the vessel. I suggested, "Why don't we have some of the milk from this." Bholanath responded, "That will not be right. Snakes abound here; the walls are full of holes and are almost collapsing. Supposing some poison has somehow fallen into the milk!" This Body told him, "Let me taste it first," and lifting a little with Her finger She put it on Her tongue. The others also took small portions, like *prasād*. After

¹⁸ The derelict house near the Ramna *Kālī* temple became the site of the Ramna *Āshram*.

¹⁹ Mā giving an indication that Her manifestation was the fruition of *sāadhanās* carried out by numerous *sādhanaks* over centuries with a single objective of revelation of the Divine Feminine Creative Power.

that we returned home. The next morning the vessel was found to be completely empty, as if washed. Someone had finished the contents to the last drop without leaving any trace of it.

One dark new moon night, Nityānanda Giri²⁰ went to worship the *Shiv-linga* on the *samadhi* of Harachandra Giri. Prompted by some *kheyāl*, I went along with him. He was sitting on his *asan* when suddenly this Body spoke, "I wish to stay here for some time. Tell Me, where can I stay?" Nityānanda Giri pointed to the place where the present *āshram* is and said, "Why don't You stay there Mā? That house is not used by anyone." I agreed. He again said, "Please remember this!" A number of people heard this conversation. Several commented that he had spoken these words under the influence of alcohol²¹ and had not meant what he said.

Lakshmī Pūjā

Bholanath wanted to celebrate *Lakshmī pūjā*. It was decided that Rajendra Chatterjee would perform the *pūjā*. Although he had initially agreed, he later declined after consulting his wife. Thereupon Bholanath suggested that I do the worship. I protested, "I have never performed *Lakshmī pūjā* nor have I observed anyone else doing it so I don't know how it is done. It is better that you do it." Bholanath replied "Whatever You do will be fine. You never do anything according to Your wishes.²² So do whatever comes from within. Perhaps *Lakshmī* wants it that way." After personally making all the preparations, I sat down to worship and found that after some time all the external rituals normally performed by the priests as well as many more began to come about spontaneously. At times this Body would sink to the ground and then get up to continue with the rituals. Progressing in this manner, it took a long time to complete the *pūjā*.

²⁰ Monk in-charge of the Ramna *Kālī* Temple.

²¹ Alcohol is sometimes used in Tantric rituals.

²² Mā is ego-less and hence the divine power operates through Her instead of will power, refer sub-heading 'Divine Power and Will Power' in Chapter 4. Most probably Mā performed the *Lakshmī pūjā* on the *Lakshmī pūjā* day which fell on October 12, 1924.

The Duties of a *Sādhak*

While this Body remained busy with the domestic chores required in Her role as a housewife, there also emerged in Her signs of the *sādhak*, the other role in which She was engaged at the time. The latter role was a result of Her *kheyāl* which arose as a result of an inner questioning, "How does a human being realize God?" The answer was immediate, "There must be an overpowering desire for it." So, intentionally or unintentionally there must be an all-consuming craving for God that flows continuously within the Self. Just as a married woman guards her conch-shell bangles, steel bangles and vermilion - the sacred symbols of her marriage-under all circumstances; a grieving woman, despite her sorrow, ensures that she dresses with propriety; or a mother attends to the house work while carrying her child, so too must you think ceaselessly of God while going through your daily life. If this is ever disturbed due to your other preoccupations, on remembering you should feel repentant and confess, "O Lord, all this while I have been forgetful of you." Then the thought of God will increase within you by the day. You have to remember that the only true thought is the thought of God. One should talk to others only when needed; one must restrain one's desire to talk as well as to listen to others. There is, however, no negative impact in discussions that increase one's contemplation of God. Indeed these must be encouraged as they can eradicate self doubt.

Also you should realize that the more you meditate on the Supreme, the sharper will be your capacity for judgment and discrimination, revealing what is beneficial and leading you towards greater purity of thought. You will then find that your attraction for the world as perceived through the five senses is decreasing while you remain immersed in the contemplation of God. If you are striving to maintain purity of thought, the first sign of progress will be that no person or thing will ever rouse any adverse reaction in you, and gradually good qualities like truth, sacrifice, restraint, love, forbearance, patience, and endurance will increase within you. You will discover that the more you receive God's Grace, the less different or alien other

religious practices will seem, and you will begin to feel that they are but different ways of worshipping your own *Ishia*. This concept is analogous to the various roles which the same person plays in others' lives, for instance he who is My father may be another's friend and yet another's uncle. One calls him father, another *bandhu* (friend) and a third, *kākā* or *māmā* (uncle).

You must utilize your time fruitfully with *pūjā*, prayer, meditation, *japa*, *kirtan*, and *yagnas*. In the earlier stages, while you are striving to put your mind to spiritual matters, involvement with worldly activities is not supportive of your spiritual aspirations. Hence, combining these (the spiritual and the worldly) cannot yield fruitful results. At least for some time remain in seclusion and forget the external world, look into the realm of your inner mind and meditate ceaselessly upon Him. While engaged in this, take utmost care not to let any other thought enter the mind. Should anything occur to disturb this, then one must feel a deep sense of aversion towards it or else know that there still lingers within the self, some attachment to those thoughts.

The fragmented experiences of the *sādhak* in his efforts to ceaselessly meditate upon Him gradually develops the awareness of a vast, complete and infinite essence that paves the way to progressive advancement and the hope of successful completion of one's *sāadhanā*, leading to ultimate revelation. Only the cessation of doubts transforms the *sādhak* into a precious jewel submerged in *Vishvarūp*²³. Until this happens it is not possible to uproot one's primary worship practices when setting out on the path of *sāadhanā*. Thus one finds that even when all obstacles towards realizing the ultimate truth of one undivided *sattā* (existence) are cleared by means of deliberation and logic, complete realization may still be absent as one can remain attached to the particular dynamics of one's *sāadhanā* and become bound within the different boundaries of the *bhāvs* therein. Remaining at this stage and within such limits even in a state of being without doubts is not the same as being beyond all doubts.

²³ Universal Self

There are, in general, three kinds of intelligence. The first is *Jīva-buddhi* or human intelligence, although religious or philosophical matters may be taken up by it, it is used in an ordinary manner. The second is *dharmā-buddhi* or religious-intelligence in which earnestness and religious ardour are predominant and all actions are spiritually focused. The third is *prajñā* or *yogaj buddhi*, which is superior intelligence or super consciousness. This comes as a natural outcome of following the first two paths. When purity of the *chitta* is attained as a result of *sādhana*, there appears, like the sunrise at dawn, a perfect intelligence within oneself by which the true essence of the divine truth is known. Thus one achieves that pure consciousness that can be called *yogaj buddhi*. This supreme consciousness plays only with the Eternal and Absolute Truth. In this *līlā*, there is no expression of worldly tendencies. When an ordinary person starts practising *sādhana*, his main aim should be to maintain purity of body and mind, which is *brahmachārya*. **Without *brahmachārya* nothing can be attained. For every human being, the foundation of *sādhana* must be observance of truth and *brahmachārya*.**

Vision of Deities and their Essence

On another occasion, while replying to questions Mā said, "When a vision of a deity appears as a result of devotional ardour and at the same time the 'anahat chakra' of the *sādhak's* heart is opened, then the vision of one's preferred deity is seen reflected within all other deities. One feels that all the different deities embody the many types of attire, moods, and stances of one's preferred deity; just as one's mother may be looked upon by others as *māshi*, *pīshi* (aunt), or *didī* (sister) as per their relationship and respect though she remains one and the same person in all cases. When this knowledge deepens within the worshipper as a result of one's devotion, one feels that one's desired deity exists in different forms in all human beings; then this feeling extends to the animal world-to birds, beasts, and insects-and later still to the plant world. Gradually this aspect covers water, fire, earth, and then extends to the atmosphere and space. The

understanding dawns within the self that whatever one sees are all but endless forms, expressions, and attributes of one's beloved deity. In time one also feels oneself to be nothing other than a manifestation of the deity, and becomes overwhelmed with sublime ecstasy. The more this raptness intensifies within oneself, one sees one's Beloved in all forms, in all thoughts and in every single object around. When one ponders over this state, the manifest form dissolves at times and a peculiar sublime ecstasy of separation within total union (*virāho bhāva*) descends upon the bewildered one. The *chitta* is purified at this stage. In this manner, when one's fragmented consciousness due to *sanskāras* becomes transformed into one's Beloved One, the *sādhak* realizes that the One Reality resides in and permeates every single thing in this universe, in endless forms, endless expressions, with endless attributes. As the *sādhak* is still involved in the external world, his body may outwardly appear temporarily lifeless and inert, but within there flows a ceaseless stream of an infinite, supreme *bhāva*. This is but one stage of accomplishment in the *bhāva* domain.

For example, the *sādhak* begins his or her *sādhana* with the image of a particular deity in mind and progresses gradually to realize that all forms and qualities are but different expressions of none other than his beloved Deity, and illuminate the real nature of the Supreme. In other words, everything that exists in the universe-trees, plants, animals, birds, and all else-are but different forms of the *sādhak's* chosen One. As one progresses in this state, one may take the path of establishing oneself in the Self, where the aspect of worshipping deities loses significance. One can also choose the path of form and be fully established in that, or he may not take a path of form. According to one's *guru's* instructions, one can meditate upon the essence of Self, leading to the realisation of Self. If one is established in '*dhyān yoga*', even then one may be confronted with the basic question of duality-the physical and that which is beyond the physical. Who is That? What is That? Nothing but He who is beyond all doubts or contradictions-the Self. Behind the universal diversity what is revealed beyond all contradictions is nothing but the *Ātmā Rām*. It is not enough to become absorbed at that stage or be temporarily merged

in it; one must firmly establish oneself in that state. You talk of going beyond doubt, yet doubts still linger. How is this tenable in a state which encompasses all?

Categories of *Sādhaks*

A stage comes in the life of a *sādhak* when he may benefit others by his blessings. He may take on the illnesses or fulfil in various ways the material desires of others. He may bestow spiritual strength upon those who are spiritually inclined. How does one manifest such blessings? When the *sādhak* realizes that everything is contained within himself and that he exists in everything, it can happen that he takes upon himself the suffering of others for there is no difference-no duality. On the other hand, if that person is meant to be healed or saved, things can occur on their own in a way that accomplishes this. For instance, one day this Body was sitting in *āsana* at the Siddheswari temple talking to people when suddenly She stood up and walked towards a nearby pond. A child had fallen into it and was drifting towards deeper waters. She quickly lowered Herself into the water and pulled the child to safety and returned it to the parents who had been sitting within the *Kālī* temple. There is also a stage when a person can be saved without undergoing suffering or without the *sādhak* taking the suffering upon himself.

A *sādhak* of a high calibre can enhance a person's spiritual prowess by infusing him with greater awareness of the Self (*Ātmā*). At this stage the *sādhak* is capable of exhibiting various powers, however, should he display these with pride and a sense of superiority, then his progress becomes arrested as there still remains the desire within him for recognition. Although the *sādhak* may acquire supernatural powers, he may realize that because he has not yet gone beyond likes and dislikes he is not qualified to use these freely. This is also a stage. However, this does not apply in the case of a true *ācharya* or a *jagatguru*²⁴.

²⁴ A *jagat guru* is a spiritual teacher of the Universe who is able to create worlds and transmit power onto others without losing his own power

Mā then laughingly started explaining the various stages. Those who have an attachment to various forms of prayer and meditation (like *japa*, *pūjā*, *pāth*, *kirtan*, *satsang*) and try to be absorbed in the thought of their chosen deities via their particular aspect of *sādhanā* belong to the stage that you may classify as 'student'

There are those who engage in *pūjā*, *pāth*, *dhyān*, and *dhāranā* and at the same time strive to remember God continuously by engaging in discussions and deliberations on the fundamental Truth. They strive earnestly to pursue the path of spiritual progress and search intensely for the way. Such persons represent the Intermediate stage

Again, there are those who become engrossed in various fundamental truths about God and their *Ishta*, or are intent upon furthering their knowledge on the essence of *Ātmā*. Such persons zealously pursue and analyze their individual quests. These represent the stage akin to your B.A. degree.

Going beyond the involvements of the physical world or its three primordial *gunas* (qualities), *sattva*, *rajas*, *tamas*²⁵, there are those who experience the Supreme Reality, beyond all attributes, the Self-effulgent and without form. In them there is no question of there being lesser or greater progressive advancement of a particular doctrine. However, their revelations are proportionate to their pace of progress. Such persons have reached the penultimate stage, a process that you may align with your M.A. degree.²⁶ The above is explained in this manner to make it comprehensible

Supremely established in one's Self-where there is no conflict or controversy-that is the desired goal. You say it is beyond doubt, yet doubt remains. How is that possible? How beautiful is the one who attains absolute knowledge of the Ultimate Reality, who is established beyond all knowledge and ignorance, and who melts to become formless and then congeals to be with form! Again, the all pervading One that solidifies to take form is the same as That which melts to

²⁵ Pure and good, passionate and restless, dull and torpid - see Glossary

²⁶ It is similar to the stage of opening of '*Rudra Granthī*' in Tantra *sādhanā*, refer - Appendix III

become formless. All this eternal dissolving and solidifying is the essence of the Supreme Self.

In both the form and the formless, there is only the One. A *sādhak* who has realised this ultimate state may choose to be merged with the Supreme or remain within form as the full embodiment of the non-dual revelation Itself. Where this merging into formlessness or remaining with form takes place in full realisation of the Supreme, there remains no question. Again it is said that it dissolves in love and is ablaze in the fire of knowledge. That is, the sheath of ignorance can be removed by the aspect of divine love or the true knowledge of the Supreme. These are but different points of view and ways to attain the supreme goal of being established in the Self.

It is interesting that for those who follow the path of Vedānta in order to realise the Supreme, as long as the aspect of reasoning exists there will always remain the concept of a judge, a subject to be judged and the argument for and against the subject; then the question of *karma* and *sanskār* (the consequences of the activities of past lives) will arise. The idea of formlessness and form will also play into that argument. When will the question of *karma*, *vasana* (subtle mental craving from previous lives), and *sanskār* not arise? Well, when these concepts are no longer relevant. Where is the place of language for what remains and what does not? Language floats on something, so where is that something?

Again there is that Great Power beyond which there exists no other, where there is no dearth of revelation of any fundamental truth, be that in the aspect of Self (*Ātmā*) or God with form such as *Rām-Sītā*, *Shiv-Shaktī*, or *Rādhā-Krishna*. Whichever way you may state it, it is where the real nature of the Supreme exists. It is That and only That. The ability to play freely in that state is equivalent to your Ph D. degree. Now, find out what THAT is!

Mā in *Harinām*

In answer to a question Mā said, "You are talking about the way *Harinām* affects this Little Girl! Do you not all live in the world of

name and form? Whatever general mood prevails among you all during *kirtan* is reflected in this Body accordingly. At times you find extraordinary aspects in this Body even when it is in a natural state. Yes, things happen on their own. Whatever has to happen happens, as the Doer is not a separate entity. Whatever has been revealed or is being revealed while listening to or reciting *nām* are merely different expressions of the Self."

It is the Supreme Being who is in the form of *nām*, it is He Himself, eternally present in the form and the formless. You talk of *nām ras* - the delight you experience by taking God's name, *ākarshan Krishna* - the attraction of Krishna, *ānanda Rām* - the joy - permeated *Rām*, *Ātmā Rām* - the supreme bliss of the Self; or the *vīgrahas* (images) of *Sri Rām* or *Sri Krishna*, whatever you say, these are like water and ice, different forms of the Supreme who is eternally present with and without form. The names by which you call God, like *Shiv*, *Durgā*, *Paramatmā*, the manifest, and that which is not manifest, then again *Shaktī*, all are but He, with form or without form, the life-force - the Self. So whatever form you adopt, would that not be the worship of the Supreme One in the form of the 'name'? Yes, you may assert that whoever you choose to call by a certain name has a distinctive appearance and expression that goes along with that name, which is but natural - but tell me is this not the highest truth? This is like a man who can be referred to as the father, son, or a husband, yet none of these relationships is less than the other and all these names refer to the same person.

It is true that each doctrine is based on a certain idea: The need is to evolve fully beyond all names and forms, where the question of conflict does not exist. Think of That! The Eternal, the Pure, the Enlightened, the Liberated, and the Immortal, it is nothing but *svayam prakāsh*²⁷. Even when the aim is to reach the Supreme Truth by the method of negation, as '*neti neti*' - 'not this', 'this is also not He,' there too the goal is *svayam prakāsh*. You see that in all spiritual efforts the aim is to realize the Absolute Self, to merge in an eternal

²⁷ Revelation of the Self/Self-luminous

union with the Supreme, therefore when you progress spiritually through a specific path, your goal must also be the same.

You asked the other day why *Harinām* brings about a change of *bhāv* in Me. Just as a *guru* leads you through differing paths according to your *sanskār* and traversing those paths may bring forth varying *bhāvs*; yet all these different paths lead to the same goal. So too does this Body display changes in *bhāv* as per the prevailing situation, or as directed by Her *kheyāl*. Now think over the matter. You follow a certain path in order to transcend the specific name and form of a deity, but it is with the support of the name and form that you do so, is it not? It is that all pervading absolute One that dwells in the name and the form. *Hari*, the name, transcends everything including death, and cleanses that which needs to be cleansed.²⁸ He is the Lord. All names are His names, all attributes are His attributes, and it is His form in all forms, and the question of name, attributes or form does not arise. Specific names, forms, and attributes may evoke specific emotions but these eventually lead to the manifestation of that Supreme. If you are not able to perceive Him in all things, it is natural for questions, like the kind you are bringing up, to arise

Just as one renounces the world in order to become an ascetic, so does one sing *kirtan* in order to become completely immersed in oneself - *Ātmā*. But often people are neither able to sing or listen to *kirtan*, nor do its delights reach their innermost spirit effectively because their mind is preoccupied with external matters. That is why after *kirtan* they remain the same. The delightful interlude is not able to bring about any remarkable change within them. However, you will certainly reap the good effects that result from reciting His name. After all this is all that humans have, to help them on their way.

His name and the one who takes His name are inseparable. The name is a form of God too and its effect is wonderful. You know that the power of fire is such that it is not even possible for you to gather together the huge amount of material that one tiny speck can burn. Remember, such is the power and effect of *nām*. It is true when you

²⁸ Here *Harinām* burns away the limitations within the human character and personality in order that the infinite Self may emerge

say that a human being cannot commit more sin than what is eradicated by singing the name of *Hari* even once

Just as after sowing the seed in the ground you have to keep a careful watch until the sapling sprouts, and once it does you have to erect a fence around it for protection. In the same way, as soon as devotion to God begins to dawn in a person, he must try with full earnestness to discipline and regulate himself in order to develop this fervour in his life.

The Seven Stages of *Kirtan*

Since you want to know about the effects of *kirtan* and about their symptoms, then listen.

In the first stage one primarily concentrates on the form of one's chosen deity, and by trying to hold on to the thought and emotion evoked by the *kirtan*, one does experience some joy and ecstasy, but only partially because he is still under the influence of the external world. At this stage, although one's body appears to be inert and a person may lose outward consciousness, he is still conscious within of worldly matters and the desire for material pleasures still lingers.

Those for whom this feeling of ecstasy develops further as a result of their ceaseless effort represent the second stage. They get intensely absorbed in contemplating the deity while listening to or singing *kirtan* and such experiences lead them to a joyful enraptured stage of physical and mental stillness.

As one gets further engrossed in the intensity of one's spiritual absorption due to an enhanced purity of the mind, one may laugh, cry, or adopt the gestures of one's chosen deity in a temporary childlike state. He may be attracted to all deities, roll on the ground in ecstasy, be acutely restless, or lie motionless. As these aspects are only temporary, they are merely a prelude to the state of more complete absorption in God and may be termed the third stage.

In the fourth stage the absorption intensifies and stabilizes within the *sādhak*; wherever he turns he sees only the form of his beloved. Although temporarily restless during *kirtan*, he may be absorbed all

day in his beloved deity. As his mind and vision are focused inwards all the time, he may speak of matters of a higher level, show some supernatural powers, and be awakened to a still higher stage of spiritual ecstasy.

During the fifth stage his devotion becomes even more intense. He is not limited to a particular form of worship or deity any more, but feels consumed in an ineffable joy, being one with the essence of his beloved all the time. At this point the ties of caste, race, and sect are dissolved and the *sādhak* advances towards unity. He may appear active or inert, but his *bhāvs* are now natural like breathing. Nothing personal can be perceived any longer in his demeanour.

At the sixth stage, everything is dedicated to God and he becomes immersed in a sublime ecstasy where form or formless becomes irrelevant.

Later, he may go beyond this stage and establish himself in the Supreme, which is both a manifest and that which is not manifest form. This is called *mahān-bhāv* and is the highest type of self-dedication to the divine.

Divinity Manifested in Form and Formless

What is the *nitya-līlā*²⁹ of *Rām-Sītā* or *Rādhā-Krishna*? And who is that Supreme Being? It is He who dwells in the abode of the Self where the question of gender does not arise. Who is that Blissful One? Where and how does He reveal Himself? All manifestations are possible because all are contained in Absolute Consciousness.

Laughingly Mā said, "For example, what is that which permeates *chinmoy*³⁰? Supposing there are items made out of sugar - a doll's house with its shape, style, rooms, and the doll - it is after all in essence only sugar in form and sweetness. Even with form and shape its essence is formless. Similarly the Blissful One is with and without form, action and inaction. Is there any description for that? The realm

²⁹ Eternal divine play

³⁰ The essential all-pervading divine consciousness beyond *Prakṛiti* (primordial matter) i.e. beyond nature, time & space

of *chaitanya* is transcendental; there is only Pure Consciousness and no place for *achaitanya*³¹. What is that great light which reveals to us the sun, the moon, and the universe but the Supreme Light? That Light which is beyond the question of light and darkness and is not perceivable as long as it is obscured by time and nature. There may appear a glimpse, but the full manifestation comes only with Supreme Revelation.

All these experiences begin with the name and form of the adored. One and the adorer, the relationship of the master and the servant. The individual advances with a particular *sāadhanā* till he reaches the ultimate stage. What is the relationship of the master and the eternal servant? Who is He? Is the question to be resolved? There is also the revelation of the essence of one's *guru*. To be established in the full revelation of the relationship of the Lord as master and the devotee as eternal servant is the ultimate solution."

Mā resumed, "Divine ecstasy, the pain of separation, and the joy of union are different expressions of *bhāv*. Where are the words to describe these feelings? Sometimes in special circumstances it is possible for this Body to reveal the identity of those forms by gestures. **because She is the That and there is nothing separate**³². These gestures do not belong to the realm of the mind. HE, the Self Refulgent, is present within and without all emotions, forms, and qualities. What then and who are the deities? *Rādhā-Krishna*, *Sītā-Rām*, *Shiv-Durgā*, *Kālī*, or *Ganesh* all manifest themselves to the devotee according to the form that he chooses to worship. There is also the stage where the question of worshipping or not worshipping (deities) does not arise. Well, think it over, try to understand, and find out what that stage is. This is only a little of all that is there to say about this matter."

I questioned Mā, "Isn't the *samādhi*-like stage resulting from *Harinām* too susceptible to emotions?"

Hearing this Mā laughed and replied, "What is emotion and whose feeling are we talking about? Who is subservient and to whom? The

³¹ Lack of Pure Consciousness

³² Satchidānanda

Divine Mood is not easily understood nor can it be conceived by negating all that it is not. Therefore it is natural for you to think in this way. It is emotion beyond all emotions. It is the true nature of the Self in divine revelation. It is emotion in the form of pure consciousness - Love incarnate or *Amrit*. This Divine nectar is His true Self - He Himself. All this pertains to the world of pure consciousness and what you are discussing pertains to the world of dreams. Yes, indeed, it is a good thing if such discussions can open up one's inner eyes, for discussions can often be nothing more than exercises in ignorance.

If you talk of the Supreme all the time your discussion will act like a fire, burning and melting whatever it comes in contact with. HE is the Blissful One steeped in His own joy, playing with Himself in the nectar of immortality. Try taking *Hari*'s name. *Hari* is the annihilator of death, the destroyer of all illusions, the controller of time. That which ends all illusions is *Harinām*. It is beyond knowledge, intelligence, or discrimination. Whichever name of God appeals to a person is his *Harinām*. How can that intense longing for the divine, the overwhelming calm of total stillness, and the exhilaration of the Divine Ecstasy be described? How would you know how profound and awesome this emotion is? You do not turn your eyes or your attention to this so how can you comprehend it? There is no difference between being steeped in Divine Joy and being established in the Self.

What you are saying is that this experience is brought about by excessive emotions. Yes, this is true at the level where the feelings are not of the true nature of Self, but of subservience. Where the mind and the body are still involved in and identified with the emotions this is of course true! But, it is difficult for the ordinary person to perceive the true state of Divine Joy. The Self has to be manifested in all forms as well as in the formless, isn't that so? What can be achieved without that? Leaving out any part means being left out yourself. The ultimate truth inherent in every aspect must be revealed. This is nothing less than self-realization as the Supreme Self (*Paramātmā*). In fact, attributes, the lack of attributes, bondage, and freedom are all but the Self.

When one is established in the Self, then you find everything in the universe contained in that One Self. You say, '*sarvam khalvidam Brahma*' and indeed everything is *Brahma*. That with form and that without form have the same eternal relationship as ice and water. Through form you will reach the formless, just as water will surely appear in ice and vice versa. Tell me, where there is but one identity, one soul, the Supreme Being - solitary and unique, why should anyone think of it as something separate? So, what you talk of in Vedanta is also not left out. Supreme bliss is the ever present - joy permeated state. Whatever path one adopts, can the Eternal be any different? It is only along the path that there are differences due to differing tendencies and traditions. Where there is complete establishment in the Self, can anything be excluded?"

Who Gives *Dīkshā*?

A *sannyāsi* of a certain sect came to this Body one day and asked, "Some people tell me to give *dīkshā*. I do not feel I have reached that level, nor do I have any desire to do so. What should I do?" This Body replied, "Your duty is to follow whatever instructions your *guru* gives you. The *sādhak* whose goal is to realize the Supreme Being will never accept the role of a *guru*. Once he attains that level, this comes about naturally. Losing sight of one's final goal or relegating it to a secondary position is not desirable. If one wants to dedicate oneself to the good of humanity, where is the ability to do so? Only when one has achieved the innate, supreme power, can one ensure the welfare of all. When worldly praise, fame, money, and disciples are sought, then everything is futile; and how can the *sādhak* then continue his journey towards salvation?"

Different Aspects of a *Sādhak*

There may come a time when a *sādhak* feels an urge to become a *guru*. Just as the desire to teach people or to serve mankind is natural

to humans, so also is the feeling of compassion in a *sādhak*. As he is not yet a *Jagat-guru*, he has not yet transcended all *gunās* (qualities) hence compassion comes naturally in that sense. Divine Grace is different. There are others who, even upon reaching the level of a *guru*, remain indifferent to that aspect and try to pursue their goal single-mindedly by performing all actions perfectly. They observe with detachment all the supernatural stages that appear on their path and prepare to merge themselves in the Supreme *Sattā* (Essence) be it in a way of 'I, I,' or 'Thou-Thou'.³³

Let us understand this phenomenon through the allegory of bathing in the Ganges. One may arrive by any route and somehow take a dip in the river whether or not there is a *ghāt* (bathing-place). Whereas another may go to the river taking note of the roads and all that he finds on the way and bathe properly at a well-constructed *ghāt*. There is a difference between these two bathing experiences. The former person may need to be further purified if there are doubts regarding the sanctity and purity of that place where he bathes, plus he has gained no knowledge of the paths leading to the river. For the latter, however, no further purification will be necessary. In order for a *sādhak* to attain complete realization, he must acquire full maturity in all fields, in whatever way that may come about. So you notice that although the Ganges flows through many places, yet there is always a large crowd at Brahma-kund in Haridwar. Wherever it may be, there is everything everywhere. If there is this belief, there can remain no more doubt.³⁴

One who is omniscient may impart knowledge to everyone but is not weakened or limited or in bondage because of that. So too with a *sādhak*, a stage arrives when it dawns on him that he is all-powerful, that everything is contained within him, and also that he is everything,

³³ The end result of either of these approaches (only 'I', or only 'thou') is the state of absolute non-duality.

³⁴ Mā uses the allegory of the Ganges to point out one key fact in *sādhana*. Although the waters flow a long distance, only specific places are considered sacred along the river. So although the Supreme is everywhere, for the *sādhak* who has not realized the Self, adopting a specific spiritual path will lead to his/her upliftment until it becomes evident that God may be anywhere for there is everything everywhere.

yet only One. Then there is no fragmentation in his thought like 'I am in this or that' or 'I am everything'. Nothing is excluded. As long as he continues to think in terms of fragments, he is still at the level of fragmentation and not yet omniscient. It is not enough to acquire knowledge; one must go beyond knowledge and ignorance. Can the *sādhak* who has evolved to the stage of knowing all be called God? For God is the One without a second - an undifferentiated absolute whole and is also inseparable. At the stage beyond attainment and non-attainment, there can be no questions or doubts whatsoever. It is not even possible to put that state into words.

When one speaks of an incarnation of God, some say it is just one aspect of the Supreme. This too is correct - but again there is nothing that may be termed as one 'aspect'. Everywhere is only That, the Complete, the Self-Refulgent. Form-formless, action-inaction, sequence-without sequence, coming-going, ascending-descending: these words cannot describe That. One merely sees an outer manifestation of That in the behaviour of incarnations. As there is no other than the One, to give Him another designation would fragment Him. HE is complete, Supreme, and can not be fragmented even if termed a fragment.

But just as the seed is an integral part of the fruit, the shape is an integral part of the leaf, similarly even if He is perceived as fragmented it is because He is fully present in every part of an entity no matter how minute, mingled inseparably in everyone everywhere all the time. And it is He alone that IS. In duality too, again it is He as both subject and object. As you say, one multiplied by one remains one. Where is the question of mixing? Is there any one else? With whom will He merge? Where is the concept of time? As long as the *sādhak* is at the stage of fragmentation, he sees Him in that light. You will try to infer and judge as long as your perception remains at this level. Again, everything is in Him and He in everything.

The truth is that it is He who is always descending in special forms and perfecting Himself in the form of the *sādhak*. Compassion, humanity, and all other qualities are within Him. Nothing exists in Him and simultaneously everything is in Him. Whatever you say, it

is but He alone. He is everything at the same time, be it in any form or formlessness. The empty sky cannot be spoiled or soiled whether it is dawn, day, dusk, or night - with or without the moonlight. So also there is no change in Him for there is no space within Him to contract or to move.

It is also true that when the need arises in the world, He appears for the emancipation of living beings in such a way that they will understand His message. For one naturally cannot grasp what is beyond one's understanding and not acceptable to one's inclinations. What is, after all, this universe? What are all these comings and goings? Think over the matter and then you will understand everything. Knowing yourself is knowing everything. That is why He reveals Himself at the proper time. However, it is also said that He plays an *ananta-līlā*³⁵; His will is divine law. HE plays it according to His own volition. Of His own will and out of compassion He appears to save humanity, this too is true. It is also said that since we are in the world of desire and discontent, there arises the mood to know the Lord; our attainment depends on the intensity of our *bhāv* (spiritual inclination). This Body says also that desire, discontent, and their absence are all but a play within His absolute completeness.

What you say about the behaviour of incarnations when they appear in human form for uplifting humanity is true, for human and divine qualities appear simultaneously in Him. All His actions are contained fully within Him, as also the play of *māyā*³⁶. HE is one with splendour and divine power. HE is constantly playing His game in His own way. None can realise Him unless He allows one to do so. Since the precept is true that there are as many paths as there are doctrines, all these paths of spiritual practices (for instance *Gyān-yoga*, *Bhakti-yoga*, and *Karma-yoga*) are contained in Him beautifully.

Somebody asked, "This tree that I see before me, is that God?" Mā replied, "Can a tree ever be God? When you look at it as a tree or leaves-then one does not see God. But if you see only God, then you will no longer see trees or leaves. However, when that thought gains

³⁵ Eternal divine play

³⁶ Phenomenal nature which is transitory, ever changing. Worldly illusion

strength within you, you will see the trees and leaves as but different forms of God. That feeling gradually strengthens and grows within you.

It is wrong to look upon one's *guru* as a human, just as it is wrong to look upon a *vigraha* (sacred image), *shalgram* or *shiv-linga* as stone. You should consider one's *ishta*, *guru*, and the *mantra* to be one and the same. HE alone manifests Himself as *ishta*, *guru*, and *mantra*. The three are in one and the One in the three. As it is said the one who is my *guru* is also the *guru* of the universe; the one who is the *guru* of the world is also my *guru*. He who is the '*Ishta*' is thus the *guru*. There is the '*Ishta*' in *guru* and *guru* in '*Ishta*'. Upon further spiritual progress the question of one being 'in' the other gets dissolved. The universe is the *ishta-guru*; the realization comes gradually. Everything is He and He alone.

Who is the *ishta*? From whom there can never be any *anishta* (harm). Revealing Himself in the form of a *guru* and guiding the *sādhak* towards self-realization, He alone is the One who is one's very own - *Bhagabān ishta*, the beloved of the *sādhak*. Whether you think of Him as with or without form or attributes, it is He who is Self Revealing and Self Luminous. HE, who guides one along the spiritual path and holds one's hand as one traverses it. He is the *guru*.

Those who logically analyze the visible world as 'not this or that' in relation to the Supreme, reason on the basis that as long as a thing has a separate identity within time and space it undergoes change, thus how can it be the Supreme? Such persons will think in this manner as long as they separate the Eternal from that which has motion and changes. Later as they deliberate more they eventually strike at the root of all their tendencies, gaining in single-mindedness, steadfastness and maturity until they become established in their own Self and thus oneness with Him. Then there are no more questions, no more doubts. What does the word single-minded mean? The mind is normally engaged in many activities, but the moment it concentrates meaningfully on attaining the Supreme Self and achieves that state of revelation it reaches the root of all things. Then what will you call the root, and how is it different from the outer manifestation? These differences of gross,

subtle and the cause are only in one's perception. That which is in the root is also in the gross - and that which is in the gross is also in the root. What does that mean? Well, you may water the root of a plant and it grows into a healthy tree full of green leaves, fruits, and flowers. But from where comes the sweetness of the fruit? It is inherent in the seed that produces the ripe fruit. From where does the seed come? It comes from the nectar of immortality, for death has been transcended in creating another tree through that seed. It is like changing one's clothes. Similarly, the *ātmā* (the soul) does not die. You see change because you perceive an external world of movement and creation.

What is death and rebirth? Rebirth and death are occurring all the time. What was your infancy is now your old age. These stages were surely present minutely in different forms at every point of time but you were not aware of this. So where is the question of birth and death, of coming and going? When you find the seed, can you think of any part of the tree which does not come from it? Well, when you graft a plant, can you find any part independent from the root that does not exist? How then would you understand motion, immobility, change, and permanence? Find out.

I questioned Mā, "From where does the dualistic conception of subject and object arise? Can they be other than the undifferentiated One?"

Mā responded, "That sense of duality is found in those to whom appearance and creation, motion and motionlessness appear separate. They are living beings in a state of bondage whose vision is limited. When the mind has reached the root, can it still be in a state of flux? When that stage arrives, when the ice melts into water, where one is established in his true self, he no longer thinks in terms of diversity or duality."

Māyā and Knowledge

If you deconstruct the word '*māyā*' in Hindi it sounds like '*me, ayā*' which means both 'I have come' as well as 'I go'. Coming is the same as going. Where there is coming there is also going and vice versa. For if you say you are going from one room to another, you

mean that you have gone away from one room to come into another. Another meaning of the word '*māyā*' is seeing something one moment and then losing sight of it in the next. In this perpetual movement of '*māyā*' there is eternal stillness. You say the mango tree originated in the distant past, but how could the seed have been preserved all this time? The answer lies within the processes of nature. Only a rare *sādhak*, one in a hundred thousand, who has progressed beyond *māyā* will understand this revelation. The *ātmā* cannot be destroyed for it is known to be eternal, pure, enlightened, liberated and immortal. What is changeable and in constant motion is known as destruction; that is where coming and going, birth and death happen.

That which is not real but yet appears to be real, delusory and changeable, is of the nature of the mind. However, if you accept the existence of the eternal, where Truth is omnipresent, where is the place of transience or *māyā*? Yet from another perspective you can say that *māyā* exists where there is creation, and hence it also belongs to the Absolute. These are two sides of the same coin. Mere intellectual enquiry is not enough to awaken Ultimate Knowledge, one has to persevere through spiritual rigour. But again, true knowledge is Self Revealing and independent of *karma*.



Obedience in Family-Life

You must remember that in this world even if one acts with sincerity and truthfulness, because of differences in our thought processes, we perceive others' behaviour according to our respective attitudes and understanding. That is why a person who makes an effort at doing something is not always appreciated. Without considering the fairness of a case, we often behave wrongfully towards young children. Some realize this later, some do not, while others do not acknowledge it even if they realize it. But when you are undertaking a task, you must do so unhesitatingly and truthfully by concentrating upon what must be done. Do not ever worry about how your superior is going to view it, for you have no right to judge your superior. Your duty is to carry

out instructions cheerfully. Do not harbour feelings of dissatisfaction while doing it, or the work will not be done to perfection and your mind will be disturbed and joyless.

Following Bholanath's Instructions without Question

At that time this Body was hesitant about appearing before outsiders or going out anywhere, a reluctance that displeased Bholanath. I tried to abide by his wishes to the best of My ability. One day a relative of Bholanath asked Me, "How is it that You do whatever Bholanath asks? If he asks You to do something harmful will You still do it? Don't You have a mind of Your own?" This Body replied, "This Body never thinks along those lines at all. For Her it is about following instructions to the best of Her ability. There are no words to express what She would do if such an occasion arose." Hearing this, the person remained silent.

Immersed in Ecstasy while doing Household Work

This Body was still taking only three morsels of food in the morning and evening.³⁷ Ashu and Mākhan were at Shahbag. In the morning after preparing the meal, feeding the boys, and washing the utensils, She would cook again after a bath. Once that food was offered to the gods in the *pūjā* room, Bholanath would sit down to eat. I would clean the food ingredients and the utensils thoroughly, carry the water from the pond to prepare the *bhog* and complete all other housework. On countless occasions in the course of this daily work I would fall to the ground in a deep spiritual *bhāv*. Similarly, while cutting vegetables, I would become mystically absorbed, oblivious of My arm resting on the blade of the chopper. After regaining normalcy I would get up and complete the task. Sometimes in trying to pull a piece of wood from the clay oven My arm would remain there, I would discover later that the fire had scorched My skin, but there was no sensation of burning or pain. Who was going to feel it?

³⁷ This practice of eating continued for eight or nine months, almost till February, 1925

Some days the food remained half-cooked or was overdone and sometimes even burnt. In a dazed condition I would then try to make amends, but by the time I had everything ready it often became very late. Bholanath realized that this Body did not do this wilfully but tried to do everything as perfectly as possible. This Body seemed to be in a state of divine intoxication, a condition that was gradually increasing.



Shree Shree Mā going into Samādhi



Shree Shree Mā in
samādhi



Shree Shree Mā steeped in
samādhi

Shree Shree Mā lost
in *samādhi* as if
life-less



Shree Shree Mā engrossed in
samādhi

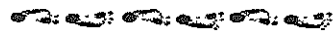
Shree Shree Mā coming out of
samādhi



CHAPTER 7

Arrival of Pious Men

After we came to Dhaka, Nani *babu*¹ came for a walk one morning to the Shahbag garden and met Bholanath. On hearing about this Body's condition from the latter he expressed a desire to meet Her. One evening he and Prāngopal *babu*² came and after this Body spoke to them through the *kundali*, they sat silently for some time before leaving. After that, every six or seven days they would come in the evening and spend some time sitting quietly before this Body. They were both pious men and felt that their *japa* flowed steadily with greater intensity in this Body's presence. When this Body went to the Siddheswari temple they would sometimes go along with Her. One evening Bholanath and I went to the temple accompanied by them and we stayed until the night drew to its end. On our way back Prāngopal *babu* said, "This is the first occasion when I have spent an entire night pursuing *dharmic* activities."



One day I was about to start the day's cooking when Bhupen³ who worked in the Agricultural Department arrived and informed that Jyotish *babu*⁴ wished to meet Me." Bholanath agreed to this. I heard all this from behind the door where I would stand if somebody came

¹ Nani Gopal Bandopadhyay, Professor at Dhaka University

² Prāngopal Mukhopadhyay, Deputy Post Master General of Dhaka

³ Bhupendra Nārāyan Dasgupta of the Dhaka Agricultural Office.

⁴ Jyotish a.k a Jyotish Chandra Roy, ISO, popularly known as Bhaiji or elder brother. He became Ma's most respected disciple and is credited for compiling notes that are now presented as this book

to see Me in those days, or else I would go into the kitchen. Bholanath would question My behavior saying, "Why do You behave so? After all, they come only to get some spiritual counsel from You."

Within a day or two three people came to see Me in the morning. I came out to meet them after Bholanath called Me. In those days I kept My head veiled and would only talk from within the *kundali*. However once I started speaking, I was no longer conscious of whether the veil remained in place. That morning I offered the visitors three low wooden stools to sit on while I sat down silently within the *kundali*. Bholanath too was present. Jyotish asked, "Is there any hope of our spiritual upliftment?" This Body replied, "The hunger is not there yet." Not much else was spoken and after sitting for some time they left.

Wiping out the *kundali*, I was about to leave that room to go to another when this Body's glance fell on Jyotish, who had by then gone a distance of about a hundred cubits.⁵ His back was visible with only a *chādar* (a cotton shawl) wrapped around him, yet later I came to know that he was wearing both shirt and a *chādar*. This Body observed a very subtle spiritual link, much like a fine thread, between him and Herself. After all, it was only a spiritual link that brought people to Her. After this he did not come to Shahbag for nearly a year. Despite an occasional *kheyāl*, I never called him, for I knew that all would be set right in time.

Spiritual Link with Jyotish

Jyotish wrote a book called *Sādhanā* and wished to have it read out to this Body. He sent the book with Bhupen and wanted him to find out what this Body thought about it. I told Bhupen, "Ask the author to come and see me." Jyotish had only visited Shahbag once about a year earlier; on getting this message, he came one day and read the entire book to this Body.

⁵ Ancient measure of length of 18 to 22 inches that is, equivalent to the length of the forearm. A hundred cubits is roughly a distance of 150 feet

Three years had passed since this Body had stopped talking. Now, even though She spoke without the *kundali*, Her voice sounded somewhat indistinct, and She could not talk for long. That day She spoke quite clearly for the first time with him on spiritual matters.⁶ From that day onwards, Jyotish came to Shahbag almost daily.

One day, as this Body, Bholanath, Bhupen, and Jyotish sat talking, the scene of My first meeting with Jyotish appeared suddenly before My eyes. From then onwards, he often appeared to be sitting before this Body like a pure-hearted, devout *brahmin* with a *chādar* wrapped round his body.⁷ Although this Body did not name him specifically, She suddenly said, "We are three *brahmins* sitting here." About four or five months after this incident, Shashanko⁸ *babu's* son Nandu told Me one day while talking that he had a desire to bow at Jyotish's feet and pay him obeisance. I said, "If you wish to do so, your chance will come some day." Later, when he came to Shahbag, he paid his obeisance to Jyotish exactly in that manner. This Body told Jyotish, "That day when the words about three *brahmins* came to My lips, it was you that I meant. You are a *brahmin*; you are spiritually linked with this Body."

Bholanath's Anxiety

Often by the time I had Bholanath's lunch ready, it was almost evening. What could I do? This Body was almost always in a divinely absorbed state. While going to a room to fetch something, She would sink to the ground, benumbed and sometimes lie there for hours on end. When I got up there would be no memory as to what I had gone there to do. If someone talked to me I would hear the words, but these would soon drift away like smoke and vanish. Bholanath often wondered how the household work would get done and felt that it might be better if someone came to stay with us. Later this Body too calmly agreed to this idea.

⁶ January 1926

⁷ Jyotish *babu* often appeared in Mā's *kheyāl* as a true *brahmachārī*.

⁸ Dr. Shashanko Mukherjee retired as the Civil Surgeon of Dhaka. Later took *sannyās* and was named Swami Akhandananda

Around this time Motori, Bholanath's sister, arrived. Although Bholanath had never maintained much contact with his relatives she came on her own initiative. She informed us that since her son had completed his studies at the village school, she could now stay with us (she was a widow and not bound by family duties). Even though she did not keep very good health, she would not allow Me to do any household work but coped with everything on her own. Hitherto she had followed rigid dietary rules and restrictions, and bathing with cold water made her ill. But after coming to live with us she would bathe early everyday, eat at odd hours, and flout almost all the rules she had maintained earlier. Despite these irregularities in routine, her health improved and the housework was now well taken care of.

HE who is responsible for all does His own work; men merely worry about these things needlessly. If only one's mind is fixed on the Supreme and one has faith in Him, His inexhaustible powers will put everything right. If we are able to become totally engrossed in His thought, then it is seen that whatever we offer to Him comes back to us in a special new form.

At that time this Body took only three-mouthfuls of food in a day. One day Bholanath stood by Me when I was eating and, after the three-mouthfuls had been taken, said in a firm voice, "Now I shall see how You cannot eat more. Come on, take another mouthful, hurry!" This Body tried to carry the food to Her mouth, but Her hand began to shake and the rice fell from Her grasp. She looked distressed and began to weep so pitifully that Bholanath, in great anxiety, exclaimed, "That's enough! Get up now. You don't have to eat any more!"

The Sense of Absolute Oneness

A few days later I found that whenever I sat down before the altar of *Lakshmi* to offer food or pay obeisance to the deities, the sense of identification with the body seemed to evaporate. The feeling of oneness with the deity began to affect all bodily movements, almost

bringing them to a standstill. Gradually I found that whenever I sat there to offer anything to the deity the impulse for action drifted away like vapours of camphor, and this feeling of oneness would descend upon Me causing the body to lie there in *samādhi* for long stretches of time. The ants would crawl all over the offering, over the body, and even through the strands of hair, as if they had made their home there. The head, arms, legs, and knees would lie at odd angles. This Body would lie there completely inert, in a wondrous state-beautiful and serene. This happened on many days for long periods of time. Even when consciousness of the body returned, it took Me a long time to become completely normal.

Kheyāl to Eat only Fruit

In the meantime a new *kheyāl* to live only on fruit took possession of Me.⁹ I would pay the purchasing price of whatever fruit grew in the garden and eat that, drinking some milk only if it was given by someone on their own volition. I told Bholanath not to make any arrangement with anyone to obtain fruit or milk. Fruit was not always available in the garden but there was always something or the other to be had for My frugal repast. Hearing of this Body's condition, Peyari Banu, the owner of the garden, sent a message that money for the fruit was not to be accepted.

Know this! HE to whom this Body belongs will surely provide for it.

Observing *Akshay Tritīyā*¹⁰

It was now almost the time for the annual ritual of *Akshay Tritīyā*. At first, when Bholanath was in Bajitpur and this Body stayed on in

⁹ This practice continued for five to six months almost up till August, 1925.

¹⁰ *Akshay Tritīyā* is observed on the third day from the new moon in the months of April/May. This day marks the start of the *Satya yug* (Golden Age). Married women worship Vishnu, the Lord Preserver of the universe, by practicing rituals that purify their bodies and mind. They offer water in a pot, fruits and other gifts to holy people for the general well-being of their communities. This practice is particularly followed in Bengal.

Bidyākūt, Her sister-in-law decided to observe *Akshay Tritīyā*. The day prior to the event, she followed the practices of austerity required for the occasion. However, before dawn on the auspicious day she said to Me, "I shall not be able to observe *Akshay Tritīyā* as my menstruation¹¹ has started. You must observe it with the ingredients that I have procured." I exclaimed, "But I did not observe the necessary austerities yesterday nor have I taken Bholanath's permission, what should I do now?" I found that both My parents were in favour of My doing it and I was advised by the *purohit* (priest) that an early morning bath would compensate for not purifying the body the previous day, and thus *Akshay Tritīyā* was observed.

Due to financial constraints Bholanath preferred to observe only the essential rituals. As everything would be done according to God's wishes, this Body remained tranquil. The day before the *vrat*¹², a priest from Bhatpara arrived unexpectedly saying, "I have come on hearing about the *vrat* that is to be initiated tomorrow. Why did you not inform me?" Bholanath responded, "We were planning to do it in a rather small way, so we asked only our family priest to come." The priest declared, "As I am here now, you should do it properly. It will not be all that expensive." And that is how *Akshay Tritīyā* got celebrated. A lot of people joined the celebrations, and the ceremony was completed perfectly.¹³

Mā in Shahbag

One day Jogesh¹⁴ *babu's* son Prafulla *babu* came to the *Kālībārī* and informed his father of the rumours that were being circulated about this Body. On hearing this, Jogesh *babu*, who was in charge of the gardens at the time, banned all outsiders from entering Shahbag.

¹¹ The menses is regarded by Hindu custom as a natural process that renders women's bodies impure and unfit for religious rituals. Only after its completion and after purifying baths are women considered fit for participation in these ceremonies.

¹² A voluntary religious observation, vow, a resolution or fast.

¹³ April 26, 1925.

¹⁴ Rai Bahadur Jogesh Chandra Ghose, overall incharge & trustee of *Nawab's* estates.

Subsequently he came to Shahbag and spoke of this at great length to Bholanath, who as a result got angry and said to this Body, "It is because of You that outsiders come here, giving rise to all kinds of speculation. I will not work here if I have to put up with such insults." This Body reassured him, "Don't worry; I shall Myself go to Jogesh *babu* and do whatever needs to be done." As it happened, about ten the next morning, Jogesh *babu* and Bhudev *babu* came over and the former invited Bholanath and this Body to his home, saying that he would send his carriage at three o'clock.

When we reached his home he took us into his bedroom. This Body sat there quietly. On his asking about prayer and worship, this Body, from inside the *kundali*, told him a few things regarding Her current condition. Then Jogesh *babu* asked Her, "You are observing silence, upon whom do You meditate?" The words came automatically, "Upon *Brahma*¹⁵," though She had hitherto never heard about either *Brahma* or the practice of meditation.

I told him that Bholanath did not wish to work at Shahbag any longer and that we were thinking of leaving. Jogesh *babu* immediately exclaimed, "No, no, You cannot go; You must stay here in the gardens." His son Prafulla *babu* had just lost his job at the *Nawab* Estate and Jogesh *babu* asked Me what the future held for him. Again, words came out of My mouth spontaneously, "At present things are not good for him. They will improve after eight months." Indeed, after eight months he found a job. After discussing various issues, we returned to Shahbag and the days passed peacefully.

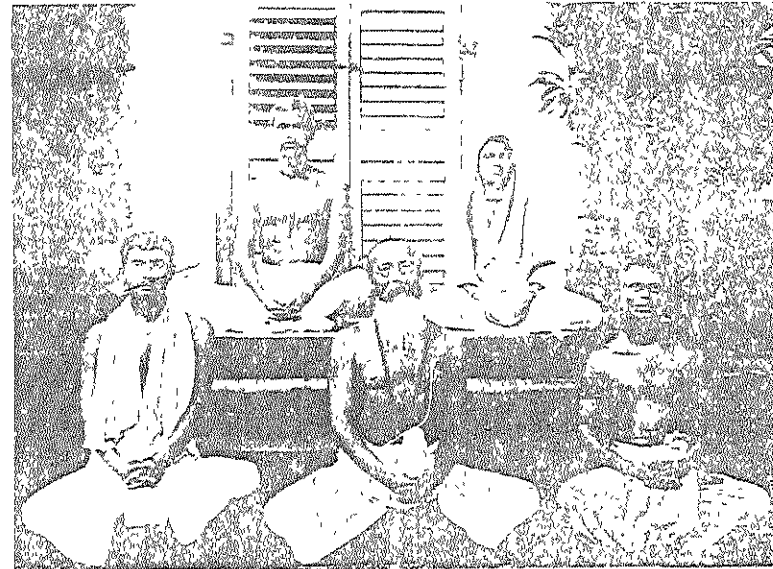
This Body had a habit of wandering about the gardens absorbed in Herself. In the grounds there was a living room and a large *nātmandir* on either side of which was a small circular detached structure. There was also another building, which was known as the *khānā-ghar* (dining room). Various *mantras* and *shlokās* would emerge from My mouth while wandering around these buildings.

One day from the veranda of the *khānā-ghar* I saw the figure of the Arab saint whom I had earlier seen in Bajitpur, with a disciple

¹⁵ The formless, absolute all pervading Oneness.

walking away and disappearing at a distance. The two brick *mazhārs* in Shahbag belonged to them.¹⁶ Later I heard the boys discussing a country called Arabia, where the majority of the people were Muslims.

Talks were going on about Prāngopal *babu's* forthcoming retirement and the possibility of his leaving Dhaka thereafter. In the



First photograph of Shree Shree Mā with Bholanathji taken in June, 1925.

Forefront: Baul Chandra Basak, Prān Gopal Mukhopadhyay and Nani Gopal Mukhopadhyay

¹⁶ It appears that the fakir appearing in astral body at Bajitpur invited Mā to Dhaka where his *mazhār* was in Shahbag not far from the Ramna temple. This may be correlated to Mā's vision as described under the sub-heading 'Arabian Saint' in Chapter 4. Mā performed *namāz* at his grave and also spontaneously recited a portion of the Koran. refer Chapter 11. It is interesting to note how circumstances cooperated for these events to occur. The above presumption is corroborated by Mā in the book 'In Association with Sri Sri Mā Ānandamayī' by Anulya Kumar Dutta Gupta in volume 1 on page 15. For detailed layout of Shahbag please refer Appendix VI.

mean time two of his old acquaintances, Atal¹⁷ *babu* and Girja¹⁸ *babu*, came to Dhaka and met this Body. Before leaving Dhaka, Prāngopal *babu* expressed a desire to take a photograph of this Body I told him that this would be possible only after a particular period. When the time came he arrived with the photographer and took a photograph.¹⁹ This was the first photograph taken of this Body. Soon after Prāngopal *babu* left Dhaka and Promotho *babu*²⁰ succeeded him. He too would come to Shahbag in the evenings with his wife and spend a long time in *japa* and meditation.

Dīpānvitā Pūjā

A message arrived from Bholanath's home that the annual *Dīpānvitā Kālīpūjā* was to be performed in Dhaka. One evening when Baul came, I told him to arrange a priest for the *pūjā*, but he responded, "This *pūjā* must be performed by Mā." I kept declining his repeated requests, but Bholanath and Atal, who was also at Shahbag at this time, joined Baul in trying to persuade Me. I told them, "*Kālīpūjā* consists mostly of external rituals which I have never performed. Besides, as this is an annual festival, it will be better for a priest to do it." Baul assented but added, "Very well, but we shall bring a separate image whose *pūjā* Mā will have to perform." They also decided to offer a blood sacrifice despite the lack of any religious necessity for a sacrifice at an annual *pūjā*.

After completing all arrangements for the two *pūjās* in two separate rooms, this Body on Bholanath's specific instructions, sat down to perform the *pūjā*.²¹ Seated on the floor quietly for some time, the hands then moved like a mechanical doll to carry out the rituals. A healthy goat, having been bathed, was brought to this Body. I held the goat on my lap and suddenly began weeping uncontrollably as I

¹⁷ Atal Bihari Bhattacharya. Professor at Rājshahi College.

¹⁸ Girja Shankar Bhattacharya. Professor at Rājshahi College.

¹⁹ June 1925.

²⁰ Pramothobabu (Pramotho Nath Basu). Deputy Post Master General of Dhaka who later became the Post Master General of India.

²¹ Mā performs *Kālī pūjā* for the first time at Shahbag on October 17, 1925.

stroked his entire body with My hands. *Mantras* poured out of my mouth as I touched certain spots on the goat's body and then whispered in its ears. At the time of consecrating the axe, this Body sat in a particular *āsana*, lying face down on the ground, with Her hand holding the axe at Her neck. There were many people in the room. Bholanath advanced towards Me anxiously lest I bring the axe down upon My own neck. At that time three sounds like a goat's bleat emerged from My throat. After this, lifting the axe and leaving My seat, I gave the goat to Bholanath to carry out the sacrifice. When the axe fell on the goat's neck it did not cry out even once, nor did its body twitch. No blood fell from its body either. A few drops were taken out with difficulty for the consecration. By the time the *pūjā* finished, the night had drawn to a close.

Promotho *babu*'s Vow of Silence

One evening Promotho *babu*'s wife said to Me, "If You give me permission, I would like to observe silence on Mondays." I gave My approval. The next day Promotho *babu* informed Me, "I hear my wife has Your permission to observe silence on Mondays, I will not be outdone by her and so wish to observe silence on Sundays. I seek Your permission to do so." I gestured My consent. He asked, "How should I initiate it?" I showed him a *yogic kriyā*. Accordingly he started practicing his vow of silence on Sunday. On Monday morning, he found that he could not talk. He exerted all his efforts but to no avail. As the day advanced he was worried that his muteness would impede his office work and gestured to Pratul, his son, to apprise Me of his condition. Soon Pratul arrived at Shahbag and told Me about his father's condition. Bholanath suggested that we go to him." At his home we found him sitting silently. Bholanath told Me, "Do whatever is necessary to help him." His enforced silence was a consequence of not finding out the requisite *kriyā* to be followed to resume speech. I showed Promotho *babu* the *kriyā* to allow speech, and as soon as he performed that he began to talk. From then on he

observed silence every Sunday and later for two days every week. On those two days he did not read or write, nor did he communicate through signs.

Overeating

This Body's sister-in-law, Bengi²², came to Shahbag. One day she decided to prepare some *mishtānna*.²³ She had 20 kilos of milk brought, from which she put aside about two and a half kilos in a *kadai*²⁴ and made *mishtānna* with the rest. She invited two or three persons for a meal and prepared a large number of choicest vegetable dishes. When she and I were the only ones left to eat, she said to Bholanath repeatedly, "Mā takes only three-mouthfuls of food, but since I have prepared *mishtānna* today, instead of mixing the bitter, sweet and sour dishes all together and feeding Her three handfuls, please tell Her to take some more *mishtānna* at the end of Her meal."

It so happened that it was dusk by the time Bengi and I sat down to have our meal. She said, "Today You must take a little extra *mishtānna*." Bholanath told Me, "Bengi has not eaten the whole day so try and keep her request." I agreed and kept eating until all the *mishtānna* had finished. This Body then asked for more, insisting like a petulant child. While Promotho *babu* and Baul hurried to the market to get more milk, Bengi prepared more *mishtānna* with the two and a half kilos of milk that had been left in the *kadai*. This Body finished it all. Still she sat, waiting for more. When five more kilos of milk arrived from the market, Bengi prepared more *mishtānna* with it, gave a small amount to Promotho *babu*, and the rest to this Body, who ate it all again. When she was about to ask for more, Bholanath declared, "You have had *mishtānna* made from almost twenty kilos of milk, You must not have any more! There is no more left."

²² Bengi's proper name was Mokshadha Sundari Devi and her husband's name was Kali Prashana Kushari. He was an Inspector of Police. Her visit to Shahbag was during Christmas holidays in 1925.

²³ Sweet prepared with milk, rice and sugar.

²⁴ A wok-like cooking vessel.

When this Body still insisted, Bengi scraped the bottom of the vessel and, reciting a *mantra*, placed that small amount upon My head. Later she said that this was the way that *Sitā devi* had stopped *Hanumān ji* from eating continuously. The moment that bit of *mishtānna* was placed on this Body's head, a transformation came over Her and She swooned to the floor and lay quietly. She got up only after much persuasion from those around Her. Everyone asked Her, "How could You eat so much?" However, the effect of eating 20 kilos of sweets was no different from the effect of Her daily ration of three-mouthfuls of food. The part of the *sārī* covering Her head where the *mishtānna* had been put appeared to have been scorched.

The Hazards of Testing Mā

In those days I spent the time lying quietly absorbed in silence. Bholanath's meals would thus get delayed. Observing this, Baul would regularly bring to Shahbag all the necessary spices, cleaned and ground by his wife, maintaining the required standards of purity. One evening when Baul had come with these ground condiments, Bholanath remarked to Me, "From what I noticed of Your condition, what would happen if You were to eat some ground red chillies without mixing it with anything, would You be able to withstand it without your eyes watering or experiencing any discomfort or getting sick?" This Body replied, "When a question has arisen in your mind why don't you feed Me some of the ground chillies with your own hand?" Bholanath then took three handfuls of the ground chillies and put it into My mouth. I chewed these like *chhatu*²⁵ without water and then sat before them for almost an hour. Both were wonderstruck.

On being further questioned on the subject of eating ground chillies, Mā continued, "The next day, Bholanath took My paternal aunt to the Dhakeswari temple and when they returned in the afternoon, he said, "Since last night I have not been feeling well, I think I have fever." The fever became worse and he suffered from blood dysentery over the next two or three days. He started vomiting by the minute,

²⁵ Powdered gram or barley.

his temperature rose and his condition deteriorated. Promotho *babu* sent a reputed doctor to treat him but the medicines had no effect. Baul came and spent the nights here. This Body neither ate nor moved from his bedside. One night I said to Baul, "Bring Me some *chirā*²⁶." He did so, whereupon I soaked it in some water around four o'clock in the morning and put it aside. Bholanath's condition stayed the same during the day. When the fever rose even higher in the afternoon, ice was placed on his head. He would not take any medicine and went into delirium. He would raise his head, but it would fall back again and he lay there with his eyes fixed as if unconscious.

Ashu and Motori began to cry. A singular feeling came over Me. I asked them to be quiet and raising Bholanath's head with My left hand, I kept passing My right hand lightly all over his body while strange sounds emerged from My mouth. After some time Bholanath drew a deep breath and opened his eyes. Very slowly he whispered, "I am in great pain, save me." I told him, "Do not ever try to test this Body again." He whispered his assent and prayed to get well. I now made him a drink with the *chirā* that I had soaked the previous morning and placed a small amount of ground mint on his tongue around 4 o'clock in the morning. I observed that his feeling of nausea gradually lessened. The night came to an end and Bholanath slept for a long time. The fever went up once, but soon came down slowly, and in a couple of days he recovered completely.

On Baul's writing to Prāngopal *babu* in Deoghar regarding Bholanath's illness, Prangopal wrote to Bholanath, saying, "Ask Mā from where has She picked up such expertise, surpassing even the Guru." This Body replied, "It came from the Guru Himself."

It was found then that if anyone attempted to test this Body, something adverse would always befall him or her. Just as proximity to fire brings warmth, and proximity to ice cools, so too one's *bhāv(s)* determines the benefit or loss that one derives from being close to this Body.

²⁶ Pressed rice

Vibhūti

About a week before this event this Body experienced a strange condition. For three consecutive days and nights one eye remained closed and one arm stayed in a raised position. After that, the closed eye opened and the other one closed and the raised arm came down. Six days passed in this way. From the seventh day, the eyes returned to normal.

It is possible for a *sādhak* to remain with one arm raised all the time.²⁷ This is also a state within spiritual practice. When in that state, this Body realized that it was easy to maintain the posture indefinitely without any feeling of discomfort.

Later several questions came to mind. Even if one establishes oneself in that state, so what? If the eyes close in meditation or remain open forever, what is attained? If one attains the power of uttering the infallible, then what is achieved? If one limb stretches upward without being focused on the Supreme, what good is it? These questions should occur naturally to the yogi, what is important is that the Supreme Self must be realized.

Consider the question of *vibhūti*: the state in which whatever is desired is manifested instantly. Well, even if one attains this, so what? Since creation, preservation, destruction - all that is happening in the world is contained within Him, is not *vibhūti* also contained within 'That' which is ever present? How does *vibhūti* manifest itself? Does *vibhūti* manifest in His play? Is it His blessing? Is not HE Himself the eternal *vibhūti*, in form or without form? Is it His *Swabhāv*²⁸ that is manifest in the form of the divine *bhāv* where there is no place for *abhāv*²⁹? How then does the question of *vibhūti* arise here?

²⁷ This refers to a particularly austere *sadhana* practiced by certain *yogis* in India for thousands of years.

²⁸ Here it is divine volition, in the case of humans it represents propensity, innate tendency, inherent nature.

²⁹ Every being is in continuous search for joy which is transitory in this ever-changing, materialist world and thus unable to enjoy the eternal blissful - *Ānanda*. This feeling of deficiency, incompleteness, want or desire is known as *abhāv*.

The manifestation of *vibhūti* in a *sādhak* means that he feels an *abhāv* when actually there is none. Those that have *abhāv* in their perception see *vibhūti*, which the *sādhak* may acquire while progressing spiritually. He may only become adept in revealing the power of a specific spiritual path and cannot be sure how long this power will last. One can degenerate from this stage due to conflicting emotions of desire and aversion and the frustration of not achieving one's goal of self actualization. However, one can also advance from that point after even an infinitesimal awakening or realization of *shaktī* (divine power) within this feeling of *abhāv*. Faltering at that level will definitely lead to the *sādhak's* fall.

You see, one must recognize and get acquainted with the domain of one's own Self (*Ātmā*). You call the Supreme-*Mahārāj* and *Sākshī*¹⁰ *Mahārāj* is the overlord above whom there is no other king-the Self. So long as the *sādhak* does not attain this realization and is not established in it, these kinds of *vibhūti*s will naturally enter his domain. His spiritual path itself will ultimately enthrone him through Self realization. What is this realization? It is the manifestation of That which alone exists; so where then is *vibhūti*?

If you talk of *vibhūti*, it is but the Supreme! From the point of view of the *sādhak*, attaining *vibhūti* is equivalent to attaining supernatural powers or divine grace. Whatever exists in the universe-creation, preservation, and destruction, the tangible and the intangible, that with form and the formless, the devotee, the different categories of *Sādhaks*, the *yogi* and the *mahāyogi*, *avatārs* and the gods, reincarnation with birth, death, and rebirth-all are but aspects of the Supreme. Where is the individual here? There is only the Supreme Self. The *sādhak's vibhūti* is within himself. But there too it is He alone in this form.

Eating with *Didimā*

I used to eat rice every Monday and Thursday and only small portions of fruit on other days.³¹ I ate only what was on My plate as a first serving. Around this time this Body's mother came for a visit.

¹⁰ Witness, One who sees everything - the Supreme

³¹ This practice was followed for six or seven months

One day when mother and I sat down to eat, she served rice from her plate. I was observing silence at that time and I did not say anything. Seeing Me silent, she put some more from her plate onto Mine and then began eating, as did I. Mother quickly finished her meal and then gave Me more rice and vegetables from what was leftover in the pots. I ate all of it including the salt and green chillies left on the plate and then gestured for more. In amazement, she gave Me whatever little was still left. When again I gestured to be served some more, she exclaimed, "Get up now! You should not take any more. You can eat again at night. There is no more food left." But, like a child, I tearfully gestured to be given more. Only when Mother hurriedly sought Bholanath and he insisted on my getting up did I finally do so. When Bholanath heard of the incident, he explained that My behaviour was triggered by mother serving food repeatedly to this Body.

*Amāvasyā Bhog*³²

Promotho *babu* travelled to Kolkata on official work. Before leaving he left strict instructions that there was to be no lapse in sending *bhog* to Shahbag. However, there was a disruption once and Promotho *babu's* son Pratul came to us, saying, "Please grant my prayer that I can make all arrangements for tomorrow's *bhog*. I will not accept Mā eating only on Mondays and Thursdays. She must eat tomorrow." He succeeded in persuading Bholanath as well. I told Bholanath, "Whatever you wish will be done." Next morning Pratul took care of the arrangements. Going to the market he bought things to his satisfaction and then brought them here. He and two or three others who were then present were invited for the meal. By the time the preparations were completed, the day had advanced. It suddenly occurred to all present that it was *amāvasyā* (new moon) and Bholanath would take *prasād* at the Ramna *Kālī* temple only after the end of the *pūjā*. What was to be done? After deliberation we decided that, as Pratul had arranged the *bhog* on an *amāvasyā* day, the *bhog* would be offered at Shahbag. From that day onwards vegetarian *bhog* was offered there on every *amāvasyā*.

³² Food offerings to God on new moon day

Swāmi Akhandānanda, whose earlier name was Shashanko *babu* took the responsibility for the *amāvasyā bhog* and this continues to this day in the *āshram*.

That day, by the time all the cooking was completed, night had fallen Offerings to the Gods were made. At the time of the distribution of the *prasād* Pratul said, “No matter how late it is, today I shall not go home till Mā has taken Her food.” Bholanath too began insisting. So, this Body sat down to eat, telling Bholanath to take the food from the plate and put it in Her hands. I sat with My two hands cupped together in order to take the food, but as soon as he gave me the rice it began to fall to the ground through the gap between My two hands. In spite of My efforts to hold the food, I could not do so. When all the items had been served in this manner I began to pick the food up from the ground and eat it. After this incident, I would put all the food from the plate on the floor and eat from there. While eating I sometimes noticed hair or some other dirt lying on the ground, but it never occurred to Me to clean the place or pick the dirt out from the food. The thought stayed in My mind that once I sat down to eat I must do so no matter what the conditions were in which the food was served.

For nearly a month I took my food in this manner. One day Bholanath said to Me, “You will not eat from a plate made of either bell-metal, or brass, or stone, or even from a leaf. Will You then eat from a silver plate?” There was a trace of harshness and anger in his voice as he spoke. Suddenly, I said laughing, “Very well, I shall eat from a silver plate, but not if you have it made for Me or have it procured for Me by someone. And remember, you are not to mention this to anyone within the next three months.” Bholanath agreed. Within these three months Jyotish’s wife came one day, carrying along with fruits and flowers, a stone bowl of *rābri-doi*³³ and a silver plate full of *sandesh*³⁴. She said to me, “You must use this silver plate for Your *bhog* (meal)” I ate My food from that plate for a while and then reverted back to taking it from all kinds of plates.



³³ A thick sweetened curd

³⁴ Sweet made of cottage cheese and thickened milk

CHAPTER 8

Khukuni’s First Meeting with Mā

One day Shashanko *babu*¹ came over with Khukuni², for whom this was the first visit. In accordance with My custom of offering female visitors betel-leaf and vermilion, I offered betel-leaf to Khukuni despite the fact that her father informed Me that she was not in the habit of chewing betel-leaf. Drawing her aside to another room I asked her laughingly, “Where have you been all these days?” She too laughed and we conversed about some particular issues. In the meantime, struck by a strange sensation, I told her to sit and wait for Me. Khukuni thought that I was going elsewhere, but while still talking My body slackened and swooned onto the floor. After lying there in a divine absorption state for a while I resumed My conversation with her. Later they left.

Khukuni’s coming to this Body was a result of a special spiritual connection from previous births.³ When departing from Bajitpur in the month of *Chaitra* (early April) we had stayed at My brother-in-law’s house in Dhaka. Once we went to Tikatuli, where we had washed our feet under the tap in front of Shashanko *babu*’s home. At that time, on looking at the house, I had a *kheyāl* that I would be visiting it one day.

¹ Dr. Shashanko Mukherjee retired as the Civil Surgeon of Dhaka. Later on taking sannyās, he was renamed Swāmi Akhandānanda.

² Khukuni was the daughter of Dr. Shashanko Mukherjee. Her nick name was Khukuni and proper name was Adarini Devi. Later Mā gave her the name of Gurupriya. Most people called her ‘*Didi*’ or Elder Sister.

³ Mā indicated that in the most recent birth, she was Her elder sister who died prematurely just before Shree Shree Mā’s *prakash* – Chapter 1.

Public *Kirtan* during the Solar Eclipse .

There was a solar eclipse on that particular *pous sankrānti*.⁴ All those who used to frequent Shahbag were eager to have *kirtan* that day. The owner of the gardens did not like too many people gathering there and constantly endeavoured to prevent that from happening. Anyway, when Jogesh *babu* came to Shahbag, he was told of the plan and approved. Arrangements began to be made for the *kirtan* and for a *bhog* of *khichuri*⁵ and *mistāna*.

Kirtan started about nine or ten in the morning. I was applying vermilion on the women's forehead when gradually this Body began to go numb, sank to the ground and began to roll on the floor in ecstasy such that the container of vermilion slipped from Her fingers. Then She rose slowly and stood on Her toes with Her arms raised, head tilted back so far that it touched Her back, and Her eyes fixed upwards. A little later She began to move in that posture without any awareness of direction, completely oblivious as to whether Her clothes were in place. There was complete consciousness within, but no expression of it outwardly. She was filled with divine ecstasy and danced as if intoxicated, just as flames leap skywards when the lid of the container in which they are kept is suddenly lifted. It was a dance totally out of this world, impossible to describe. Still dancing, She reached the place where the *kirtan* was being held and began to roll on the floor like a piece of cloth whisked along by a gale. No one could stop Her, for trying to do so was like attempting to hold on to the wildly swinging branches of a tree during a powerful storm. Having rolled at a lightning speed for a distance, She sat up drowsily and from Her lips emerged softly the words, 'Hare Murāre, Madhukaitabhāre .',⁶ Her body swaying in a stupor-like state to the

⁴ Thursday, January 14, 1926.

⁵ Rice cooked with pulses, spices and ghee.

⁶ 'Hare Murāre, Madhukaitabhāre, Gopāla, Gobinda, Mukunda Saure' - this stanza, contains the names of Lord Vishnu (or Krishna) and the two demons, Kaitabha and Madhu (representing human lust and greed), who are killed by Lord Vishnu, the sustainer of the Universe (for human salvation)

rhythm of the song.⁷ Watching Her, Promotho *babu* too went into a trance and began to perform *āratī* before this Body, while tears flowed freely from his eyes. Automatically this Body's hand went up in a gesture of blessing him.

As the sun emerged and the eclipse ended so did the *kirtan*. This Body remained in this state for a long time during which Bholanath helped Her back to their room. Still unsteady, She went to the kitchen to check on the arrangements for the *bhog*. By then *kirtan* had resumed. At dusk Bholanath came and called this Body, "It is time for the *lūt*,⁸ come soon." Entering the *kirtan* hall I found that some of the symptoms experienced by this Body at midday were reappearing along with other forms of emotion. In this state, possessed by divine *shaktī*, this Body began to circle round with others in the *kirtan*. Later balancing Her body on one foot and dancing something similar to a *tāndav-nritya*⁹ for sometime, Her body sank to the floor and then sat up again.

Transforming a Young Man with a Glance

Not long after this, a young man was observed laughing at this Body and the other women in the *kirtan*. In an instant Her glance fell on him and rested upon him for a long time. The young man stopped laughing and sat motionless with his head bowed. After the *lūt* and *bhog* were completed and the *prasād* was being distributed everyone went to partake it, but this young man would not move. When he was urged to go and eat, he said, "Mā is angry with me." Hearing this I said to him, "Mā is never angry with anyone, go and eat." He sat down to eat. Khukuni and I served *prasād* to about a hundred and fifty people that day.

⁷ This is the state of *Mahābhāva* of divine ecstasy of *Bhakti sādhanā*, when eight types of divine expression can spontaneously manifest in a *sādhak's* body. The effect of rolling on the ground is one such aspect as is the utterance of *shlokās*.

⁸ Scattering of puffed sugar pieces as *prasād* at the end of a *kirtan* without any discrimination.

⁹ A divine art form, a dance performed by the Hindu god Shiva. According to Hindu scriptures, Shiva's *Tāndava* is a vigorous dance that is the source of the cycle of creation, preservation and dissolution of the universe.

The same young man returned the next day and began to relate in detail all the misdeeds and mistakes he had committed in life. He had a Masters degree and had at one time been a part of a *Jatradal* (theatre group). Since then he had lost respect for women. He looked upon them primarily as *sakhīs* (companions) and not as mothers. He said, "For the first time I have paid homage to You today, please tell me how I can correct myself. My brothers keep reprimanding me but later I forget." This Body told him, "Yesterday, seeing you laughing in that manner at so many women caused My glance to be severe. Until such time that you are able to respect a woman as a mother, you are not to look at any woman's face. Keep your eyes only on her feet when talking to her. Today you must make this resolution and come here everyday to partake the food that is offered to God." He agreed. One afternoon he came when a group of girls were there. As I talked to the girls I saw the young man sitting silently with a cloth covering his head. Thus he would come to see Me from time to time. One day he said he was going home and after that day this Body never saw him again. It was learnt later that he had changed for the better.

Since the *kirtan* on *pous-sankrānti*, *kirtans* would be held on most evenings and regularly on every *amāvasyā*. During these occasions many different divine moods would manifest through this Body. By the time the *amāvasyā kirtan* and *bhog* were completed the night would often draw to an end.

Curing Ailments at Bholanath's Behest

I visited different places at Bholanath's behest to bring relief to people who were ill. Because of his soft heart, people would often take advantage of his kindness. For this reason, despite this Body's protests, he would at times angrily demand that I go.

This Body sometimes visited Noni *babu's* home, which was adjacent to Nishi *babu's* abode. The first-born son of Nishi *babu's* daughter, Lilly, was about three months old. Her husband was away in England and she had become very sick while staying with her parents. Nishi *babu* took Me to his home to help Lilly. This Body

advised him to call a doctor "She is ill. What can I do?" Bholanath urged Me to try. Laughing, I replied, "You eat the fruit while I go back and take rice. In this way I shall consume your illness." Saying this, I returned to Shahbag. Gradually Lili recovered.

Some time later her infant had an ear infection. Although the doctor prescribed surgery, everyone was afraid that the baby would be unable to withstand it as he was extremely weak. Deeply distressed, Nishi *babu* came to Me and said, "I shall do whatever You tell me to do." This Body replied, "Do whatever the doctor advises." Bholanath, however, insisted that I try to heal the child. A sudden *kheyāl* came upon Me and I told him, "Alright, tell Lili to grind whatever her hand comes in contact with on the floor this evening and apply it to the root of the ear." She did so and soon after the sick child began to laugh and play. Everyone was wonder-struck.

Sometime later when I visited Shashanko *babu's* home for the first time, Nishi *babu* came to Me greatly distressed and on the verge of tears, saying that the child's ear had turned septic and was emitting a bad odour. The doctor had told them that, as a result of not having had the surgery, the infection had spread inside the head. What was to be done now? He further said that in case something amiss befell the child, he would face criticism from the child's paternal grandfather who was a wealthy man. While saying this, tears started flowing and he pleaded with Me to accompany him, "You don't have to stay long and can return immediately." Going with him, I found the child laughing as if without pain, but the abscess at the base of the ear had swollen up enormously, causing everyone to be worried. I returned to Shahbag.

Later that day, while wandering about the *nātmandir*,¹⁰ My eyes had fallen upon a gramophone-needle on the floor. Picking it up, this Body pierced Her left hand with it and created a wound. She did not mention this to anyone.

The next day Nishi *babu* came on his own to take Me to his home, saying that he would not let Me leave until the abscess had burst. A

¹⁰ During Mā's stay in Shahbag *kirtan* used to take place in the dance hall and the room was later referred to as *nātmandir*.

kheyāl then came to My mind that the child's abscess would burst open. Later, in our presence, the abscess did indeed burst, and gradually the child recovered.

Shashanko *babu* Worships Mā

A few days after our first meeting, Shashanko *babu* took this Body to his home in order to worship Her on the new moon day.¹¹ In those days if anyone did *pūjā* (ritual worship), paid obeisance to, or put flowers on Her, this Body would go into a *bhāv* and Her head would incline forward to the ground. This happened again when Shashanko *babu* began his *pūjā*. After offering clothes, he put a gold necklace of skulls¹² round Her neck. Later, when I came back to normal, Bholanath requested Me to leave the necklace on saying, "He has offered it to You with such earnestness and devotion - do not take it off right now." Consequently, it stayed round My neck for many days. At the end of the *pūjā* this Body declared to Shashanko *babu*, "From this day onwards may all your personal, external rituals come to an end." After this he no longer felt any inclination to practice these rituals any more.

I found that after a few days I remained unaffected by the flowers, sandal paste, *bel* (wood-apple) leaves or anything else that people placed on My body. It occurred to Me that there was no difference between this Body and the items placed on it. I neither approached nor turned away anyone. This Body often reflected the utterances and perceptions of those who came to Her. As for speech, only whatever came spontaneously to the lips was spoken.

A *sādhak* may reach a state such that if anyone pays him homage, his external body becomes motionless. As his *sādhanā* advances, he acquires a feeling that all things are equal. Just as the Supreme is *ananta* (infinite) so also are the states of the *sādhak*. You see, this

¹¹ Goddess *Kālī* is specially worshipped on the new moon day. Shashanko *babu* saw in Mā the divine incarnation of *Shaktī* – the primordial creative energy.

¹² A necklace of skulls adorns the Goddess *Kālī* as a symbol representing the destruction of evil forces.

Body was at the time spontaneously playing with many different aspects of *sādhan-līlā* in Her *kheyāl* as a *sādhak*. This was merely a manifestation of one such passing aspect. Absorbed in Herself, She went on playing with one aspect after another spontaneously. What more do you want to hear?

Inability to Eat with One's Own Hands

For some days I had been eating rice regularly. One day I was invited to Rajendra Kushari's home¹³ for a meal during a period when I was observing silence. Sitting down to eat, I found that when I tried to carry the rice to My mouth My grasp slackened and all the food slipped through My fingers. My hands were neither weak nor numb, yet every time I brought the food to My mouth My grasp would loosen. In spite of My effort to do so, I was not able to eat. The members of the family were deeply distressed and said, "There must have been some serious lapse on our part." I reassured them that from time to time such changes came over this Body automatically as if propelled by a machine. The Self remained in equipoise.¹⁴ I returned to Shahbag.

Another day when I sat down for my evening meal I found My fingers slacken their hold on the food and the food falling on the ground. I lifted the plate from the ground with My left hand, and carried the food to My mouth with My right hand. I ate in this manner for about three or four days but found afterwards that even in this way the right hand would not reach the mouth.

Then I began to mix together all the items that had been cooked, scoop as much of the food as My left hand could hold, and with My right hand put the food in My mouth and eat slowly. After one or two days even that would not work."

Bholanath had noticed that I was hardly eating. One day while sitting down to eat he called Me, and sitting before him with My two hands cupped together, I said to him, "Give Me whatever food you

¹³ Bholanath's childhood friend from his village.

¹⁴ Normally among all human beings changes take place due to their desire for something and perception of its lack or absence. In Mā there is a total absence of desire.

want just once.” I ate by bringing My mouth to whatever he gave Me. Then later I found that My hands could not reach the mouth at all Just as the mimosa curls up the moment it is touched, so too did My entire body feel inert as soon as My hands came close to My mouth. There seemed to be no control over anything. It was as if I had lost the ability to do a simple task like lifting the food with My hands to feed Myself.

This Body was like a child playing with different toys. Hunger, desire to eat, did not seem to exist for Her at all, instead there was only serenity. When Bholanath questioned Her, She replied almost tearfully like a child, “I do not do anything of My own free will; the hands do not rise and I cannot eat.” Bholanath said, “Alright, I shall feed You.”

From that day onwards I stopped feeding Myself. At the beginning of this stage, the person feeding this Body would also have to sit with Her, otherwise She would soon get up saying, “I won’t eat any more.” Later it came to this Body’s *kheyāl* that all the dishes cooked were to be mixed and fed to Her with only two fingers just once, as one might hold a single blade of grass. Those who fed Her followed this rule twice every day. On alternate days water was also given once. After five and a half months had gone by in this manner, on the seventh day of *Bāsanti pūjā*, some milk was sent from Jyotish’s home. This Body took only that for the following three days. On the night of the tenth day, She took rice.

There are always subtle links working at the root of all things.¹⁵ Again, links that are even more subtle than these cause all actions to come to their fruition in different ways. As in the world of action so also in the spiritual sphere, these subtle links take various paths. Later, for several days, I ate like I used to earlier.

After four or five years had gone by, one day at the Ramna *āshram* all those around Me insisted that I eat with My hands. This Body too had a *kheyāl* to do so. I sat down to eat and a strange feeling came

¹⁵ Cosmic womb from where the entire creation and destruction in the universe are taking place through subtle inter-linking connections of whatever is happening in both animate and inanimate worlds in different ways

over Me that made Me wander all over the *āshram*, at times feeding Myself with a tiny morsel and at others, feeding whoever I found in front of Me, including animals and birds. In this manner, sometimes sitting and sometimes walking, I took a long time to finish the midday meal. At night I was served *sandesh* and some other items. I smeared it carefully on the ground with the thought that doing so was equivalent to My eating it. However the people observing this behaviour were perturbed and began saying that if this Body was to survive, She must be fed. Several people now requested that they be allowed to feed this Body. From then onwards, whoever happened to be around or desired to do so fed Me. I felt that all their hands were My own and that I was eating with My own hand.

No condition or bind applied to this Body. To obey Bholanath’s wishes, a small amount of food—a mixture of all items, would be eaten once by this Body.

On being asked whether or not She was negatively affected by not eating properly, Mā answered, “Eating or not eating makes no difference to this Body.”

The Healing of a Young Girl

One afternoon I was engaged in some work when a carriage carrying a family from Raipur village in Comilla arrived. The man said to Bholanath, “I have come to Mā. My daughter has been bedridden for the last four years. At first she used to get fever, then her body became stiff, and now she is virtually paralyzed, and we have to help her even with her toilet. She is twelve and married. The well-known local doctor, Guru Prasad Mitra, treated her for three months but there was no improvement. In fact it was he who asked us to bring her here. So, with no other recourse left, we have now brought her to You.” Bholanath repeated all this to Me. Suddenly the words came from My lips, “Ask them to come next Thursday.”

They came accordingly and the parents of the girl carried her into the room and laid her on the floor. I saw that she could not even sit up and was so weak that she could hardly speak. This Body observed all

this, and then sitting beside the girl told her, "Try to roll on the ground a little." She made an effort to do whatever she could. Then I told her, "That is enough." I was at that time cutting areca nuts into pieces for *bhog*; I threw a few pieces on the floor and told her, "Stretch your arm and pick them up." With great difficulty she picked them up. The family left soon after that.

I came to know that on reaching home she ate her meal and then, while lying on the bed playing a game of conch-shells with others, she suddenly jumped up on hearing the sound of carriage wheels and music from the streets and ran to see what it was. After that, she gradually began to walk. The next day her father, smiling happily, came to inform us of her progress. It was heard that the girl had recovered completely.

Full Moon *Bhog* at the *Āshram*

One day there was *bhog* at Nishi *babu*'s home and by the time it was over and we returned to Shahbag it was almost dark. It was a full-moon night and Motori had resolved to arrange the full-moon *bhog* that evening with her son's first salary. On our return we found that she had already finished all the cooking and was singing *kirtan* along with a few others while waiting for us. Food was offered to Bhagabān at the right time and the people present partook the *prasād* happily. The offering of *bhog* on full-moon continues to this day at the *āshram*. Consequently, one may observe that whatever is to happen does so inevitably on its own.

Feeding the Poor¹⁶

Once Shashanko *babu* made arrangements to feed the poor and the destitute at Dhaka's private medical school and there was *kirtan* sung on the occasion. The previous evening we went to visit the school. Preparations were being made for *khichuri*, a curry and sweets that would be fed to the poor the next day.

¹⁶ Occurred on March 3, 1926.

The next morning *kirtan* went on for a long time and this Body once again was absorbed in a deep *bhāv*. When the mid-day meal was served this Body had the *kheyāl* that She would also serve food. Taking Khukuni with Me, I went there and she and I began to serve those who had sat down to eat. While serving, I noticed one person with leprosy sitting there and he was unable to use his hands to feed himself. I went to him and said, "Let Me feed you." But saying, 'No, no,' the man quickly began to eat with a spoon. When one group had finished eating, Bholanath said, "You can come away; let the men serve now."

In the mean-time dark clouds had gathered in the sky, and heavy rains seemed a certainty. This Body had a *kheyāl* to remain outdoors. By now big drops had started falling and although everyone urged Her to go inside, She remained oblivious. Later it became clear to all that only after the second batch had been fed did this Body go indoors, and immediately afterwards the rain started to pour.

In the evening Shashanko *babu* asked this Body to have Her meal. She asked that others be called as well. Some said, "We shall not eat, for these arrangements were made only for the destitute." Then some students began saying, "Today Mā will serve us."

In the middle of all this confusion I said, "Who is truly destitute? Are we not all destitutes? Who is to be called a destitute? Everyone maintains their body by feeding and clothing it but those who do not possess the real treasure alone are truly destitute." Saying this I led them outside where the main feeding had just finished. Some were still eating and I sat down with them. It was getting dark; I said, "What needs do the destitute have of too much light? Whatever there is, is enough."¹⁷ When the meal was over we returned to Shahbag.

Paying Homage by Touching the Feet

After seeing this Body's condition during the *kirtan* at the school, Anāth¹⁸ went into something like a spiritual trance. For two days he

¹⁷ We humans are all destitute for we are oblivious of our true Self, the source of all light, which enables us to see the diverse aspects of nature. Here Mā indicates that those destitute of wisdom should adjust to any situation for the revelation of the true Self.

¹⁸ Anāth Das was a student of the medical school.

went without food and sleep. In the evening he came to Shahbag and in tears declared that he would not eat anything until he could touch Mā's feet and *pranām* to Her. Upon Bholanath's insistence I agreed, and that day Anāth, and because of him many others, touched this Body's feet and paid Her homage. Anāth did so the next day as well. From then on it was decided that every month on that particular date and time, for five minutes, whoever so wished could likewise pay their homage to this Body by touching Her feet. On hearing this, all those who were present there at that time did so during those five minutes. This Body had been standing and after the five minutes had passed She sat down automatically on the floor. Gradually, this practice was discontinued.

Bāsanti Pūjā: Labanya's State of Divine Intoxication

While in Bajitpur, Bholanath once said, "I would like to perform *Bāsanti pūjā*"¹⁹ Twice in the past, due to deaths in the family all the arrangements which had been made for the *Sārodiya Durgā pūjā*,²⁰ were used instead to perform the *shrādh* (funeral rites for the deceased). Since then the question of performing *Durgā pūjā* has never been raised, but now I feel a great desire to do it. Tell me, will my wish be fulfilled?" I replied, "It will."

After coming to Shahbag, Bholanath reminded Me of that conversation. Around that time Shashanko *babu* built a thatched hut at the Siddheswari holy site.²¹ A decision to perform *pūjā* there was taken, and an image of *Durgā* was made to the measurements of this Body. This was created partly with earth from the white-ant mound²² and partly with clay. A large number of Bholanath's relatives arrived for the occasion and those who frequented Shahbag also made

¹⁹ Worship of Goddess *Durgā* in spring.

²⁰ Worship of Goddess *Durgā* in autumn.

²¹ This was the First *āshram* of Mā. It was built with a thatched roof and bamboo-mat walls in seven days as per Mā's directions, on acquiring the land in the Bengali month of Falgun (end February to early March, 1926).

²² The earth was purified by Bholanathji's *sādhanā* in his previous life. Reference is drawn to sub-heading "Seven Days at the Siddheswari *Kālī* Temple" in chapter 6.

elaborate arrangements. Shashanko *babu* and Purna Sarkar had a gold bangle and a gold encased conch-shell bangle made for the deity. Bholanath's sister Bengi needed to be fetched in order to be able to participate in the *pūjā*. So, at Bholanath's suggestion, we travelled to Chittagong to bring her back with us.

One evening we went to Shashanko *babu*'s home where I saw his younger son, Nandu, for the first time. After this he maintained regular contact with this Body. A short while after meeting Khukuni, I advised her to relinquish all contact with her other relatives just as she has done with her husband, and she had complied. Nandu said to Me one day, "I used to wonder who was the person who directed my sister to break off contact with her siblings."²³ When we came to know that You are that person we felt aggrieved and did not feel like coming to You."

Not too many days were left before *Bāsanti pūjā*. Jyotish's wife arrived one day with a red bordered *sārī* and requested this Body to wear it. I wore it on the occasion of *Bāsanti pūjā*. Around this time a big exhibition was arranged in the building now being used as the Intermediate College and Jyotish's wife took Me there for the first time. She pointed out various things and offered to buy Me anything I fancied, but to this Body everything appeared to be the same, nothing seemed new.

On the day of the *pūjā* we went to the Siddheswari temple from Shahbag and arrangements were made for people to stay in a large, vacant house. The image of the Goddess was ready in the straw hut constructed for it at the holy site and all other arrangements were completed. On the morning of *saptamī*,²⁴ having taken Her bath in the pond, this Body proceeded to where the *pūjā* was to be held, after first giving instructions on how the *bhog* was to be prepared.

The floor of this room was one cubit higher than the holy site, which was about two feet square forming a kund (square pit).²⁵ During

²³ Khukuni was destined to lead the life of a *brahmachārīni* and therefore advised by Mā to dissociate herself from her family so as to be away from worldly attachment. Later she wore the sacred thread and also received sannyās mantra to lead a life of an ascetic.

²⁴ The seventh day in the waxing phase of the moon of the *Bāsanti pūjā* - March 21, 1926.

²⁵ Mā had given direction for the floor to be raised 18 inches without disturbing the holy spot where Mā's right arm had entered the ground, thus a square pit of about 2 feet was created.

the entire duration of the *pūjā*, this Body would remain sitting or lying in that space. At the time of *Prān-pratistha*,²⁶ the priest was told not to articulate the *bīj mantra*. For a long time this Body gazed fixedly at the sacred image, while inside Her the *bīj* flowed continuously. Some of those present later said that the *Durgā murti* (idol) seemed to have come alive.

Bhog was offered to the deity after the worship. All those gathered there took the *prasād* with great joy. In the evening there was a minor storm but the night passed peacefully.

The next morning after making arrangements for the day's *bhog* I went to the worship room. The *ashtamī pūjā*²⁷ had come to an end and almost everyone had received *prasād* when someone brought the news that a new group of about forty or fifty students from the local medical college had just arrived, and whatever was left of the *prasād* was not enough for them. Arrangements had been made for everyone who came to attend the *pūjā* to have *prasād*, no one was to leave without having any. This Body said, "Make them sit and start serving from whatever is left in the pot." The others, however, thought that it would be an embarrassment if there was not enough, so they hastily prepared two more vessels of *khichuri*. At the beginning of the function this Body had said that the entire quantity of *bhog* to be offered should be prepared at one time and that nothing was to be cooked after that. When the new *khichuri* had been cooked, the students were first served the left-over *prasād* and it was found that this was more than enough to feed them all. The two pots of *khichuri* cooked later remained untouched.

In the evening it was clear that a storm was brewing. It started to rain and the wind turned so strong that there was panic and commotion all round.²⁸ The hut where the *pūjā* had been held was fragile with flimsy walls and the roof resting on a few bamboo poles. Soon these began to shake in the powerful gale. A twelve-year old girl fainted

²⁶ Rite of instilling life into the idol

²⁷ The eighth day in the waxing phase of the new moon of the *Bāsanti pūjā* - March 22, 1926.

²⁸ Hurricanes in East Bengal (now Bangladesh) can be devastating

from fear, while several people held on desperately to the poles, crying 'Mā, Mā' frantically. This Body sat in the *kund* inside the hut. Outside the hurricane seemed like an unrestrained wild dance of nature, while inside the hut there was the single-minded desperate prayer of human beings. Overcome by divine emotion, Her body began to sway rhythmically while an unnatural laughter emanated from Her lips. The image of *Durgā* was shaking slightly with the wind. Seeing this Body laugh in such a manner confused and upset Bholanath even more. Drawing this Body's attention, he appealed to Her almost tearfully, "What is all this that is happening? Please save us!"

In the meantime a man of low caste came through the door, covered in mud, looking at Me entreatingly not to be turned out. He began to sing *nām* with the others. Slowly the fury of the cyclone abated without causing harm to the sacred image or the oblations. I could see only water when I looked outside. The thatched roof had been blown away and several branches of nearby trees had been broken. At night Mathur *babu* put everything right again.

A group of *kirtan*-singers had in the meantime arrived from somewhere and started singing. A divine rapture came over this Body. At that time, Ashu, his younger sister, her husband, and Ashu's mother were all present. Ashu's sister, Labanya, was about sixteen or seventeen years of age and had never seen this Body in this kind of a state. Elated and wonderstruck she put her arms about this Body. Immediately a transformation came over her and repeating 'haribol' she sank to the ground. Swaying unsteadily this Body went to the Siddheswari temple with the *kirtan* singers accompanied by many others.

When *kirtan* had finished, on our way back I saw that in the open space in front of the holy site. Ashu's mother and a few others were trying to remove the mud from Labanya's body while she rolled on the ground in a blissful state. Her face calm and serene, eyes were fixed upward, her lips were repeating 'haribol, haribol' indistinctly. Shashanko *babu* said to me, "Returning from the *Kālī* temple, I was on my way to the *pūjā mandap* (enclosure) when I heard someone singing 'haribol, haribol' in a melodious voice. Looking around, I

came upon someone rolling on the ground in the courtyard. It was dark, but I went closer and found that it was Labanya.”

There had been a shower a short while before and Labanya had lain there through it all. She was now brought in and her clothes were changed, but she continued repeating ‘*haribol*,’ and tried to roll on the ground. Ashu’s mother came to Me and asked “What is happening to her? You must put her right immediately!” I saw that her husband too was somewhat anxious. This Body told them, “This is a very good state.” But they said, “How can she attend to her household duties in this condition?” I asked her husband to take her to another room and then told Bholanath to instruct him to whisper certain words in her ears. He followed the instructions. The whole night Labanya lay like one intoxicated, and after three or four days she returned to normal to a great extent-although she continued to utter ‘*haribol*’ from time to time and had the tendency to roll on the ground in ecstasy.²⁹

Her mother said to her, “So this was why you were always so keen to come to your *khurimā*!” Her mother and husband did their best to divert her mind from all this, but the words ‘*haribol*’ uttered in an ineffably sweet voice, exuding love, continued from her lips. When she accompanied Me in the morning to bathe in the pond there would be a rapt look on her face, and on her lips the words, ‘*haribol, haribol*’ This Body told her, “Your mother and relatives do not approve of all this.” Laughing like one beside herself she would keep saying, “*Khurimā, haribol, haribol*; they do not understand what bliss the word brings” Her mother begged Me to bring her daughter back to normal. Gradually she did and they left for their ancestral home.

Since her birth Labanya had been cared for by this Body. Even as an infant nothing pleased her without this Body. Her name was given by this Body. After her marriage, whenever she met Me she would say in confidence, “*Khurimā*, I do not enjoy domestic life, please let me come and stay with You.” At times she would even go into a

²⁹ When the state of divine ecstasy takes place, one’s body responds to the inherent vibration of the ‘*nam*’ causing one to roll on the ground oblivious of one’s surroundings

trance which she did her best to hide from her family, but which would nonetheless be revealed, particularly when sometimes she would be found to be lying motionless like one unconscious.

The *Dashamī pūjā*³⁰ came to an end. When it was time for *visarjan*³¹ they asked Me, “What is to be done with the gold bangle and the gold-encased, conch-shell bangle on the image?” This Body said, “Leave them there.” Bholanath and some others objected saying this was against convention. This Body then instructed them to give them to the *purohit* (priest).” Those who had arranged to have these bangles made now claimed that they had done so with the intention of putting them on Mā. So, after some discussion, the ornaments were taken home for this Body

When the immersion ceremony concluded, all those present declared, “Today we want to touch Mā’s feet and pay Her our homage.” So far this Body had not allowed anyone to touch Her feet. That day, along with all others, the aged Sitanath Kushari too insisted on paying Her his obeisance.

Reaction to People Paying Homage

For several months after coming to Shahbag, whenever anyone prostrated in *pranām* before Her, this Body’s head too would automatically sink to the ground, returning the gesture; and when someone tried to touch Her feet, Her hands would reach out for that person’s feet. When this happened, the one who had tried to *pranām*, no matter how fast he or she ran, was never able to evade this Body. An unusual strength seemed to come upon Her and, as if playing a game, She seemed to be bent upon touching that person’s feet. If anyone saluted Her from a distance unseen by anyone else, or fell to the ground to salute Her, She would immediately reciprocate and Her head too would bow down to the floor.

³⁰ The tenth day in the waxing phase of the new moon of the *Bāsanti pūjā* – March 24, 1926

³¹ Immersion of the idol

Prediction of Danger to Moroni

Bholanath's elder sister³² came to Shahbag for *Bāsanti pūjā* with her entire family and stayed on for some time. Her son's wife was pregnant. One day, the daughter-in-law told Me in great distress, "Already twice when one child is born another child of mine dies. I am giving Moroni, who is a year and ten months old, to You, because I am expecting another child. It is up to You whether or not she lives." From that day onwards, Moroni lived in Shahbag. Another daughter was born to her mother, but she too died. After that a son was born and his grandmother brought him to the *āshram*, performed his naming ceremony there, and fed him *prasād*. That boy is still living.



Shree Shree Mā with Bholanathji and child Moroni in Shahbag - after *Bāsanti pūjā* of March, 1926

³² Sitanath Kushari's wife - Ashu/Labanya's mother

Jyotish's and Niranjan's Prayers

After *Bāsanti pūjā* one moonlit night Jyotish and Niranjan³³ were talking while standing near Me. Except during the first few days, I had never seen Jyotish sitting near Me either in Shahbag or in the *āshram*. Niranjan suddenly said, "Mā, may we die and be reborn soon as *brahmachārīs*³⁴ in Your *āshram*. This is our prayer to You. Please give us Your blessings." Looking at Jyotish I said to him, "Can you not become so in this birth? What is after all the true meaning of 'brahmin' or 'brahmachārī' other than an expression of one's mental attitude and actions?" No one responded to that. Jyotish's recovery later from serious illness should be considered as his rebirth.



³³ Niranjan Roy was a close friend of Jyotish Chandra Roy and was the Assistant Commissioner of Income Tax, Dhaka.

³⁴ The Vedas stipulate four primary stages in a human being's life. For most Hindus, every stage of life has its proper time. The first stage involves apprenticeship (*brahmachārya*), and the leading of a disciplined pious life and observing strict celibacy. Periods of study may vary before proceeding to the second 'householder' stage (*gārhastha*) where each individual works within the caste and raises a family on the basis of moral norms. Ideally, the householder stage extends twenty-five years. The third stage focuses on prayers and spiritual rituals in a 'forest dwelling' (*vānaprastha*). This is a life of detachment where 'needs, wants and desires' must wane off leading to the next stage where everything is renounced without the aspects of 'likes and dislikes' including family and all property. In the final 'renunciation' stage (*sannyās*), the individual is dedicated solely to spiritual liberation, that is, surrendering to the Supreme, where play of the propensity of the mind loses its significance. In the final stage of life, liberation (enlightenment) becomes more easily attainable.

CHAPTER 9

Obstructions in the *Sādhak's* Path

At the beginning of one's *sādhanā*, the *sādhak* goes through a stage where, if anyone comes to pay obeisance, he feels embarrassed, insignificant, unworthy of anyone's salute, and withdraws himself thinking that it will lead to a loss of spiritual energy. As this energy increases he may lean towards working for the welfare of humanity. He blesses those who *pranām* to him. When asked, he tries to explain spiritual matters to the best of his ability like a person who finds satisfaction in undertaking charitable works when he becomes wealthy. At that stage, his goodness, compassion, accumulated wisdom, benevolent attitude towards forgiveness and equality, openness, and simplicity are evident and bring joy to all. He avoids greed and attachment and hence eschews malice, falsehood and calumny.

Advancing on the path of truth and sincerity he gains some *siddhis* (supernatural powers), which manifest themselves in personal matters and worldly affairs.

As there is still hidden within him the desire for praise and fame, he gains satisfaction by helping others in some way. This reveals that the roots of his egoistical tendencies are not yet destroyed. Too much involvement in displaying one's *siddhis* inevitably leads to their loss. Confused between truth and untruth, he may be led astray from the path of truth without at first realizing it but when he does, it becomes a matter of grave sorrow to him. Therefore, it is imperative to keep one's attention fixed on the ultimate goal. When the *sādhak* concentrates with his entire heart and soul on the practice of his *sādhanā*, different spiritual experiences unfold within him as he

progresses along the path. Once this process begins, the *sādhak* develops an intense dislike for all matters other than those spiritual. At the mere mention or sight of anything unrelated to that, a stinging or burning sensation comes upon him as if pricked by thorns or touched by fire. He wants to talk only of God and about nothing else, and because he is constantly absorbed in thoughts of the Supreme Being, his general behaviour appears pleasing. He may acquire and subtly display many supernatural powers as per his progress.

Those *sādhaks* who are not able to shun these powers, but become enmeshed in this game, are unable to proceed further, whereas those who can overcome these obstacles reach the highest level. When the *sādhak* reaches even more elevated levels, the tendency to communicate with others lessens. He still attempts to answer questions from genuine seekers of knowledge, although he realizes that such matters will not easily be understood without serious self endeavour on the part of the enquirer or through their *guru's* grace. And if anyone tries to pay obeisance to him, the *sādhak* feels seared like when water is poured into a hot vessel. The desires and wishes of the person making *pranām* affects the *sādhak* like an electric shock. Once he transcends the physical and is established in his true nature, none of these things can affect him but till such time there is no escape from the emotional storm.

Only a few of the stages experienced by the *sādhak* have been mentioned. Of course, the way in which the *jaḡat-guru's* compassion flows is quite apart from this.

Hearing this, a question was asked, "We have now heard about the *sādhak*, but why are You affected in this way by our obeisance?" Mā replied, "Do not take this Body into consideration. She just goes on playing momentarily with one thing after another, don't you see? It has always been like that." In this great journey there is always the fear of obstacles coming your way, therefore you must proceed with utmost caution. That is why great skill is needed to enter the path.

Although initiated, some *sādhaks* may still go astray after learning the external rituals of worship, like singing *kiṛtan*, reading from the scriptures, guiding others in *pūjā*, *japa*, or meditation and allowing

them to pay obeisance and blessing them through touch, etc. They may decorate themselves with perfume, sandalwood paste, and garlands in trying to look like genuine *sādhus*. Generally, those who cannot recognize true *sādhus* and have only a little thirst for divine knowledge are the persons attracted to such types and derive pleasure from their company. As you yourselves admit, the one in whom you take shelter (Guru) can at best give you only as much as he is capable of giving. But when God's grace is combined with certain auspicious conditions the disciple can surpass even his preceptor.

How will the full benefit come to those who are interested in imitating holy men? It is not that they will not receive any fruit at all, but only in a limited way; as you see, their actions are motivated by self-gratification, and desire for fame.

Initially a *sādhak* or a householder suppresses his material desires in favour of pursuing his goal of attaining the Supreme by involving himself in *kirtan*, reading scriptures, *japa*, meditation with full focus so as to realize his true self. But the desire for fame and materialistic achievement may remain latent in him and manifest later because he has not yet freed himself from anger, greed, attachment and envy. However, the initial act of discipline to save himself from *māyā* (worldly attachment) will still have its effect (in this world of cause and effect)

Spontaneous Revelation in *Kirtan*

When this Body went to Shashanko *babu's* ancestral home, She was taken to Khukuni's maternal uncle's home where lunch was followed by *kirtan*. During *kirtan*, this Body sank to the floor in a state of rapture with Her head and arms hanging down seemingly without support. She then slowly slithered like a snake from the high plinth of the veranda to the courtyard below. Everyone was wonderstruck at the way She was able to come down from such a height without using the stairs, and without falling with a thud. It is not possible to express in words the manner in which this was accomplished nor the swiftness of this movement.¹ Her entire body

¹ She would seem to be virtually defying gravity in these states

was flushed red, radiating divine power and emotion, and Her eyes glowed with a divinely enchanting expression. Gradually the Body stood up straight with arms stretched upwards. What a posture it was! The hairs on the skin stood upright, and the pores were swollen up like boils. This happened often, sometimes with a trace of blood on them.

Many a time in Shahbag this Body lay inert for days in a state of *samādhi*. When She came out of that there was saliva dripping from Her mouth and tears flowing from Her eyes so abundantly that no amount of wiping by Khukuni could stem their flow. A long time would pass this way.

This tendency to lie motionless in silence continued like before without any fixed time or place, even at the Ramna *āshram*. Khukuni would nudge Her for hours on end and She would open Her eyes just once with a strange look in them before withdrawing once again into Her own world, sometimes smiling. Her speech was indistinct and language incomprehensible. At times She would be stiff like a log of wood, Her body cold as ice and unaffected by vigorous massage. She was not responsive to vigorous shaking and sometimes seemed not to be breathing. Those around would panic and weep, fearful that She was about to leave Her body. There were so many conditions manifested in this Body that others could do very little to bring Her back to 'normal'.

At times while lying, sitting, talking, or even running, I would suddenly burst into peals of laughter, go limp, and sink to the floor. The laughter was so intense, unnatural, and spontaneous that it was almost unstoppable. Sometimes others too would start laughing, but at other times they were apprehensive that I might leave. My body while laughing, it would continue for quite a while and then stop on its own. Sometimes this Body would, in a frenzied manner, alternately laugh and cry, much like sunshine followed by rain.

There was no fixed time for daily ablutions or chores. Sometimes I was completely unaware of where I was going, whether there was fire in front of Me or water, thorns or a pit; no heed was paid to anything. This Body would suddenly run wildly in a certain direction

and then fall to the ground and lie there motionless for long stretches of time, or else rise after a short while. Sometimes Bholanath and at other times Khukuni would try to restrain Her or run after Her and bring Her back. She seemed to have no idea of where She was going or why.

As She was oblivious of the state of Her *sārī* during *kirtan*, Bholanath got Her to always wear a chemise. Because of the state that this Body was often in, someone or other stayed by Her side constantly. Once at Shahbag, on an impulse, I suddenly dove into the deep water tank there. The place was rather unkempt and it was getting dark. Bholanath, who had followed me, was getting worried. Finally after this Body came out of the tank on Her own Bholanath asked in surprise, "How did you get out?" I replied, "Why, it was quite easy!"

Some time passed in this way. During that period there was nothing fixed regarding Her eating. When She woke from slumber, She ate fitfully, sometimes a little fruit, rarely some milk.

One day after *kirtan* at Shahbag I found the symptoms of the earlier *bhāvs* reappearing and I sat in an *āsana* with *shlokās* and *mantras* emerging continuously from My lips. While uttering these, this Body once appeared on the verge of tears before She resumed the *shlokās*. Finally the Body sank to the floor in the posture of a *namaskār*. After this, almost every day during *kirtan* such *shlokās* and *mantras* poured out of My mouth, sometimes for short spells, at times for long, sometimes after starting with 'haribol.' One day during *kirtan* I observed, as if from another location, this Body lying on the ground, singing through others' lips, as well as listening and enjoying its bliss to the fullest extent²

Once the *kirtan* became so intense that this Body sank to the floor, stood up again, and circled round with the others while they made room for Her. A dog, barking all the while, also circled on its hind legs, as if dancing, just in front of Her. After that day I noticed this dog coming to sit near Me, sometimes resting his head on My lap. At

² In case one mistakes this as an out of body experience, that Mā had, this incident illustrates Mā identifying with everyone around Her, a divine quality that always distinguished Her from those surrounding Her

the time of *harir lūt*, the dog would eat the *bātāsās* like everyone; but if someone tried to shoo him away he would no longer make the effort to take *bātāsās*.³ When this Body rolled on the ground or walked, the dog would stay so close to Me that at times he had to be tied, but that made him so restless that he was let loose again.

There was *kirtan* one Wednesday at Dinesh *babu's* home at Dhankora, Dhaka, where this Body went into a divine ecstasy once again. She told them to arrange *kirtan* every Wednesday and they complied. This Body would go there from time to time. Once, when outsiders were prohibited from coming to Shahbag, She instructed the devotees to rotate the *kirtan* every Wednesday at different people's homes, and this continued for four or five years. Within that time the Ramna *āshram* was built, after which the *kirtan* was discontinued in many homes.

Mā's Play with Brahmachārī Jogesh⁴ during *Kirtan*

There used to be regular *kirtan* in Shahbag and (Br.) Jogesh used to visit often. He would sing at times, but hardly ever participated in *kirtan*. One day this Body went into a trance while going around in circles with others. All the people were on their feet and singing in great joy and devotion, but (Br.) Jogesh continued to sit. Suddenly an unusual state came over this Body and going behind (Br.) Jogesh, She put one foot on his back and with the other in the air stood upright. Loud spontaneous laughter emanated from Her mouth. Fearing that She might fall, Bholanath rushed forward and held on to Her little finger. She was now in great *bhāv*, Her head uncovered, Her hair dishevelled. After being in that position for a little while, She touched (Br.) Jogesh's shoulder and descended. Then the right hand went up and came down on his cheek in the manner of a slap. Immediately the left hand also went up and, as if consoling a child, stroked that

³ The dog was displaying the qualities of a *sādhak*

⁴ Jogesh Chandra Ray, one of the earliest *āshram* Brahmachārīs to join Mā's *āshram* in Shahbag, Dhaka. He oversaw Mā's Kishanpur *āshram* on Rajpur Road, Dehradun for many years. He left his body in Varanasi as a *sannyāsī*.

cheek, laughing all the while After that Her demeanour gradually changed All the while (Br.) Jogesh sat still, like a wooden statue Although I had placed My entire weight on him, I was told later that he had felt only a slight weight, as if a small child was on his back. Before this incident (Br.) Jogesh had never come near this Body, nor ever spoken to Her; but after that he participated in every *kirtan*.

The *Līlā* of Taking Rice

In Shahbag there was an old *Hindustani*⁵ maid employed to wash dishes. Once when she was eating her meal this Body stared at her plate of rice and asked childishly, "What is this? What are you doing? I too want to do the same." And approaching the maid She said laughingly, "How well you put the food into your mouth, then chew and swallow it!" Since the woman was of a different caste, Bholanath was afraid that if she offered food to this Body, She would surely open Her mouth to eat it, and so he dragged Her away forcefully saying, "You don't eat anything except fruit that has fallen from trees nowadays! This is rice. Don't You recognize it? You seem to be forgetting everything."

Once earlier, this Body had gone up to a dog that was eating something, and tearfully demanded, "I want to eat, I want to eat!" That day too Bholanath had dragged Her away. Often when anyone tried to prevent Her from eating or doing something She would throw tantrums like a child, sink to the ground, and hold Her breath for hours. Thus the days went by in a manner that was at times bewildering to those around Her

One day I told everyone, "Whether I tell you or not, feed Me three grains of rice every day; otherwise, just as this Body is unable to eat with Her own hands, you may find Her not eating at all. Nothing is certain." Every morning I was fed three grains of rice. If there happened to be any extra food I would push it out with my tongue Along with the three grains of rice this Body would also take three sips of water. This seems to have gone on for almost six months.

⁵ A person from the west of undivided Bengal, speaking Hindi was referred to as Hindustani

Even during more normal times there was nothing fixed regarding this Body's intake of food. Some days She ate only a little *chhatu* and curd, a little fruit, or milk and *khoi*. For some months She would eat *chapatti* and boiled vegetables or else just vegetables for a couple of days. On rare occasions, at Bholanath's or someone else's insistence, She would take a few mouthfuls of rice.

Men try to become detached from the desire for food, but this Body has to make arrangements so as not to completely forget the eating habit altogether It is not enough to reach the state of relinquishing everything, one must go beyond that

Mā at Balānanda Brahmachārī's *Āshram*⁶

We stayed at Prāngopal Babu's home when we went to Deoghar and met his *gurūdev*, Balānanda Brahmachārī, at his *āshram* On seeing this Body, Mahārāj *ji* joyfully exclaimed, "You once appeared to me in Your astral form, today You come in Your physical form!"

One day during *kirtan* this Body went into ecstasy while Mahārāj *ji* and his disciples sat around Her in a circle. When She became a little normal, he asked Her, "two or one?" This Body replied, "One " Mahārāj *ji* said, "Two." Later I queried, "Why did you say two?" Mahārāj *ji* answered, "One is He, and the other I." This Body said, "But He cannot exist without Me, nor I without Him " Many such playful dialogues were exchanged. The dialogues provided Mahārāj *ji* great joy; he would ask someone to bring *lichis*, which he then fed this Body with his own hands.

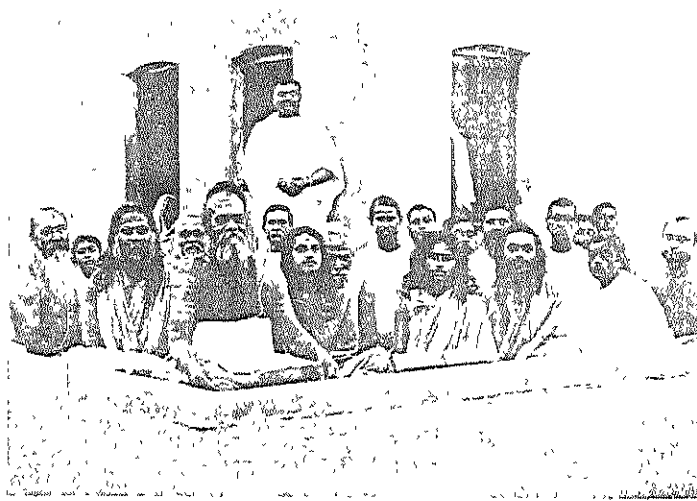
We would visit his *āshram* twice everyday. One day, just after *kirtan* had started, this Body went into a blissful state. As Balānanda Brahmachārī Mahārāj *ji* approached Me, somehow My arm rested on his head. Mahārāj *ji* then took this Body to his *dhyān-mandir*, while asking others to remain outside. With a great deal of care and

⁶ Mā travelled for the first time west-wards to Kolkata en route to Deogarh in May 1926 This trip came to be due to repeated requests from Prāngopal Babu Mā was accompanied by Bholanath, Dr. Shashank Mukherjee, Didi and three others In Kolkata Mā stayed for a couple of days in the house of Promotho *babu*, who was then the Post Master General of India

affection he showed Her his place of meditation and spoke of his own experiences and *yogic kriyās*. There was a secluded spot—Tapovan—a short distance away. This Body pleaded with him like a whimsical child, “Why don’t you stay there, Bābā?”

At Deoghar most of the time, whether day or night, this Body would lay engrossed in a state of divine stillness. When She got up or walked the same state prevailed. While seated this Body was in this blissful steady state, much like a pot filled with water that is held upright by staves. This Body would unblinkingly stand at one spot for long stretches of time, or else lie motionless and silent.

Before coming to Deoghar, the word ‘*so ’ham*’ would emerge from My lips, at times softly, at other times loudly. Those who overheard would inquire, “What are You saying?” When I did not answer, some thought I was saying ‘*shivo ’ham*’. Later I heard ‘*shivo-ham*’ on some people’s lips, but I had never heard the word ‘*so ’ham*’, I had never even known that there was such a *mahāvākya*. The clarification came from within that *so ’ham* meant being established in oneself, “I am THAT”.



Balānanda Brahmachārī and his devotees

Mā at Promotho *babu*'s Home

Returning from Deoghar we stayed at Promotho *babu*'s home in Kolkata. One evening when there was talk of our shifting elsewhere Promotho *babu* exclaimed, “Most certainly not!” While uttering these words, he sat down to do his *japa* on the terrace. Soon his body became so still that he appeared unconscious. Meanwhile it started raining but Promotho *babu* continued to sit there. This Body told the others to start singing *kirtan* in the rain and Promotho *babu* began to roll on the floor in the intensity of his *bhāv* (divine emotion). An hour later, after he regained consciousness of his surroundings, he revealed that the shock of this Body leaving his abode instigated such intense feelings that these transported him into an indescribably ecstatic state.

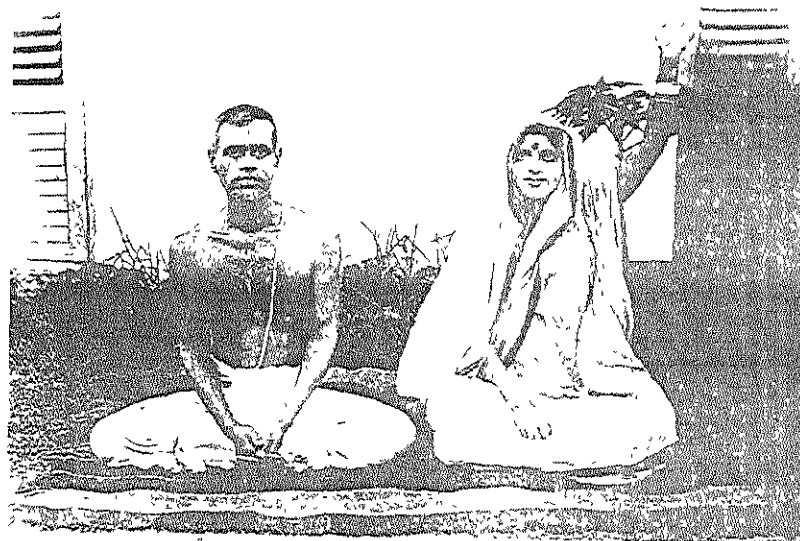
Kālī Pūjā in Shāhbag⁷

Kālī pūjā came again and everyone, including Suren *babu*, the Post Master and Prafulla *babu*'s wife, Hiran, expressed the desire to see this Body perform it, since many had missed it previously. Usually when faced with such requests this Body declined them.

This Body was often taken to Shashanko *babu*'s home for meals where She was always greeted with joy by all present. On this particular day, as we approached the pond near the Governor's House on our way to Shashanko *babu*'s home, I saw a living Goddess *Kālī* floating about nine yards above the ground looking at Me with her arms outstretched as if yearning to come to My lap. My left hand went up and a strange *bhāv* came over Me, which was noticed by those who were with Me. Bholanath asked several times, “What has happened?” When we sat down to eat after reaching the home I noticed the same image of the naked goddess standing like a small girl between Bholanath and Myself. Once again My left hand went up. In a few moments the image disappeared. Soon after, this Body lay down on the floor. When Bholanath enquired about the meaning of this, I

⁷ This *Kālī pūjā* was celebrated the night of November 4, 1926. This is the second time Mā performed *Kālī pūjā*.

replied, "I cannot tell you now, please do not ask Me." After that we returned to Shahbag



Shree Shree Mā with Her left hand raised sitting beside Bholanathji when Mā Kālī appeared between them at Dr. Shashanko Mukhopadhyay's home in Tikatuli

One day while busy in the kitchen I had a vision of Bhudeb *babu* coming to Shahbag and telling Bholanath, "I heard that there will be no *Kālī pūjā*? Why not? You must do it!" Later I learnt that this had indeed happened. Suren *babu* came in the evening to raise the subject once again, "Time is running out, *Kālī pūjā* is the day after tomorrow." I told Bholanath, "As they are so eager, why don't you officiate as the priest, everyone will be happy." While uttering these words, My body began to get numb and I lay down in the next room completely inert. Summoning Suren *babu*, Bholanath said, "Now that your Mā's *kheyāl* is to celebrate the *pūjā*, it will happen. Please make all necessary arrangements."

Having made a list of all that was required, Suren *babu* inquired, "What about the image? Since *Kālī* images are available only at specific times and only one day is left for the *pūjā*, will it be possible to have one made within this time?" Bholanath instructed him to go to the city and search for an image. When he enquired about its size, Bholanath referred to this Body. Seeing Her lying in a state of divine absorption and, as it was already eleven at night, Bholanath suggested that the image be as high as indicated by Her when She had raised her hand in the carriage on the way to Shashanko *babu*'s home and again later after arriving there. When Suren *babu* went to the market he was informed by an artist in a particular temporary erected shop that he had received orders for twelve statues but, after finishing those, had felt like modelling another of a slightly bigger size. That one was still available and he offered it to Suren *babu*. On measuring, Suren *babu* discovered it exactly fitted their requirements, and so he asked the artist to complete the finishing touches

When the statue was brought to Shahbag, its colour was more like the images of *Krishna* (dark blue). It exactly matched the floating, naked image that this Body had seen. The only extra detail lay in the figure of *Shiv* at the bottom. When arrangements for the *pūjā* were complete, Bholanath urged this Body to perform the *pūjā* Herself, in spite of Her repeated demurrals

I sat down to perform the *pūjā* possessed by a rapture about which those present will be able to tell you better. Somehow the *yagna* was completed, and when it was time for the final oblation this Body stood up and stretched Her arms out.⁸ This sacrificial fire is burning even now.

The next morning when several people came with the articles needed for the ritual before immersing the image, Niranjani's wife said, "Mā, I feel very reluctant to immerse such a beautiful image." At that I replied, "Then probably the goddess does not wish to be

⁸ This action signifies maintaining the *yagna*. Mā made the necessary arrangements for the preservation of the fire along with the daily 'Gāyatrī' oblations, as well as for the *pūjā* of the *Kālī* idol. These have continued since November 5, 1926. Today this fire is maintained in the Kankhal and Varanasi Āshrams

dissolved." The *murti* (idol) was not immersed and arrangements were made for its daily worship.

Preserving the Sacrificial Fire

That night while stirring the holy fire this Body asked, "Who is prepared to take the responsibility for preserving the sacred fire?" Shashanko *babu* offered to do so. This Body told him instead to ask his sons. He demurred by saying, "I am not leaving any responsibility for them." The sons who were present did not go against their father's wishes and so the holy fire was handed to Shashanko *babu*, who sat at the site of the *pūjā* from that day onwards to do *sādhanā*. Later he and Khukuni took the responsibility of preserving the holy fire at Shahbag for some time.

Shashanko *babu's* *guru* came to Dhaka. This Body asked him to return to his home to attend to his *gurudev*. He complied but would come every day to Shahbag and spend the full-moon and new-moon nights there.

Biren Worships Goddess *Kālī*

Biren, Shashanko *babu's* eldest son, had come to Dhaka earlier and would often participate in ethical and spiritual discussions at Shahbag. One day Biren expressed his desire to worship *Kālī* and made all the arrangements. A goat was to be sacrificed, and when the sacrificial knife was being sharpened its blade happened to graze Biren's skin and some blood oozed out. This Body told him to place the blood on a *bel* leaf and offer it to the goddess. Later, when the goat was about to be sacrificed, this Body suddenly placed Her hand on its neck just as the person wielding the scimitar was about to strike. He stopped short at the last second. This Body told him, "Take the goat to the Ramna grounds." Accordingly the goat was taken there and left at quite a distance from the *Āshram*. On the way back Bholanath said, "The goat will get eaten up by jackals." This Body made no reply, but no sooner had they returned to Shahbag than

everyone saw the goat walking towards Her, bleating. The *pūjā* was completed.

The goat stayed on wandering about the gardens at will. In the evening it would enter the room where we lived and lie quietly in a corner. In winter, a cover was put on the goat. During *kirtan*, the dog mentioned earlier and this goat would nestle close to this Body, sometimes resting their heads on Her knees and at other times following Her around the house. Someone once asked Her, "What was this goat in its previous birth?" The answer came spontaneously, "He wore the robes of a *saṁnyāsi*; don't you see? He uses a blanket, wanders about freely, and eats whatever he gets." Once we went away from Dhaka for some time and when we returned we could no longer find the goat. No one could give any information about where it had gone.

Placing the Sacrificial Fire in a *Kund*

After some days it was decided that the sacrificial fire was to be placed in a *kund*. When the spot was identified, this Body told Bholanath to dig a hole there and bring three banyan leaves. When the leaves were brought from a nearby banyan tree, Her hands spontaneously wrote three lines in three different languages on each leaf with a piece of coal from the fire. These leaves were then placed inside the hole which was covered up and a *yagna kund* made according to scriptural regulations. This Body had a *kheyāl* at that moment that the three languages used were those that existed at the very origin of languages. In the worldly sense, Sanskrit clearly appeared to be one of them. This Body had never prepared a *yagna-kund* before, but it was learnt later that everything was executed exactly as per the tenets of the scriptures. Once the sacrificial fire was placed in the *kund*, the image of the goddess was moved to another room. This Body also described the method by which the sacrificial fire could be generated again in case it ever got extinguished or became invisible.

We went to Kolkata and there around midnight amidst discussions with Biren, the words 'fire is invisible' came out of My lips. We later

learnt that the fire at the *kund* had momentarily become concealed. Immediately the instructions left behind by this Body were implemented, and the fire became visible once again. The same thing happened again when we visited Adināth along with this Body's father and Sitanath. Suddenly the words 'fire is invisible' escaped Her lips. This was later corroborated and the fire was revealed again as per this Body's instructions.

The first time this Body saw the *Agni* (the God of fire) was at Adināth, and then again at Kolkata. How beautiful it was! There was this Body lying with Her head pointing towards the east and Her feet towards the *Āshram*, when suddenly a flame coming from the west twisted forward and came to stand by this Body like a statue with its front facing the north. She uttered the words, "the fire there is invisible," meaning that the fire in Dhaka had become invisible there but visible to this Body even though Adināth was a long distance away. Again in Kolkata the fire appeared in living form as it did on other occasions. So, although the fire was invisible to you all, in reality it is manifest all the time, accepting your care in maintaining it.

Before coming to Dehradun,⁹ in accordance with this Body's *kheyāl*, nearly one lakh oblations were offered to the fire deity. Arrangements were made to unendingly preserve the fire with coconut oil lamps, because the fruit of the coconut and its oil seemed the most suitable to this Body for this purpose. Fire is brought from those lamps during the daily *yagna*. Scholars later confirmed that these oblations were in accordance with scriptural injunctions.

Mā's Visit to Nirmal *babu*

One day as I lay on My bed in Dhaka I 'saw' that I was sitting on Nirmal *babu*'s cot in Benaras.¹⁰ As soon as I got up Khukuni said, "A message has just arrived from Benaras saying that Nirmal *babu* is very ill." Spontaneously I spoke up, "But I have just been there!" It was learnt later that at that very moment, Nirmal *babu* had seen this Body in his home sitting near his head. Soon after he recovered.

⁹ This visit occurred on Monday, June 6, 1932

¹⁰ Benaras is presently known as Varanasi and is about seven hundred miles from Dhaka

Kamalakānta becomes an Ascetic

There was a high school student called Kamalakānta who used to live on a farm near Dhaka. One day he came to Shahbag and, from afar, stared at this Body fixedly. Noticing his difference from other children, I called him and asked him about himself, later inviting him to visit Me whenever he desired. After that he came to Shahbag often. For months he had been suffering from fever which was diagnosed by doctors as kalajar.¹¹ On an impulse this Body advised him to eat some rice soaked in water over-night. With great relish he ate it and gradually recovered.

One day around eleven or twelve in the morning, Kamalakānta came to Me distressed because his school master had told him that he was too worldly. He said, "But I am not at all interested in family life, please tell me how I can lead a virtuous life. I am prepared to do whatever You ask of me." Suddenly this Body suggested, "Why don't you go to Jyotish?" He did so and on returning said to Me, "I felt a great joy in meeting him and could discern in him excellent qualities that *sādhus* are supposed to possess of which I have read in books."

Later Kamalakānta came to stay at Shahbag after the arrangements had been made for installing the Goddess Kālī and the sacrificial fire. Every evening Kulada *babu*, a deeply religious man who was meticulous in following the scriptures, performed the rituals of the *yagna*.

Without Drinking Water

One day in Shahbag in the course of a conversation someone mentioned, "Is it not possible to live without drinking water?" On hearing this, a peculiar *kheyāl* took possession of Me and there was no inclination to drink any water, so much so that even after eating I did not drink water nor rinsed My mouth. About fifteen days went by like this when one day I was handed a pot of water as I was going out (for the toilet) but there seemed to be no consciousness of how to use

¹¹ Sun fly fever, prevalent in Bangladesh

water or what it was for. There was nothing in my consciousness to differentiate it from other things. Immediately the thought came that this was because of My not having used any water for some time. Bholanath, Khukuni, Atal, Kamalakānta and Nandu were there at the time. I told them, "All five of you pour water into My mouth" They did so and I drank about one full pitcher.

After drinking the water this Body went out. It was quite late. On returning She said, "Look, I found five lotus flowers out here. No one is likely to have come here so late at night! Where did these come from?" There was some significance in this too. I told them to each take one flower. During those days discussions would continue until late at night.

There had been another occasion in Shahbag when no water was taken for twenty-four days. It was generally seen that if this Body got used to a certain pattern of things for some time, the previous practices seemed to go out of Her mind. If green coconut water was offered, only a sip was taken merely to ensure that water as such was not forgotten. This did not seem to affect this Body either way. This time water was not forgotten, but it was proven that one could live without it.

In Shahbag when the tendency to just keep lying quietly absorbed began to increase, it was seen that if any liquid, like water or milk, was offered to this Body She could not even sip it. This would happen at times when a particular altered breathing rhythm went on continuously. At first it was found that when taking a sip, the liquid went straight to the crown of the head. A few days later the inclination to even sip anything ended. This went on for some time. Then finally the ability to sip ceased altogether. She was then fed milk with a spoon until She gradually returned to normalcy.

Mā in Paoldiya Village

Once Jogesh *babu* desired to take this Body to his ancestral home in Paoldiya, saying, "My mother is very ill, almost unconscious. I would like a *Kālī pūjā* to be performed for her salvation. You must come.", and so we went. On arriving there, pointing towards Me he

then said to Bholanath "She must perform the *pūjā*" On Bholanath's insistence I said, "Very well, but you must promise never again to make such a request to this Body" He agreed saying, "Alright, but please do it this time."

After the priest completed all arrangements this Body sat down to perform the *pūjā*. All the rituals manifested themselves on their own.¹² When Jogesh *babu* came into the room once to see the *pūjā* he could not see this body anywhere, but only saw a cloth lying on the mat. He thought that She had gone elsewhere. Later he was surprised to learn that I had been seated on the mat all along.

At the time of Jogesh *babu*'s mother's *shrāddha* (obsequial rites), we were present at Paoldiya.¹³ When they began the *kirtan* a change came over this Body. While circling with those doing *kirtan* She noticed a Muslim man nearby and immediately the name of Allah emerged from Her lips along with several other words in his language. He chanted Allah's name along with Her. Later he said, "Even if we try, we cannot utter Allah's name the exquisite way Mā pronounced it." He told us that his feeling of joy on that day was something he had never experienced before, nor did he ever expect to do so again in the future.

Bhramar¹⁴ and a few other girls sang *kirtan* through the night at My request. After twenty-four hours of *kirtan*, at this Body's suggestion, Jogesh *babu* went round the singers with lit incense sticks.

Jyotish's Illness

Around the middle of Pous,¹⁵ Jyotish came to Shahbag saying he had fever, and left soon after. I came to hear later that he was seriously ill. Kamalakānta spent the first few days with him, informing us regularly of his condition. Some days later the doctors

¹² There is a stage in the spiritual evolution of a *sādhak*, when the play of *ichhashakti* (will power) ceases and the *mahashakti* (divine power) spontaneously carries out whatever is required. This was the third time that Mā performed *Kālī pūjā*.

¹³ December 1926

¹⁴ Grand daughter of Rai Bhadur Jogesh Chandra Ghose

¹⁵ January 4, 1927

diagnosed that Jyotish had tuberculosis. We visited him from time to time. Niranjana would come almost daily to give us news of Jyotish's condition. The two of them seemed to appear like inseparable twins. Neither ever came to this Body without the other. One day Niranjana came and said, "Mā, Jyotish is very keen to have some rice and dāl but the doctors will not allow it. His condition is critical, and if he dies we shall regret that he did not get what he asked for." His illness was at its worst. He was coughing incessantly and frequently bringing up blood through his mouth. Those who came to Shahbag often visited Jyotish too and would express their concern and sadness at his condition, and pray for his recovery. Khukuni, who was almost constantly with this Body, would say, "Mā, You must save Jyotish da."

One evening at a *kirtan*, it seemed to Me as if a number of the people present had blood on their lips. When the *kirtan* was over I told Bholanath of this and he exclaimed, "Could it mean that Jyotish is vomiting blood?" Immediately he went to check on Jyotish and saw that it was indeed true.

On an impulse one day I mixed some rice with dāl and, accompanied by Bholanath, went to Jyotish's home and fed him three handfuls of it. He ate with great relish. At that moment it came to My *kheyāl* that Jyotish would live for as many days as the number of grains of rice fed to him. I also took from his chair the round piece of wood that is usually placed to cover the screw on the top of the rear leg. Handing this to Bholanath I told him, "Jyotish should carry this back with him when he visits us after recovering." Bholanath kept it aside and that was what was done later.

After some days Bholanath and I went to Jyotish's home one evening and spent the whole night there. When leaving Shahbag I had taken a bamboo twig with me and with this I hit his body hard, three times, with the intention of driving the disease entity from him¹⁶ that had entered his body. I left that stick behind on his window sill. After this I did not visit him again during his illness. That night I told

¹⁶ It is believed by Hindus that diseases are conscious entities that can be communicated with and driven away through *yogic* power.

the spirit form of the disease, "You have done whatever damage you intended. Now you must stop!" His condition did improve after this, but it took him a very long time to recover completely.

Brahmachārī Jogesh Living the Life of a Mendicant

At the time when Jyotish's illness was at its peak, it occurred to Me that it would be beneficial to Jyotish if (Br) Jogesh led the life of a wandering mendicant, staying away from home for one year. In spiritual matters there can be many connections, no clarification is coming forth on this.¹⁷

One day I told Bholanath to tell (Br) Jogesh to shave his head, leave home on the first day in the month of Phālgun¹⁸ without any money whatsoever and take to the life of a mendicant for one year. He was to return to Dhaka the following year on that very date. Jogesh did so accordingly. That year was the year of the *Purna-kumbh*¹⁹ at Haridwar and when this Body went to Swargadwar in Rishikesh,



Brahmachārī Jogeshda sitting in front of Bholanathji's temple in Kishanpur āshram, Dehradun

¹⁷ Hindus believe that present associations and circumstances are based on past *karma*. In the spiritual world too the same principle applies, otherwise salvation from the cycle of life and death is normally not possible.

¹⁸ February 13, 1927.

¹⁹ Celebrated in March-April, 1927.

Bholanath pointed out (Br.) Jogesh who was then living there. He had been told to live incognito and, having followed all instructions to the letter, Jogesh returned to Dhaka on the stipulated day.

Forms of Diseases

Diseases have forms just as you do. This Body often sees them and they sometimes enter this Body to play their games. If they ever come to Me they are never turned away, for this Body never turns anyone away. After all, there is only One! They are to this Body just as all of you are. I neither call them to Me nor turn them away if they come.

Once I was lying on the bed in Nirmal babu's home in Benaras when I noticed two forms standing outside. On my telling them to go elsewhere, they did so. To those around me, I said, "Two entities." The next day fever and small-pox broke out in the area where they had gone. When they come I can often see them as clearly as I can see you. Only if there is a *kheyāl* on the part of this Body does She talk to them as was done in this instance. Otherwise they carry on their work according to their nature.

Arranging a Visit to *Purna-kumbha* in Haridwar

Before his illness Jyotish had mentioned that the *Purna-kumbha* would be held in Haridwar, and had inquired whether this Body would be going. I replied affirmatively and when the time arrived, arrangements were made. About twenty-one people wanted to accompany us. As Jyotish was bed-ridden, he could not join the group. It had been discussed earlier that if we went to Haridwar, we would spend some days in Kolkata at Jogendra Kundu's house. Rajendra Kushari was Bholanath's childhood friend, who hailed from the same village. He used to work with the Kundus and had once brought Jogendra Kundu²⁰ to Shahbag.

²⁰ A well known landlord of the state of Bhagyakul (now in Bangladesh), lived and owned properties in Kolkata

Around that time the supernatural conditions were manifesting in this Body. She was constantly in a state of divine rapture. When going up or down the steps, She seemed to have no control over Her legs. Her body would swoon and lie motionless on the ground with the eyes staring unblinkingly, at other times closed.

When a *sādhak* becomes fully absorbed in a *bhāv* in himself, prayer and meditation no longer hold much importance to him because he dwells in the realm of divine rapture. At times, according to his inclinations, he can see the extraordinary in the ordinary or the ordinary in the extraordinary and run after it. His body may manifest restlessness due to these emotional upheavals and yet later become absolutely still. This Body was at that time submerged in an exquisite joy. Here there was no question of mental inclination or disinclination.²¹

Mā in Kolkata

Peyaribanu of the Nawab's family in Dhaka lived in Kolkata. One day there was a kirtan arranged in her home and we went there in the evening. There were many people in the big hall including several women. This Body was in Her usual divinely absorbed state. Peyaribanu and her children were filled with joy with tears streaming down from their eyes while singing Hari nām.

Kirtan was arranged at her home another time and C.R. Das's wife, Bāsanti Devi, and daughter, Aparna Devi, visited on that occasion. Bāsanti Devi said that she had seen this Body in her dream²², but until now had not been able to locate Her. That day she participated in many ethical and spiritual discussions.

Messages received in Rishikesh

In Benaras we stayed at Kunja *babu*'s home. Upon arriving in Haridwar we stayed there for seven days before proceeding to Rishikesh. There, as we alighted from the car, we found two telegrams

²¹ A state beyond physical mind

²² C. R. Das was an advocate par excellence and a national leader of repute. He donated all his assets for the welfare of the society. His untimely death made his wife, Bāsanti Devi, homeless. At that time Mā had appeared before her to provide solace.

awaiting us. One informed us that Sitanath Kushari was in critical condition, and the other was sent by Niranjana stating that Jyotish was seriously ill. We were staying at the *Kālī Kāmliwala's dharamshālā* when I 'saw' Jyotish sitting on my lap like a child while his wife stood leaning against the wall near Me. When I apprised Bholanath of this vision, his anxiety about Jyotish lessened and we felt that Jyotish would not die. I forbade Bholanath from discussing this matter with anyone.

We returned to Haridwar the next day and told Shashanko *babu* that, since they had only observed the first bath of the Kumbha, he and Khukum should remain there, but we would be leaving. They responded that they had not come for the *Kumbha*, but to be with this Body. Shashanko *babu's* astrologer had prophesied that danger could befall him at this time, and a *sādhu* had advised him of certain rituals to overcome this. I told him, "You should perform those rituals on the banks of the Ganges."

Within a few days we reached Dhaka where Jyotish was still bed-ridden, although now much better. In the initial stage of his illness, when I stopped visiting him, I had told Niranjana that I would visit Jyotish again after he moved into a single-storied house. Prior to our Haridwar trip Jyotish was shifted to a single-storied, government-owned property very near Shahbag, and we visited him there.

One day Jyotish's elder brother said to me, "What was destined has happened; now Jyotish survives only with your *kripā*. Please protect him." His mother-in-law was weeping and said, "I leave him in Your hands, please save him." At that time the *kheyāl* came to this Body that he would certainly recover completely, but also that he would not remain a householder much longer.

We went to see him daily and sent *prasād* for him. His wife too visited Shahbag from time to time, bringing news of him.

At *Manasā Pūjā* in Shashanko *babu's* Home

We attended the three-day long celebrations of *Manasā pūjā*²³ at Shashanko *babu's* home. His gurudev performed the *pūjā*. At the

²³ The goddess of the serpents

time of the sacrifice, one ear of the goat had been partially cut. In the mean time someone came and said, "I am just coming from Jyotish *babu's* home, he is very ill and wants to see Mā". Hearing this Bholanath anxiously urged Me to go with him. I told him, "You go I shall not come with You." When he insisted I agreed but added, "But I shall not enter his house" and that is what I did. On returning to Shashanko *babu's* home I asked the priest, "Wouldn't the cutting of the goat's ear amount to a flaw in the act of sacrifice?" The priest replied, "We have not found any mention of that in the scriptures." I told him, "If two parts of the body are simultaneously mutilated during sacrifice, according to my *kheyāl* it amounts to a flaw."

It was decided that we would stay there for three or four days during *pūjā* and afterwards return to Shahbag. Shashanko *babu* arranged our transport. From the time of the immersion ceremony of the deity at the end of the *pūjā*, this Body lay in a rapturous state in one of the rooms on the first floor. During the three days of the *pūjā* this Body would sit for some time and then lie on the floor for a while before rising again. That day, when Bholanath came to call me, I stood up but could not walk and was helped down the staircase. My body felt slack and my feet unsteady. Placing my foot on the stairs only after every two or three steps, I slid down several steps and sat down at the bottom. Rising immediately, I walked a considerable distance and got into the car. I reached Shahbag as though in a state of divine intoxication.

As I raised My left leg in order to cross the threshold of My room, I felt as if the bones of the leg had broken into pieces and had been collected in a bag, and that it was that heavy bag of bones I was placing inside the room. I exclaimed, "There's something wrong with my left leg." Shortly afterwards I gave the leg a hard shake and then lay down on the floor listlessly. Some of the people lifted me to the bed and wrapped a wet cloth round My leg. After everyone had left, I walked for quite some time before lying down again. It was then about ten or eleven o'clock in the morning.

In the evening while conversing with people, this Body felt an acute pain in the leg. Upon examination they declared that it had

been fractured. The leg had swollen up and the sole of the foot had turned blue. They brought leaves for healing broken bones, applied them there, and tied a bandage over it. It was the day of the *amāvasyā* (new-moon) bhog and a large number of people had congregated. While talking and laughing with them, I announced that I would not leave the bed for seven days. Things proceeded accordingly. Meanwhile, the medicines prescribed by the doctor instead of bringing relief, actually made the swelling worse. I now said, "Pour out the entire leftover medicine and finish it off." When that was done, I spent seven days sitting, lying and standing about. The swelling went down after that.

I noticed that whenever the mind became conscious of the fracture, I started limping, and when I did not think of it, I could walk normally. **By this one must realize that it is the identification of the mind with the body that is the root cause of all misery.** There were some who felt that this Body had taken on the consequences of the flaw in the *Manasā pūjā* upon Her own person²⁴.

Fire for Hiralal and the Dead Man's Last Rites

One day a boy named Hiralal came to this Body and in the course of conversation mentioned that his astrologer had predicted some impending danger for him. Immediately from this Body's lips slipped the words, "You will face the danger very soon." He asked what he could do. This Body advised him to visit Her from time to time. He began to visit quite frequently. One new-moon day when he was here this Body suddenly instructed Khukuni, "Bring some fire." When she brought it, I asked her to put it in My hand. She refused and took it away. Then I asked Hiralal to light a matchstick, and when he had done so I took the stick in My hands and held one of My fingers in the flame as long as the flame burnt. Hiralal exclaimed anxiously, "What are You doing?" To which I replied, "Your danger is past." The burnt skin took a month to heal.

²⁴ Ritualistic worship of a deity is normally performed to obtain a boon or for the well being of person or family and if there is a flaw in the worship then it may have an adverse effect, after all in this world, actions are related to 'cause and effect'

There is another explanation for this incident. There was a man who was critically ill when they took this Body to see him. I asked Khukuni for some fire before receiving news of his death, because fire had to be touched for his spiritual evolution before the last rites were performed. After all, he is part of that one Supreme Reality. Khukuni brought the fire when this Body requested it but then took it away on her father's direction. Hiralal arrived just after this incident. He was an instrument enabling this Body to touch the fire. In so doing, Hiralal's danger was removed and Her words spoken to Khukuni were fulfilled.

Hazard of Not Following Mā's Instruction

Mā continued: one evening a woman came to Me and said, "Mā, I have brought a carriage; You must come to my home." This Body was walking in the *nātmandir*²⁵ and felt an impulse to avoid accepting her request. Thus I resisted being pressed by the woman to accompany her and the word 'No' came from My lips.

Not succeeding in persuading this Body, this woman went to Bholanath who asked her the reason for her insistence. She replied, "My eldest son is very sick. I have come with the hope that I can take Mā to see him." When Bholanath related this to Me, I replied spontaneously, "He is not going to recover." Bholanath was initially silent but then said, "How shall I tell her this? What is to be done now! She is certainly not going to leave without You." Jyotish, who was present was also in a dilemma.

This Body then said, "Alright, let's go." It crossed Her mind that the boy was destined to meet Her before he died, and was eager for Her touch. Where there is death, there too only 'I' exists. Actually, there is no question of life and death. What are life and death? Merely a change of clothes, or you can even think of death and birth as going from one room to another. It is man's ignorance that prevents him from comprehending this. Even though this boy was not going to recover, why should I not go there?

²⁵ A dance hall in the sprawling garden of Shahbag where Mā lived in a small room at one end

This Body got ready to go. However, after hearing that the boy was not going to recover, Bholanath was now reluctant about going. He and Jyotish were busy discussing what those people might say later, and whether it would be correct to go to their home under the circumstances. Jyotish said, "If Mā has decided to go, She most certainly will do so." A little later Bholanath and I got into the carriage when suddenly two or three dogs appeared in front and started barking furiously. The frightened horses refused to start, but finally we were able to go and see the boy.

Not long afterward the boy's condition took a turn for the worse and again his mother came with the carriage and wept, "He is in critical condition and wants to see You. You must come." Bholanath and I went. As we were about to enter their home someone bowed to Me. In those days a strange feeling would come over me if someone did this to Me and I would try to bow back. That day I sat on the doorstep before rising to meet the boy. His mother beseeched Me, "Please save us from this predicament. We shall not let You leave. Tell us what to do and we shall follow Your instructions to the letter." Bholanath also kept insisting. Then these words now came out spontaneously, "Will you do exactly what this Body tells you to? Will you be able to? Alright then confine him to this bed for eighteen days, see that he does not leave it. Will you remember that?" The mother accepted this condition calmly with her head lowered. At the time of our leaving the boy, weeping bitterly said, "Mā, I cannot bear the suffering any longer. It matters not whether I live or die, I want peace."

We received news of the boy regularly. We had heard that the disease had abated a little when one day his mother came and said that although he had been improving, his condition now seemed to have taken a turn for the worse. This Body said automatically, "On Monday there was a lapse in following this Body's instructions."

On the morning of the eighteenth day the boy died. The mother cried, "My son cannot die. I have followed Mā's instructions exactly. You cannot take him to the cremation ground." Like one who is insane she came running frantically to Shahbag. From about four o'clock

that morning this Body was divinely absorbed and could not get up. The mother continued to weep inconsolably and Bholanath tried but failed to awaken Me. After a while the woman's family arrived and took her away forcefully because they could no longer delay the last rites. The grief stricken mother admonished everyone, "Mā's words are not correct; no one should go to Her."

A couple of months later she returned remorsefully, crying, "Mā, please forgive me. Your instructions were not followed to the letter and that led to our misfortune. One Monday, I went down on the lower floor of the house and the boy was alone during that time. He called out to me to bring in the logs of wood set out to dry on the roof. But the roof was not visible from his room and it did not occur to me then that the only way he could see it would be if he had got out of bed. You gave us Your blessings, but such was our bad luck that we could not avail it."

The Impulse to Cure Diseases

Sometimes no matter how much someone spoke to Me about something, I would not pay attention. Noticing this, that person might ask, "Mā, do you hear what I am saying?" Only when something triggered a corresponding thought in Me would I become aware that the issue was to be resolved, whether through this Body or in some other manner. In this way there are countless persons, birds, animals and plants with whom this Body interacted. Sometimes diseases would be healed without transferring the ailments to anyone else.²⁶

One evening, we were driving in Shashanko *babu's* carriage when I suddenly had a *kheyāl* to go to Jyotish's home. He was sick at the time and staying near Shahbag. Alighting from the carriage, I went quickly into his room followed by Bholanath and Shashanko *babu*. With no inclination to sit or talk, I headed for the corner table that had some flowers - champak and roses - on it and picked up two, then standing there briefly, I came out. After this we went on to Dinesh

²⁶ This is possible when one has reached an advanced state of *sādhana* and is explained subsequently

babu's home in Dhankora. On reaching there, Panu *babu's* wife bowed in *pranām* to Me and I gave her one of the flowers, keeping the other in my hand. When *kirtan* was over, this Body was taken to the home of Banamali Bagchi, whose wife was very ill. Even so she had gotten up to cook for this Body. Unknown to anyone, I put the second flower on her bed. I learned later that she recovered soon after.

During that period many healings occurred in a subtle manner also. People whom I had not seen, but about whose sufferings I had heard and who had remained in My *kheyāl*, were cured. At times a person's illness would be transferred to someone else, or to My own Body. Even if anyone merely spoke of their ailment to this Body without Her paying heed to it, the person would get healed. Sometimes this Body would be the cause of curing illnesses or dispelling potent danger for persons whom She had never physically heard of or seen in the worldly sense. Also persons were healed who had never known Her. Things happened on their own. I remained where I was but felt as if I were going to the person's room and touching them or looking at them. Often on getting to know about a person's recovery, Bholanath would ask if such persons should be told; but the desire to tell them did not arise and I forbade him from doing so.

Mā's response depends on One's Sincerity

In Dhaka, when people came to discuss worldly or spiritual matters with this Body, the answers came on their own. If responses were not forthcoming, no amount of effort would elicit any reply. At times, when this Body was on the brink of answering a question, something would interrupt the conversation.

Prediction of Monu's snake-bite

Kunja *babu* came to Dhaka with his wife and family on the occasion of his youngest daughter's marriage. Before returning to Benaras, his wife urged Me, "Mā, my son's horoscope has predicted that he will die either of snake bite or by being struck with a cudgel.

Since that time is drawing near, I want to leave him with You." This Body refused to keep the boy despite her pleading

Sudden *Kheyāl* to leave Dhaka

Some days later I had a *kheyāl* of travelling to a distant place without informing anyone. One evening I went to Jyotish's home and though he was too weak to get up from bed, I pointed to Bholanath and asked Jyotish repeatedly to bow down before him. With great difficulty he rose from his bed and bowed to Bholanath. Every day *prasād* was sent for him from Shahbag. That day I gave him some raisins after touching them with My fingers and asked him to take one every day. No one present understood the reason for My actions. Everyone *knew* these sudden impulses came over this Body and so did not comment. However, Jyotish, with a sorrowful face, took note of everything silently.

From there we went first to Shashanko *babu's* home and then to Baul's before returning to Shahbag. About eleven that night Shashanko *babu* suddenly arrived at Shahbag and said, "We don't know why but we feel afraid that we may lose our Mother. While crossing over the wall because the gates of Shahbag had been closed, my feet have become dirty and so I cannot come in, otherwise I would have stayed the night. Now I have to go home and bathe. I suppose turning me away so late at night like this is also Mā's wish! Have You in truth decided to go elsewhere?"

This Body replied, "You will come to know if we go anywhere." He asked again, "Shall we find out only after You leave?" I replied, "You will." He returned home and we went to bed.

In the morning when we got ready to depart the day was bright. Bholanath said, "If we go out now everyone will see us." I told him, "Let us start and if anyone sees us we will not go." When the two of us came out of the house, we found Kamalakānta in deep sleep in front of the door. The gate-keeper had opened the gate but had gone off somewhere. Jyotish, who awoke early and sat on his veranda every morning from where he could see the people on the main road, was

also not in his usual place and the door of his room was closed. We reached the station just as the train was ready to leave. Nishi *babu's* son was travelling to Narāyanganj and he bought two tickets for us for the same destination. We went to Narāyanganj and from there we spent a few days roaming about before reaching Kolkata.

In the meantime, Jyotish had gone to Kolkata with his family for a change of climate, and on meeting us he told us of everyone's great sorrow at our leaving Dhaka without informing anyone. He said that after this Body had left, he did not feel like staying on in Dhaka and so had come here. They left for Vindhyachal and soon after we travelled to Deoghar. There we met Balānanda Brahmachārī, who expressed great joy at meeting us.

It was decided that we should also go to Vindhyachal.²⁷ On receiving news of this in Benaras, Kunja *babu's* wife with her young children joined us in our carriage at the Mughalsarai railway station. On arriving in Vindhyachal we met Jyotish who was staying at the foot of the hill while we took lodgings in a bungalow on top of the hill. The children were very keen to show Me the places of various deities and the image of Goddess *Ashtabhujā*

One morning we set out to see *Ashtabhujā*. A number of people joined us on the way and we proceeded to a tank nearby called Sitā Kund which was on our way to Kalikho. I was walking speedily along the narrow path through the jungle shrubs when suddenly I felt a strange sensation under one foot. Going a few steps further, I turned to find a snake on a stone with its hood up looking straight at Me with a fixed gaze. I called out to the others, "Wait! Don't come any further." Bholanath asked, "What is it?" Then seeing the snake he asked again, "Has it bitten You?" He was holding a stick and as he got ready to strike it, I forbade him. For a while the snake looked at Me and I too looked back at it. Then the snake turned to look at Bholanath, after which it made

²⁷ Vindhyachal a small beautiful town adjoining a hill range situated on a bend in the river Ganges between Allahabad and Benaras. Later an āshram for Mā was built on the Ashtabhuj hill

its way up the hill. Everyone was surprised by the snake's behaviour and the look in its eyes.

We continued to walk along the path. Kunja *babu's* younger son who was about six or seven years was with us. He ran to his mother and said, "Mā saved my brother today from the prophesied snake bite."²⁸ Hearing this his mother remembered the prediction of the astrologer and found that this was the precise time that had been mentioned in the horoscope. As we walked on, from time to time Bholanath asked, "Did the snake bite Your foot?" I smiled and kept walking. Once I lifted the foot that had stepped on the snake and examined it. Shivers ran up that leg right up to the thigh. I continued to walk with no inclination to tell anyone about it. When we returned to our bungalow I said, "I want to have rice today, so cook some rice for Me."

From there we went to Jyotish's home and Bholanath told him, "Your Mother stepped on a snake today and we don't know if it bit Her." Jyotish quickly brought some spirit, but in his anxiety and excitement applied the spirit to the sole of the wrong foot. This Body laughed, saying, "There is no need for all this." Afterward we returned to the bungalow and I sat down to My meal. In those days I normally used to eat only some fruit twice a day and was now eating rice after a long time. Bholanath was feeding Me and soon all the rice, dal and vegetables that had been cooked were finished. This Body kept pleading for more, saying, "The snake bit Me so I am eating rice." In haste they cooked some *khichuri* and fed Me, and then I said that I would have whatever was leftover after all of them had eaten." When Bholanath had finished, this Body ate again. Food had to be prepared again for the rest of the household.

In the evening when I came down the hill and sat down at a place, the boys found two blue marks like needle-pricks on the sole of my foot. "Here are the fang marks of the snake that bit You!" they exclaimed

²⁸ August, 1927

Wandering about in a Single Garment²⁹

I advised Jyotish to go to Chunar³⁰. After Kunja *babu's* family departed for Benaras we joined him there. On an impulse I was not eating anything at Jyotish's home at that time. If I ever did take anything there I would give him money for it. He too never objected. After spending some days at Chunar, without informing anyone, we went in the direction of Bharatpur and Jaipur.³¹ This Body felt that it would be a good idea to visit a solitary spot and stay there wearing only one garment without any money or other material things. After all, everyone in this world is One's own people so what was the need for money?

However, I observed that Bholanath faced a lot of difficulties while travelling without any money or other materials. Food and accommodation were also problematic. He would often remark that travelling like this with a woman is a difficult proposition. In view of all this I said, "At present no more travelling. Let us go back to Kolkata."

On our way back we visited Chunar again to spend several happy days with Jyotish's wife and daughter. I found his wife very simple, straight forward, and pleasant. I would say to Jyotish laughingly, "I find your wife to be simpler than you." He said, "You may like her ways, but I don't find in her any eagerness for Your *darshan*."

Meanwhile, Bholanath found Me scratching My head hard one day and said, "Look, there are lice in Your hair." Laughing, I told him, "They have come on their own and made their home here. How can I turn them out now? However, I shall do as you wish." I went to Jyotish's wife and said to her, "Look how many lice are living in My hair." I had very long and thick hair then. She washed My hair well and brushed it. From that day the lice disappeared. By and by we came to Kolkata.



²⁹ Mā is an embodiment of *bhāvas* (divine moods) displaying different stages of *sādhana* spontaneously – wandering in single garment without any worldly needs or attachments can be possible in a *sādhak* with acute *vairagya* (renunciation) when *sādhak* leaves everything to God's care (*ākash vr̥tī*) and wanders in isolated places in absorption of God – a stage known as '*paibr̥jak*' (a wandering ascetic)

³⁰ A small town along the foothill east of Vindhyachal

³¹ September 1927 They probably travelled to Udaipur in south Rajasthan

CHAPTER 10

Mā and the Evolving Powers of a *Sādhak*

At the *Durgā pūjā* that autumn¹ in Shahbag after the *Bāsanti pūjā* of spring, this Body had a *kheyāl* not to talk to anyone during the three main days of the *pūjā*. She lay quietly in a room adjacent to the *nātmandir*, meeting people only at night. The three days - *Saptamī*, *Ashtamī* and *Navamī* - were passed in this way. On *dashamī*. She went to the pond-around mid morning to bathe and then returned to Her room through the crowded *nātmandir* without anyone seeing Her. Later when the people gathered there asked how that was possible, this Body responded, "If I wish others not to see Me, they cannot, though I saw all of you." Some would ask, "At times You look big and at other times small, how is that possible?" These types of *yog-vibhūti* (supernatural powers) come naturally to *yogis* and they manifested in this Body on their own as per Her *kheyāl*.

On *dashamī* I went to the pond late in the evening. Impulsively I waded into the water feeling that it was calling out to Me. Then this Body became inert and absorbed in the Divine and several people had to pull Her out. This feeling of wanting to merge totally with the element of water continued for several days. I would make My way towards the water saying repeatedly, "The water is calling out to Me." The same happened with fire also. This Body became one with fire and water. Whether plants, animals, humans, or the elements of nature – indeed, whatever was seen, whatever heard. I was one with all things, along with their forms and attributes.

Once travelling to Siddheswari in Shashanko *babu's* overcrowded carriage, My mother took this Body on her lap. I desired that she

¹ October 13 – 16, 1926

should not feel My weight and she repeatedly remarked, "I do not feel that You are sitting on my lap at all." When we got out of the carriage this Body sat down on the ground with a thud and said, "The weightlessness of the Body in the carriage is proof that earlier men could travel through the air (*sky-path*). Do you not see the kite, made of paper and stick, floating in the air? Everything is possible through proper *yogic* technique."

When the *sādhak* feels a change in his intrinsic consciousness and recognizes that he is not the physical body, he begins to realize that there is not a single thing in this universe in which he is not present. Initially he may play with this concept with one of the five elements of nature - water, fire, air, earth, or ether - and may appear at times restless or serene. There comes another stage when he sees the entire universe is within him, or that he is present in his entirety in everything that exists in the universe - this also is revealed. There is then no question of differing viewpoints. All are the same. These are all very significant things. When this Body was playing the role of a *sādhikā*, these phenomena naturally manifested in Her.

When everything appears to a *sādhak* simply as different forms of the One, then all things, worldly or spiritual, appear the same. Even *karma* seems to be another form of the Supreme. At this stage, if the *sādhak* fails to keep his mind focused steadfastly on the ultimate goal, he may fall from the elevated state acquired in *sādhanā*. Remember that this Body has 'played' with many different aspects of *sādhanā*.

While in Bajitpur I would talk to trees and plants while plucking their vegetables, fruits or tender sprouts as if they were humans, saying, "Come now, your work here is over now." This Body would behave with them as if they were humans, but no words were spoken to them in the presence of others. When planting a tree I would look after it as if I were nursing a living person. I noticed that it always grew to be very beautiful. I experienced Myself as **the creator, the preserver, and that I existed in everything.**

On a new-moon day *kirtan* and *bhog* had been arranged at Niranjan's home. This Body went into ecstasy during the *kirtan*, which ended about midnight. After *bhog* was offered to the deity I told them

to provide *prasād* to all the people present. Mathur *babu* came to Me and said, "Mā, the food that has been prepared will not be enough for such a large number. This Body told him, "You just make them all sit down." There was a *kheyāl* that as long as I supervised the serving, the food would certainly not fall short. When all had eaten, some food was still left over.

Spontaneous Reciting of *Namāz* in Shahbag and Mā's *Kheyāl* for Her Muslim devotees

After spending a few days in Kolkata, we returned to Dhaka. One day during *kirtan* in the *nātmandir* this Body walked out in an unusual manner. Everyone else followed, including the singers with their *khol* (a two-sided baked clay drum) and *karī tāl* (hand cymbal). Outside, Jyotish and Niranjan were standing under a tree with a Muslim friend. I went towards them and touching their friend on the back indicated that he should follow Me. I walked on ahead, followed by him and the others, and proceeding towards the big *mazhār* at the corner of the garden, gestured that the gate be opened. Then I went inside with the Muslim gentleman following Me. Immediately several sounds emitted loudly from My mouth and with that began various spontaneous movements like sitting, rising up, and touching the ears. It was later learnt that these were the traditional movements Muslims follow while saying their *namāz*. Spontaneously the gentleman also did the same because according to their custom, all those present should participate whenever *namāz* is performed.

I returned to the *nātmandir* and the Muslim gentleman followed Me and joined in the *kirtan*. I told him, "Every evening *shinnī*² is offered at the *mazhār*. It would appear that the person who normally does this has not come, so you may do it today." He did so accordingly and fed Me *bātāsā* as *prasād*. *Harir-lūt* followed after *kirtan* and he also took *prasād*. Afterwards, Jyotish informed Me that their friend was a staunch Muslim.

² An offering made by blending flour, banana, milk, sugar and coconut.

Peyaribanu, the owner of Shahbag, came to Dhaka. She enquired where the *murti* of Goddess *Kālī* was and after putting a gold necklace round its neck she paid her obeisance to it. On the occasion of her children's weddings she gave ten gold bangles to this Body. During her stay in Dhaka she would come occasionally to Shahbag. On one of these visits she sat under a tree with her family and ate *pulāo*, curry, and other dishes prepared by this Body, relishing the food greatly. Another day she urged Me repeatedly, "You have read the *namāz* at this *mazhār* once, please, show it to us today." I told her, "As you know, this Body never does anything on Her own accord. I am going inside and if it is to happen, you will hear it." They remained standing outside because the Muslim custom did not permit women to go near a grave. Once inside a great number of sounds emerged from my mouth, just like it had previously. Peyaribanu's daughter-in-law was familiar with these matters and mentioning a particular holy book, said, "She recited it entirely."

Yoga-vibhūti and *Swabhāv-vibhūti*

Around that time, whenever this Body saw waves rippling in a river She had the *kheyāl* that She was one with them and would start rolling on the ground in *bhāv*. This feeling came over Me on our way to Paoldiya and the urge to jump into the river was so strong that those on the boat had difficulty restraining Her while keeping the boat steady. The boat had to be rowed close to the river bank.

In the same manner that *kirtan* affected this Body so did the fundamental elements of nature: water, fire, air and earth. It was as if I were completely one with the water, the fire and the air. Again, looking at trees and flowers, it was as if I became one of them. This type of feeling continued for a long time. Some days this Body would watch and reflect deeply upon the qualities intrinsic to both animate beings and inanimate things and their progressive movements and realize that She was no different from them. On hearing a sound, She would feel that She Herself was that sound. On feeling a gust of wind, this Body would feel like surging upward as if blown like a

piece of cloth. She would be consumed with joy which was reflected in Her supernatural expression and the feeling of completely merging with the wind. Afterwards She would return to Her normal self. Sometimes, in the throes of this divine emotion, Her body would lie inert on the ground.

The *bhāvs* wrought by *kirtan* were similar. The vibration of *kirtan* would be internally and externally manifested in the Body. A *sādhak* sings God's name to be one with the Name and meditates to be one with the One upon whom he is meditating.

So much is possible for the *sādhak* by the power of *sādhanā*! Just as a kite can float on air merely with the support of a thread, so can a *yogi* levitate, adopt a subtle form, enlarge his size, and become invisible and manifest many other powers by the transformation of his breathing processes. It is difficult for the ordinary person to understand all this, for it is an erudite person alone who can understand the value of erudition. Unless a *sādhak* achieves *yoga-vibhūti* which then helps him in realizing his intrinsic potential, it is impossible for him to play with the inner divine power or escape the unending cycle of desires. This is because until *yoga-vibhūti* is attained, whatever powers he has acquired in *sādhanā* is dissipated through fulfilling endless desires. Where there is *Swabhāv-vibhūti*³ that question does not arise. Just as when a person sets out on a pilgrimage to Badrinath, he must set his mind on reaching Badrinath and not get diverted by the picturesque scenery on the way. In the same manner the *sādhak* must always focus unwaveringly on the ultimate goal of his *sādhanā*.

A *Sādhak* must Manifest Power with Caution

When the *sādhak* acquires supernatural powers, he must make great effort to compensate for expending energy whenever he manifests these powers as long as these powers are unstable. As for this Body, everything happens on its own like a game being played. Even the various questions come spontaneously from My mouth. The manifestation of Her supernatural powers (*siddhis*) did not require

³ Inner divine power intrinsic to Self

any remedial measures as there was no question of any consequent loss of power. This Body goes on playing with different aspects of *sāadhanā* according to the promptings of Her innate nature.

Durgā Pūjā at Shashanko *babu*'s Home⁴

Durgā pūjā was celebrated annually at Shashanko *babu*'s home. A goat was sacrificed on each of the three days of the *pūjā*, plus an additional one for the welfare of Shashanko *babu*. One year when this Body was present there, at the time of the sacrifice of the additional goat, She placed Her hand on its neck just as the scimitar had been raised. Her fingers were saved from being chopped off in the nick of time. The person who had raised the scimitar now began to tremble with fear. This Body was not conscious at all of what She was doing or why. The goat was set free and it made its way to this Body, bleating and nestling against Her legs. From that day the practice of sacrificing an extra goat was stopped. Later in the *pūjā* there was another interruption during the ritual of the goat sacrifice that worried everyone. This Body instructed, "Go and bring down a green coconut from the tree." Once this was done, She said, "Split it in one stroke and offer its water in the spirit of blood." When the coconut was cut, a little water was found in one of its halves which was then offered to the Goddess.

Coming to and Going away from Mā

You must know this for certain that in your perception those who move away from this Body do so because they stay close to Her only as long as they need to for their own good. Again, when they must move away from Her, some occasion presents itself giving them a plausible reason for going away. However, nothing holds **in the face of an intense *kheyāl* on Her part.**⁵ For this Body there is no such

⁴ October 2 – 5, 1927

⁵ In the case of Mā, it is the effect of *mahashakti* - the incomprehensible act of the Supreme.

thing as being near or far. She is the same for all persons, at all places, under all circumstances.

Mā in Giridih

From Kolkata we went to Vindhyachal again and then to Giridih. At that time Jyotish was still ill and living there. We stayed in Giridih for some days and made a trip to Pareshnath Hill. There was a river in Giridih and one day when we went there for an outing we found a tribal woman washing clothes on the bank. A *kheyāl* came upon Me to wash the clothes for her. When I asked her for them she probably took Me to be insane and began to call out, "She is mad, look after Her!" I left the clothes and sat down beside her, laughing. The woman's attitude soon changed and she said to Me, "You should move away or You will get dirty water on You when I wash the clothes." I told her, "Do your work; one should not waste time in idle chatter or sit idly when there is work to be done." She kept staring at Me, paying no attention to the clothes and began to ask Me many questions. Later, when walking away, I turned round once and found her still gazing at Me. There were many other occasions when I had such exchanges and conversations with girls from the hill tribes.



CHAPTER 11

More about the Vindhyachal Snake

One day Nagen Dutta asked this Body about the snake in Vindhyachal. While talking about the snake, this Body felt close to tears with an emotion akin to nostalgia for a loved one. Smiling, I said, "We shall meet again very soon."

Every Saturday there was *kirtan* at Niranjana's home which I would attend. His wife was very ill and I would often visit her. That day, as this Body sat near her on the first floor of their house, leaning against a cushion with Her legs stretched out, She suddenly felt the presence of a snake near Her feet. This Body did not speak, but by this time someone announced that a snake had been spotted two rooms away from where we were seated. As this Body was descending the stairs to go to the *kirtan* with Bholanath in front She saw a thin black snake near his feet. Like a child this Body quickly pushed Bholanath aside and pressed the snake under Her big toe. A little later it slithered down the steps and lay quietly at the bottom. In the meantime a number of people had gathered there and some asked, "Should we kill the snake?" Smilingly, I replied, "Try, if you can." Someone pressed a stick at the mid portion of its body, but the snake appeared to vanish despite the electric lights everywhere. It seemed to have disappeared. Whenever this Body had a *kheyāl* about that snake, its form would often appear.



This Body was sitting on the deck of a boat with Biren on the journey from Bidyākūt to Shahbag. The boat had just left a creek and entered a swamp when I saw a snake looking at Me while moving

alongside our boat at a distance of about ten cubits¹ I too stared unblinkingly at it. In this manner it swam for quite a long distance, advancing steadily towards Me. When it reached the side of the boat, trying to get closer still, the boatman struck it with his oar and it went down under the boat and passed under another that was immediately next to ours and then disappeared. The boatman said, "I was afraid it might climb on to Mā's body." Biren asked Me, "What was it?" I replied, "I saw a saint and his disciple moving alongside our boat at a distance of ten cubits. They have just disappeared."² Later this Body boarded a steamer in a state of rapture and several people helped Her to reach Shahbag.

Bholanath's Worship of Mā

Earlier, when we had visited the Kamakhya temple in Assam,³ Bholanath had once worshipped this Body. During his *pūjā* many *kumārīs* (little girls) gathered there without being invited and throughout the *pūjā* they were laughing and playing happily. In Dhaka Bholanath worshipped this Body once again at the Uttama Kutir. While the *pūjā mantras* were being recited, this Body lay quietly on the floor absorbed in a deep *bhāv*. Hours would pass in this manner.

Bholanath's Visit to Tarapīth⁴

After spending several months at *Uttama Kutir* (name of a building in *Dhaka*)⁵, I came to the Siddheswari *āshram* accompanied by

¹About 15 feet

²The snake was a *sādhak* of high calibre whose *samadhi* was in the Ramna *āshram* behind the Annapurna temple. A shiva *linga* was placed on the *samadhi* and later a small temple built over it with a carved snake entwined around the steeple as per Mā's direction — Refer to page 26 of 'In association with Sri Sri Mā Ānandamayī' by Amulya Kumar Dutta-Gupta (English edition, 1987, volume I)

³March/April, 1928, Kamakhya temple is located eight kilometers west of Guwahati and is one of the most venerated *Shakti* shrines in India. It is an important centre of *tantra sādhanā*.

⁴Tarapīth has the holy shrine of Tara Mā, another form of divine mother *Kālī*, and is located about six kilometres south of Rampurhat town in the Birbhum district of West Bengal, nearly 300 kilometres north west of Kolkata.

⁵A house rented in Dhaka after Shahbag came under the control of court of ward.

Bholanath and asked him to sit in meditation in the small room adjoining the *Kālī* temple. After three days of meditation he said, "I see a headless image of *Kālī*. Tell me what that means." I said to him, "Go to Tarapīth." I had heard of Tarapīth earlier but did not know in a worldly sense what deities were worshipped there. Bholanath left for Tarapīth with (Br.) Jogesh. Meanwhile a *kheyāl* took possession of this Body and She spent almost all Her time in that small room within the temple. I would come out at four in the afternoon, eat something meagre and stay out till about nine or ten at night, and then go back into the room.

Meanwhile Bholanath sent Suren to bring Me to Tarapīth. On hearing news of My departure, a large number of people gathered at the Dhaka station, many of whom were weeping. This Body too started crying uncontrollably, waving Her hands and gesticulating as if Her entire being was weeping. Rushing up to Me Jyotish asked anxiously, "Mā, what are You doing? What will all these people at the station say?" Disregarding his words, I remained in My *bhāv*. Seeing Me thus, the men, women and children in our group began to cry too. The other people in the station stared at us baffled. Some even commented that perhaps I was being forcefully taken away to My in-laws' home. Whatever emotion this Body expressed was always done to the fullest extent. It was the same when She began laughing. That was Her way! Presently the train started. The tearful state continued up to the time of My boarding the steamer at Narāyanganj. In time it subsided and I lay down quietly.

We reached Kolkata and from there we went on to Tarapīth. There I found Bholanath to have become deeply immersed in *japa* and meditation. He would spend all day and night in Tara Mā's temple, oblivious to the flies and mosquitoes that might sit on his face, and pass cold nights without a covering. Even the hookah that he earlier smoked habitually was not used much by him now. Since his arriving here he had not eaten any food other than Tara Mā's *prasād*.

When we arrived he had risen from his meditation for his evening meal. He said to Me, "The image of the headless *Kālī* that I saw in Siddheswari was the image of Tara Mā that is worshipped here.

Tomorrow You can see Her at the time She is bathed. The image is formed with a stone on which is placed a silver head with a crown and then dressed up until it takes on the form of the Goddess⁶." I told him, "The thought had come to My mind on its own regarding your coming to Tarapīth, for I had never before heard of such a deity." The resemblance between his vision in Siddheswari and the image of Tara Mā gave Bholanath great joy. He remained engrossed in an unbroken stream of *japa* and meditation.

Ten days went by in this manner. On the last day in the dead of night I saw that a fundamental change in his body had taken place and he called out loudly and repeatedly, "I have received the grace of Tara Mā." The *pāndās* took his behaviour to be like those, who, on coming to Tarapīth for the first time for *sādhanā*, initially become greatly excited and start raving, but later calm down. Bholanath began to narrate how Tara Mā had blessed him and how various *yogic* postures had manifested themselves in his body.

The night thus came to an end and in the morning he lay down quietly in the *Shiv* temple. That whole day he did not smoke the hookah even once. About three or four in the afternoon, saliva started flowing profusely from his mouth. Since that day his attachment to smoking left him completely. After spending a couple of days more over there we returned to Kolkata.

Receiving the Sacred Thread

One day I noticed that there was no sacred thread on Kushari Mahasay's shoulder. On My asking he replied, "It tore, and although I have been thinking of replacing it with a new one, I have not yet done so." I told him, "What lesson will your sons learn from this? All of you must put on your sacred threads as soon as possible."

Before bathing Me one day Khukuni had taken off the narrow gold chain that I always wore, and when she was about to put it back on Me after the bath it fell around My neck in the manner of a sacred

⁶ When the image is bathed (at midnight) it is deconstructed and one sees the sacred stone which is its essence – said to have been originally placed there by the Rishi Vashishta.

thread. On measuring the chain, I found that it was the length of a *Sāmvedi* sacred thread.⁷ A strange emotion overtook Me and I exclaimed, "This is very auspicious." The chain remained in that position.

Later that evening I had a *kheyāl* to actually wear a sacred thread.⁸ Taking off the chain I handed it to Bengi and said to the several *brahmins* who were present there, "Wash your hands and feet, cleanse yourselves, and then chant the *Gāyatrī*⁹ to Me." Then I put on the chain in the manner of a sacred thread. When the recitation of the *Gāyatrī* was over, Bengi came and as is usual after the sacred thread ceremony, tied the *bhikshā* (alms) to one corner of My *sārī*. The question of fasting in the prescribed manner was automatically taken care of since I was eating only fruits. The next day the sacrificial fire¹⁰ was brought home from Kolkata and, after going to the Ganges, sacred threads were put on the *five brahmins*¹¹

One day, not seeing a sacred thread on Nandu, I said to him, "Come! Take Mine, which is made of gold." He would not accept it. On another day I laughingly said to Rebatī *babu*, "Since I address you as My father, you have to be a *brahmin*. Take this thread." He too would not accept it.

Playing such games, this Body returned to Dhaka.

Shifting the Idol of *Kālī*

The idol of *Kālī*, instead of being immersed, was moved from where it was initially kept to a different place. Jogesh Bandhopadhyaya

⁷ The length measured from the collar bone at the throat to the tip of the out-stretched right thumb nail

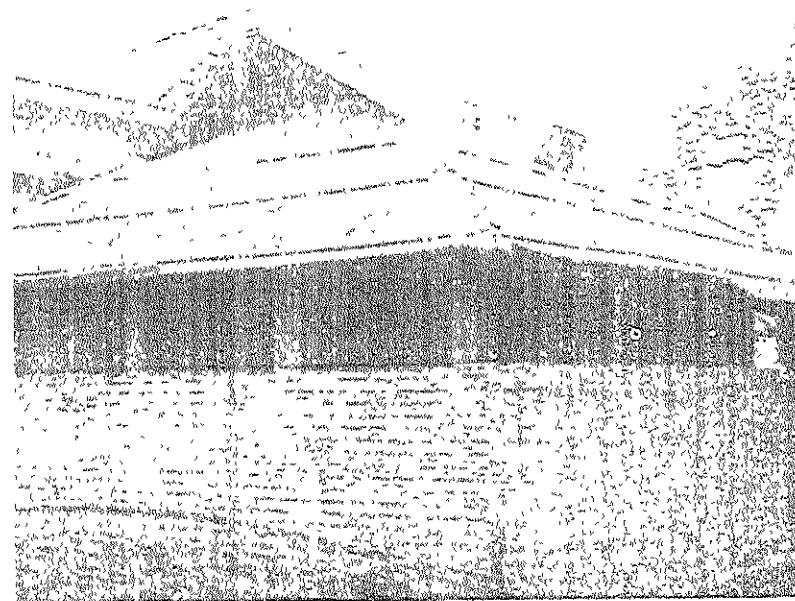
⁸ Although Mā conformed to orthodox Hindu rules on most issues, She broke new ground in insisting that women were equal to men and had the same rights as them to pursue *sādhanā*. She was in favour of competent *Brahmin* girls wearing the sacred thread and studying the scriptures in Sanskrit etc. as practised in Her girls' school in Varanasi.

⁹ A Rig Vedic mantra, invoking the inherent powers of evolution and enlightenment – for details refer to Glossary

¹⁰ The thread ceremony is completed after oblation to fire

¹¹ Third brother-in-law of Bholanath - Kali Prashana Kushari and his four sons at Shalkia near Kolkata. It is an essential requirement for *brahmins* to wear the sacred thread and recite the *Gāyatrī mantra* thrice daily by holding the sacred thread in the right hand

said, "Who knows what is to become of this idol! We tremble in fear while lifting it, lest it fall to pieces." Indeed it was with the utmost care and reverence that they moved the idol. Later, in our absence, when it was taken from Shahbag to Tikatuli in a car, it was done solely by relying on their faith in *Kālī*, for after all, the clay idol which was intended to last for only a few days was now more than a year old and could easily disintegrate. Again the idol was transported to Uttama Kutir and from there to Siddheswari. This was accomplished without any untoward incident. At Siddheswari a wooden shrine was built in which the image was placed. Finally, the idol of the Goddess *Kālī* was brought to Ramna *āshram* on the *Mahālaya*¹² day in the presence of all.



Photograph of the first *āshram* in Siddheswari, Dhaka

¹² The day of new moon in the month of *Āsvini*. In this instance the date was October 2, 1929. The Goddess *Kālī* was placed in a newly built small temple over the dilapidated Shiv temple that existed earlier.

Reward of Fervent Action

While staying in Uttama Kutir we visited Comilla where a large number of people enthusiastically gathered for *kiṛtan*. On our return to Uttama Kutir a neighbour's daughter brought Me a sealed letter saying that a few days ago on her way to bathe in the pond she had seen the letter addressed to this Body lying on the bank. Initially she had not picked it up, but after seeing it there for three or four days she thought that somebody had probably dropped it by mistake and so brought it to Me. On opening the letter I found that a young boy from Comilla had used his blood to write certain anguished queries regarding spiritual matters. This incident reveals that the sincerity of a spiritual seeker will ensure the fruitful completion of all their action.

The Establishment of the *Āshram*

It was Jyotish who first expressed a desire for an *āshram*. When he talked about it to this Body, I told him, "This entire universe is the one and only *āshram* for this Body." Jyotish replied, "You can stay even in a *kutiā* in Haridwar if we made You one, but it is for us that an *āshram* is needed." I saw that he was extremely keen on the idea. When outsiders were prohibited from visiting the gardens of Shahbag I would at times go up to the gate to meet them. Jyotish came one moon-lit night and Bholanath and I sat with him in the open field. Once again he raised the topic of an *āshram*. I told him, "If indeed you are so determined to have an *āshram*, you could try that old derelict house with the crumbling walls." Looking towards Bholanath I said, "That was your abode in a past life."

After this Jyotish fell ill.¹³ On his recovery he returned to work in Dhaka. Then one day he said to me, "For the last three years Niranjan and I have been trying to set up an *āshram*, but to no avail. There have been obstacles one after another and now Niranjan feels embarrassed to talk about it to anyone. Nothing can be possible unless You will it. For the good of all, we pray to You to do so."

¹³ January 4, 1927.

After this we went to Tarapīth. On our return we met Binoy in Kolkata and I told him, "All of you seem to be so eager to have an *āshram* and if indeed you all feel the need for one, then when you go to Dhaka tell Jyotish to try once more for that place in Ramna. But as for this Body, whether or not you set up an *āshram*, there is no guarantee that you will be able to keep Her within its four walls. Whatever happens will happen! ('Ja Hoye Jai')¹⁴ Since you all desire to set up an *āshram*, it is now up to you to do so." This time Jyotish succeeded in acquiring the location in Ramna. This Body, however, had no interest in establishing an *āshram*, for the entire universe was one big *āshram* to Her and therein dwelt eternally the One.

Birthday celebrations were going on at Siddheswari. Suddenly this Body had a *kheyāl* that during the celebration itself everyone should shift to the new *āshram* premises. I informed Jyotish, who hired labourers to work day and night to construct a room there.¹⁵ I entered the Ramna *āshram* on the 19th of *Baisākh*. That year too the tithi¹⁶ and lunar date coincided. These two had coincided on the day that this Body was revealed to you all, that is, the 19th of *Baisākh* was *Krishna Chaturthī*.¹⁷

Baul decorated the entire *āshram* in various ways with fresh flowers. In the evening we entered it and there was great joy all around, with celebrations continuing till almost two in the morning. Next morning, on coming out of the room, I found My body to be in *bhāv* and did not go back to the room again, but lay outside absorbed in this mystic state the whole day. Arrangements were made for *bhog* and a large number of people were fed. This Body rose in the evening and ate a small amount with Her father. Bholanath went to Niranjan's house.

¹⁴ This was a common saying of Mā with the sense that whatever happens is the perfect manifestation of the Divine.

¹⁵ A room with a thatched roof mounted on bamboo poles with walls of woven bamboo matting and a brick floor. A veranda surrounded the room on all sides. For details of the location of Ramna *āshram* and its layout refer Appendix VI.

¹⁶ Configuration of planets at the time of one's birth. Here it signifies the time of Mā's manifestation on earth.

¹⁷ Thursday, May 2, 1929.

Departure from Dhaka

Several days prior to this I had been saying to Bholanath, "You stay in Dhaka while I go away for a few days," but on hearing this he would get angry. A strange feeling came over Me and I said, "I want to leave right now." The others said, "But we only came to this āshram yesterday evening. It was set up with such a lot of effort and now You are talking of leaving it today! How can that be? We shall not let You go." There were about ten or twelve people present at that time, including Shashanko *babu*.

There had been *kirtan* sung in the late evening, after which many people had gone home. While these conversations were going on, *mantras* and *shlokās* began to emerge from this Body's lips and some of those present began to write them down. This Body told them, "Now that you have written them down, You should recite them every day."¹⁸

Pointing to a particular spot near where the *kirtan* had been sung that day, I also said, "As was mentioned earlier about the *tapasyins* (practitioners of intense spiritual austerity) who were previously here, **that spot is the place of a very special *sādhak* who had attained bliss and union with the Supreme and who was deeply revered by the other *sādhaks*.**" The words came out a little indistinctly and in a concise manner that not everyone understood. The link between that *sādhak* and the spot was not revealed, but it was mentioned that a lamp should be lit there every evening.

Coming out of the *āshram*, this Body sat in the open field. She sent for Her father and told him, "You have to come with Me." Then I looked around for Ashu, but as he was not present it was decided that Sitanath would accompany us.

Having received news of My impending departure, Bholanath and Jyotish rushed back to the *āshram* from Shashanko *babu*'s home. When I informed Bholanath about My intention of leaving, he

¹⁸ Refer 'Mother as Revealed to Me' by Bhairi in English, pages 42-43 of sixth edition, 1983 or Sri Sri Mā Anandamayī, volume II by Gurupriya Devī (Didi), page 17 of first edition, 1986

protested vehemently, saying, "No, no!" repeatedly. Then suddenly the words rushed out of My mouth, "If you do not allow this Body to go, it is not known what may happen to Her." Hearing this he said rather angrily, "Go!"

The moment he gave his consent, this Body set out for the station with the others following. Bholanath remained in the *āshram* but after some time he too came with Jyotish to the station. This Body got into the train. Khukuni came and said, "Mā, take me with You." I replied, "No." Jyotish came and said, "I too shall come." I said, "No" to him also, but he insisted, "*Pitāji* is asking me to go with You. If You will not allow me in Your compartment then he has instructed me to travel in a different one." While discussions were still going on the train started moving and in order to obey Bholanath's instruction Jyotish came in and sat down in our compartment. Sitting in the train I realized that Bholanath was displeased with this Body.

Early next morning the train reached Mymensingh. On arriving there I said to Jyotish, "Now you must go back to Dhaka. This Body will be going towards the hills." He said, "*Pitāji* has sent me to be with You, how can I go now leaving You in such uncertain circumstances with Your aged father, especially as it is the rainy season? If You want to go somewhere there are good places like Adināth and Cox's Bazar which are quite near. They are secluded and have both the sea as well as mountains. Why don't we go there?" I had been thinking that once he left I would leave for some other place but that did not happen. So I said, "All right let us go now." Finally it was decided that we would go to Chhattagram.¹⁹

At night a storm broke out when we were at Ashuganj Station. This Body commented, "This is nothing, tomorrow you will see worse." Early next morning we reached Chhattagram station and found Nirod *babu* and Shashi *babu*²⁰ there. Finding Jyotish in a shirt and sandals, they kept asking him, "What is going on?"²¹

¹⁹ It is now known as Chittagong

²⁰ Shashi Bhusan Das Gupta was the famous photographer of Chittagong

²¹ Surprised to see Jyotish *babu* in casual clothes and on an unscheduled visit

Finally we went to the steamer-station and started for Cox's Bazar. After a while, the steamer entered the open sea and began to heave and pitch. This Body was still in the state of *bhāv*, remaining absolutely still for long periods at a stretch either lying or sitting. Soon after boarding the steamer She lay down on the deck. People were discussing that they had not experienced such bad weather for the last five or six years. The wind and rain steadily gained in strength. The decks became awash with water while this Body lay inert, Her clothes thoroughly drenched. Pandemonium broke out among passengers of the upper and lower deck. The *kheyāl* played in this Body that the roaring sounds of the boundless mass of water were singing hymns in praise of the Eternal Being, endeavouring to teach humankind submission to His divine will.

It was almost dusk by the time we reached Cox's Bazar. After spending one day there we came to Adināth²² Jyotish and Sitanath went back while father and I stayed on. Meanwhile Kunja *babu* arrived from Dhaka. On Jyotish's return to Dhaka Bholanath reprimanded him severely in front of a large number of people, saying, "I sent you with Her to bring Her back, but you left Her in your native country²³ and came away." Within a few days Bholanath arrived in Adināth accompanied by Ashu, obviously still annoyed with this Body. Later we went to Kolkata. On the way I told Bholanath, "So long as I am in this state, do not stand in the way of My movements". But he continued to express his anger. After further exchanges, I said, "Go and wait for Me at the Kasba *Kālī* temple or some other place. If there is a change in My condition I shall inform you or come there Myself."

Mā in Haridwar, Ayodhya, Dehradun and Kashi

Buying tickets for Burdwan, My father, Ashu and I boarded the train. Kunja *babu* too wanted to come with us but I told him that he must go back. At first he seemed to agree but later I found that he had

²² The biggest island off the coast of Cox's Bazar. A shiv temple believed to have been established by King Ravana, contemporary of Lord Ram, exists and Mā stayed there

²³ Province of Chittagong, presently in Bangladesh.

accompanied us. At Burdwan we bought tickets for Haridwar.²⁴ Kunja *babu* said, "I shall go with You to Haridwar, stay there for four or five days, and then come back." After four or five days at Haridwar I found that he was still making no move to go back. Meanwhile this Body felt an urge to go elsewhere and told Her father, "I shall be leaving for some other place immediately. You stay here with Kunja *babu* and in case I do not return within seven days, go back to Kashi."

At Haridwar station we met a Bengali ticket collector who bought us tickets for Ayodhya and helped us board the train. At that time I used to take only a little fruit or juice and would just lie in the train quietly. I told Ashu to call Me when we reached the station before Ayodhya. We reached there very early in the morning and were soon surrounded by nine or ten *pāndās*. At first they would not listen when we told them that we did not need their services and they continued to harass us for some time, but ultimately they left us alone. We stayed in Ayodhya for one day and then returned to Haridwar. At the ticket collector's invitation, we spent three or four days at his home. He and his wife took very good care of us. One day his wife said to Me, "Since meeting You I feel a change in myself. I do not feel any interest in household matters any more." I replied, "You must carry out whatever duty you are faced with to the best of your ability. Serving your husband is your duty at this time. All will be achieved in time."

One day, when we were on an outing, we met some Bengali women who took us to the Bholagiri *dharamshālā*.²⁵ They would not let us leave and we stayed on there. We met this Body's father and Kunja *babu* as well. On another occasion Gopi *babu* and Upen *babu* came and said, "There is a place called Sahasradharā²⁶ near Raipur, east of the hill station of Mussoorie. If You wish You could pay a visit there." All of us set out to see Sahasradharā.

On our way back to Haridwar, Kunja *babu* was suddenly taken very ill, so a telegram was sent to Benaras asking his son to come

²⁴ A distance of more than 1 000 kilometres to the west. Haridwar is located 200 kilometres north-north east of Delhi.

²⁵ Located in the heart of Haridwar.

²⁶ A thousand streams flow out of a porous hill located east of the hill station of Mussoorie.

When this Body left Dhaka, Kunja *babu* had been instructed to stay back. He had done so initially, but later, for reasons best known to him, he travelled to Adināth and thereafter would not leave this Body's company. It was not the practice of this Body to tell anyone anything repeatedly however, not abiding by Her instructions would also lead at times to problems. Kunja *babu* too had to suffer from this for a long time.

On Her way back from Sahasradharā, while looking at the surrounding hills, She had the *kheyāl* that She would have to come back here some day.²⁷

Eventually we arrived at Nirmal *babu's* home in Benaras where we stayed for a couple of days or so. I then went with Jiten to Vindhyaçal. There Nirmal *babu's* wife came and conveyed the news that this Body's father was very ill and that we should return to Benaras. When this Body expressed Her reluctance to do so, she replied tearfully, "The time that You started out from our home was inauspicious for householders."²⁸ You must return to start Your journey anew. I shall not leave without You." I assented, "Very well, tell Me how long you think I should stay at your place to remove this inauspiciousness." She replied, "Stay as long as You wish." I returned with them to Benaras.

One evening, while talking among ourselves after *kirtan*, I had the *kheyāl* to proceed to Kolkata immediately. Everyone was taken by surprise and in order to prevent Me from leaving they stretched themselves out flat on the ground. This Body said, "I am leaving," and started out with Jiten. While spending a couple of days in Kolkata at Girin's place, he suggested, "Why don't we go and see the *sādhu* in *Nabadwīp*²⁹ once again?"

²⁷ Mā visited in May, 1943 (16 Jaistha, 1350) to attend Bhagvat saptaha at the invitation of Prabhudatt Brahmachārī. The latter made Mā sit on the podium for the first time with senior *sādhus* like Haribābā, Abhudutji and other well-known mahātmās of northern India who remained close to Her from that time on.

²⁸ According to astrological calculations.

²⁹ A town on the west bank of river Hoogly, a distributary of river Ganga, about 100 kilometres north of Kolkata. It has been the centre of *Vaiṣṇavism* and the *Bhakti* movement – a devotional worship through the repetition of the *Mahāmantrā nām* – 'Hare Krishna Hare Krishna, Krishna Krishna Hare Hare, Hare Ram Hare Ram, Ram Ram Hare Hare' popularized by Lord Śrī Krishna Chaitanya (Mahāprabhu) (1486-1533).

Mouni Bābā of Nabadwīp

In the previous year some of us, including Bholanath, had visited Nabadwīp where we had darshan of a Mouni Bābā who sat inside a mosquito net with a piece of cloth covering him and a large cushion at his back, seemingly focused on his goal. One had to view him from outside through the two windows in the room since the door was closed. This Body had gazed at him unblinkingly until Bholanath drew Her away lest that should bring about some change in Her condition. Several times earlier, while looking steadily at an object without blinking, this Body had become motionless and unresponsive to anyone calling or trying to bring Her out of it. Sometime this state would last for hours or days and the Body would be motionless with Her eyes closed. Unless She rose from that position on Her own will, no one had the capacity to make Her do so.

Different people expressed different opinions about the Mouni Bābā. Some said he was human, while others said he was a statue made in Krishnanagar. However, this Body had noticed movements in his stomach and chest caused by breathing. Meanwhile an old woman who happened to be present was asked about his daily habits and routine. She said that she had never seen him getting up and he hardly ever ate. If some milk was held to his lips every fifteen or twenty days he sometimes took a little, at other times not. She further added that he had sat there continuously for the last three years without even going to the toilet, and said various other things like this.

The timings for viewing him through the open windows was from eight to nine, from ten-thirty to eleven, and from two-thirty to seven each day. Many began to ask Me about him. I found he invoked a feeling of wonder and reverence in them. This Body did not want to disturb these feelings, for after all, God dwells in everyone. Different things evoke reverence in different people. Whatever advancement one can make with a pure heart is good, however whatever one sees or hears must be true or it can later result in bringing harm to the ordinary man. I said, "This *sādhu* has even convinced you that he is like a living clay statue. It is not a small matter to keep sitting in one

posture unblinking and motionless for days and months on end” Within this Body, however, the *kheyāl* came that Mouni Bābā was not as he appeared and did everything just as everyone else and even talked.

So, on hearing Girin’s wish to go to Nabadwīp, I said, “Very well.” Jiten, Girin, his wife and sister-in-law accompanied us. On reaching Nabadwīp in the evening we went straight to Mouni Bābā’s *āshram*. There we saw him sitting in exactly the same manner, although his body looked thinner and weaker and the mosquito net was missing.

The general consensus was that we should return to Kolkata. This Body said, “All of you go back; I shall stay here.” They spent the night there and returned to Kolkata the next day, leaving this Body and Girin’s sister-in-law behind in Nabadwīp.

While I sat there the old woman asked Me to go to an adjoining room. From there we could see a neatly made bed in the *sādhu*’s room and saw a girl carrying several buckets of water into the room through another door. We did not pay too much attention to this at the time, but then when we looked later we could not see the bed, and the door to the room was shut. Only the two windows were open and the *sādhu* was once again sitting in his usual posture. Girin’s sister-in-law wandered into the room and found that the girl was cooking for Mouni Bābā. Some time in the late morning the girl closed the windows of Mouni Bābā’s room and then carried the food. Later when asked whether he had eaten, she replied, “I have received *prasād*.”

Another woman, after having met Mouni Bābā said to Me, “If You want to talk to Mouni Bābā, this is the time,” and led Me to the room. Mouni Bābā started talking to Me and asked Me why I travelled so much, to which I replied, “Why don’t you answer that question yourself?” He said repeatedly, “Don’t You see how I remain sitting in the same position?” A lot of other things were also discussed, but soon it was time for him to sit on his mat again. I said to him, “As now you will be dressing in order to show yourself to your disciples, should I go?” He replied, “No,” but I left just the same.

I was sitting in the veranda when it occurred to Me that the people who came believed that the *sādhu* did not talk and that he always sat

in the same position. This was a complete lie. It can be seen that whatever genuine quality a *sādhu* has can be spoiled by the effect of untruthfulness.

Soon it was dusk and the old woman closed the windows. Then the *sādhu* called Me to his room. For quite some time he tried to explain to Me how many disciples he had and that the women serving him were also his disciples. The next day I noticed that the girl was cooking earlier than usual and I heard that Mouni Bābā had been angry the previous night and had not eaten. After he was fed the windows of his room were again opened. Later when they were closed, Mouni Bābā called Me to him again and narrated many facts about his life.

He said to the woman and the other lady disciple, “You told me that a hot-headed girl had come with a desire to stay here. Actually She is mad³⁰, don’t you know that?” Later he said to Me, “Everyone calls You Mā; then You are Mā to me as well.” I replied, “I am your daughter.” He said, “No, that cannot be. You must tell me Yourself that I am your son.” Later I said, “Very well, but you must leave all this deceit.” He said, “Mā, I shall not stay here any longer. You do well to keep moving from one place to another.” I said, “I do not do so of My own will, everything happens on its own.” The old woman and the girl told Me, “There are so many disciples, but we have never seen him talking to anyone as freely as he has with You.” He had told Me to visit whenever I wished.

The next day I went to his room without informing him and found a large, good quality mat spread on the floor with a pillow and a clean sheet on it. Mouni Bābā was wearing a *dhoti* of fine quality. His lady disciple had told Me that his body was becoming emaciated as he did not get nutritious food due to financial constraints. However, I found sufficient arrangements were available for his repast four times a day.

When we had been there for about four or five days, Girin came to take us back. Before departing I said, “Everyone calls you Mouni

³⁰ Implying divine madness – intended as affectionate praise

Bābā, but I had a *kheyāl* that you actually talk. Now that I have come to know you, I shall leave." He said, "Please remember me, Mother." On our way back Girin asked, "What kind of a Mouni *Bābā* is he anyway? Now that You have exposed him to me and I have even heard him talking, I am indeed shocked!" I told him that one should see and accept only the good in a person, and not the bad. We went to Girin's ancestral home. When we next visited Nabadwīp we heard that Mouni Bābā had left for some unknown destination.



CHAPTER 12

Bholanath's Illness¹

During Bholanath's illness this Body would go and lie in the holy site at Siddheswari in the afternoons, and at other times She would sit near him. One day on Her way to the holy site, She was joined by Satya *babu's* wife and a few other ladies. They sat with Her for a time and then left, assuring Her, "Once we have seen *Bābā*, we shall return." This Body said, "Very well", closed the door and lay in absorbed rapture, which occurred frequently. After a while one of the ladies came to the window and called this Body by calling out the name 'Mā'. In response this Body rose as if lifted by a gust of wind, opened the door and then fell to the floor with a thud. Those who had come realised immediately that this Body had had a hard fall. Noticing blood on Her head, they hurriedly called Her mother, sprinkled water on Her, and tried to lift Her. She arose on Her own much later when it was almost dusk, gradually noticing those seated around Her, and that Her clothes were smeared with blood and Her body was wet.

I went to Bholanath and found his fever to be higher than before. Someone noticed my condition and said, "You have changed Your clothes but there is still blood on Your back." Lowering the cloth covering My head it was found that blood was trickling down in a fine stream from a cut on the head and some blood had also clotted on strands of hair. The woman cleaned the affected part. The next day when Bholanath's doctor visited he was asked to check the wound and he said that there was a spot that had turned soft like an abscess near the crown of the head. Two or three days later he arrived with special instruments to perform a surgery that he deemed necessary.

¹ June 1929

Shashanko *babu* (also a doctor) expressed reluctance about performing surgery on the fractured bone of the skull. I said, "Do whatever you think is best." It was finally decided that there was to be no surgery, and gradually the wound healed.

There was hardly any change in Bholanath's condition. One day, as I set out for the holy site in Siddheswari at about one or one-thirty in the afternoon, this Body's mother asked "Why are You going so early today?" I replied, "It is time." Slightly worried, she accompanied Me. Soon some others also arrived and as we talked, sitting in the room, I realized that I had very high fever. I said to Khukuni, "Close the door, I shall vomit," and then did so. At dusk I came out but found that I could hardly walk. Holding the fence, I staggered outside and then sat down on the ground. Khukuni again helped Me back to bed.

Just as a fine layer of foam rises to the top when cooking rice in a pot, I found a similar sensation rising upwards inside My head through the bones and flesh. Things reached a stage when I began to feel that the body would leave Me. To those present I said, "Quick! Take this Body out onto the veranda." My breathing quickened and I instructed them to help the Body move into specific *yogic* postures of standing, sitting or lying flat on the ground, according to the Body's spontaneous urges.

I was told later by those who had assisted Me, about their fears that these *āsanas* might break a limb or two and seriously harm Me. They also feared that I might leave the body. I told them to move this Body, which had become inert, back into the room. Everyone started saying that I was paralysed. I had to be carried to the toilet. Unless properly supported, the head would flop down to the front, back, or side. While making Me sit, My head would have to be propped up much like a new-born baby's. In spite of this condition, I was aware when an ant or fly sat on the Body, or when a finger got pressed or twisted; and I instructed those around on what needed to be done.

After four or five days had passed in this manner, one day while turning this Body to one side Khukuni implored, "Mā, we can no longer take care of Your body." Subsequently, at night while in bed, I experienced movement in My legs and slowly everything came back to normal. However, since the high fever still persisted, they poured

water on My head every day for four or five days. From ten or eleven in the morning until four-thirty or five in the evening, more than sixty or seventy buckets of water were poured over My head. Some of those who nursed Me now had symptoms of fever and body ache. Bhupati *babu* took My temperature. It had shot up to 104, 105, and 106 degrees fahrenheit, so he stopped using the thermometer. My long hair remained wet, emitting a bad odour, and so I asked them to cut it off - which Khukuni did. The illness worsened, causing various parts of the body including the legs to swell.

Amidst all the concern and peoples' anxious movements to and fro, I was aware within Me of an ongoing joyful *kirtan*. This joy began to be expressed in the Body as well. And so this is how the game of My illness and their efforts to nurse Me back to health played itself out.

In the meantime Bholanath recovered completely. In his anxiety, he began to talk about My illness to everybody, including outsiders. At Jyotish's place Bhagabān Brahmachārī regularly performed *pūjās*, which Bholanath often attended. Gīrija used to come and see Me and inform Jyotish about My condition daily. Jyotish was asked by Bholanath to come to Siddheswari. He came to see Me one afternoon and, worried at seeing My condition, left and returned that very evening with Purna Kavirāj. I asked the *kavirāj*, "What has happened to Me?" He replied, "You are ill, and must take medicines." I then told him, "Very well. If I need treatment, I shall send for you." From My perspective the current condition of this Body was not different from its normal condition when I could easily walk, sit or lie down. Nor did it seem any different now that I was lying in bed constantly. It never occurred to Me that previously I had been in good health and that now I was unwell. When people gathered around this Body in concern for Her, She experienced an ongoing joyful *kirtan* within which sometimes expressed itself in Her demeanour and She would often laugh aloud.²

² Mā gives a hint that Her Body is not a result of *sanskāras* like ours, and that She is without any mental inclinations or disinclinations. Thus medications may not have the desired result on Her body in absence of Her volition.

One day Bholanath remarked acerbically, "Oh! So by laughing You try to show people that You feel no sense of illness! I do not like these things in You." Whenever I laughed he would make such comments. Finally one day I said, "Very well. I shall remain silent." From that day I stopped laughing. One night after shutting the door on everyone's face, Bholanath implored Me tearfully, "You are ill. Please heal Yourself. No one can heal You unless You will it." I told him that I felt perfectly alright, but he said, "You are very ill. You do not understand. It was wrong of me to have made those remarks that day when You laughed, please forgive me." I said to him, "It is this Body that is at the root of all this trouble for everyone. What is wrong with the way it is now? Even if, in your perception, this Body leaves Me, what is the harm? It is, after all, best to let things happen the way they are meant to." Once again Bholanath entreated, "I shall never again stand in Your way for anything. Please heal Yourself. You must will to heal Yourself. Give me Your word You will do so." I replied, "Very well. If the feeling arises that I am ill and need to get well, then I shall do so."

Getting up next morning I declared, "I want to have some rice today." However, those around Me exclaimed, "Rice! In this condition?" From the morning there was a feeling that I had been ill as per the general perception and had to get well as they wished. Accordingly, I asked them to prepare dishes that are fed to convalescing patients. When these were ready, I was propped up to a sitting position by several people and fed rice. Swallowing was very difficult and food kept falling from My mouth. Somehow I finished eating and lay down again. Gradually, I recovered completely.

Mā's *Kheyāl* regarding Sickness and Disease

One afternoon as I lay in bed, I saw the spirit of the fever standing next to Me on My left, wanting to enter this Body. I held it with My left hand and smiled with My eyes open. Khukuni who was close by, saw Me smile and asked, "Mā, why did You raise Your left hand? What have You got in Your hand?" I replied, "I am holding the fever

entity in My hand." She exclaimed, "Fever! Again?" I told her, "I shall get fever. See, it will soon manifest itself externally." Khukuni found My Body to be warm already and said, "If You say so, it will definitely come, even if in a mild form." I told her, "It came on its own. Why should I turn it away?" If you grudge its nature and wish to keep it at a distance because of its adverse effect on the body, that too is attachment and rejection on the part of the body. This Body does not call anyone to Her nor does the mood to turn anyone away arise in Her. Just as all of you are a source of joy to Me, they too give Me equal joy You come and go as you wish, so why not let diseases do the same? Any form of disease that may come is not something apart from this Body All are aspects of the Supreme What is the meaning of disease and suffering - that there is neither joy nor comfort, right? But for this Body, there is no question of comfort or discomfort, joy or sorrow. It remains the same at all times **So there is no confusion, because the fundamental dualisms at the root of these perceptions have been destroyed along with their root.** Again, it can be whatever you say, it makes no difference.

During this Body's illness, *kirtan* was organized from sunrise to sunset every Saturday at the holy spot in Siddheswari. One evening, when I was in the condition of requiring assistance to move, this Body rose from Her bed in *bhāv* induced by the *kirtan* and walked to the veranda and sat there motionless for sometime. Meanwhile, Bholanath started began to have a mild fever and became weaker, but resisted taking medicines. I started having fever every other day. When I asked Bholanath to take medicines he said, "If You take them I will too." I said, "If such a serious illness like the earlier one could go, this slight fever will also go on its own. But you must take medicines." But he was adamant, so finally I agreed and took a little quinine. Then Bholanath too began his treatment.

On being asked to resume Her story, Mā continued, "Bholanath's illness had turned worse, so much so that even when being turned on his side he experienced pain. After examining him, a doctor stated that his liver was infected but due to his weakened state ruled out surgery. Instead he administered an injection saying that should it not

work, surgery would be necessary. Bholanath lay almost unconscious that day. Some people thought that this condition was the effect of the medicines, but that was not so. His condition was indeed very critical. His consciousness returned after almost twelve hours but the idea of surgery was abandoned. Gradually, he recovered completely.

Many asked Me the reasons for My illnesses. I replied, "According to you, each illness is connected to the previous one, however the fact is there is no connection. I had told Bholanath not to stand in the way of anything that I did and that if he did so there might be problems regarding this Body. I asked him to allow Me to leave on My travels with a happy frame of mind. He did let Me go but with a great deal of displeasure and after creating various obstacles.

Another factor to consider is that about eight years prior to My travelling from Chandpur to the holy site in Siddheswari, I heard this Body utter words to the effect that Her condition would undergo a change at the age of thirty-four or thirty-five, when She would manifest the special powers by which a *yogi* can retain, leave, and heal his body. So you see, this so-called illness in Siddheswari was already prophesied eight years ago. One night as I lay in bed in Nirmal *babu's* home where we stayed on our way from Haridwar to Benaras, the words 'sixty-five days left' suddenly came out of My mouth. Those who heard Me asked for an explanation, but no answer came at the time. Nani wrote this down. Later when the illness started, he calculated the number of days and found that it coincided with that date.

It was illness only in your perception. To this Body joy and sorrow or sickness and health are all the same. I have been responding to your different moods in My own joyful way. So why don't you consider falling ill too as a part of that joyful *līlā*? The fact that this Body would experience some change at this time had already been revealed long before. This disease was manifested to fulfil the truth of that revelation. **Whatever comes strongly into My *kheyāl* will inevitably occur.** All this was nothing but a *līlā*. What a *līlā* indeed is being played by this Body!

Effect of Seeing Fresh Blood

One day during the sacrifice of a goat in Siddheswari I saw some blood and was filled with a peculiar sensation. Wherever I looked I began to see blood and flesh. Even water and earth began to look like blood. If a tree was cut, its secretion appeared like fresh blood flowing from it. A fruit too seemed to be made of flesh, bone, and blood. It was not that I always saw red, but the thought of live flesh, blood, and bone would not leave Me. If someone cut a fruit, I felt that he was cutting open My body. If someone cut down a tree, looking at the fluid exuding from it I felt that it was My body that was bleeding. The thought came to My mind that milk too was blood and this Body was blood and flesh.

Such thoughts resulted a state in Me causing difficulty especially when I sat down to eat. For several days I did not eat nor felt inclined to do so. Jyotish said to Me one day, "If You go on like this, how can Your body survive? You seem to be quite happy, but Your body cannot last this way." I told him that the question of this Body's survival is irrelevant. This is merely a *līlā* being played, for everything is a part and parcel of pure consciousness. Things are happening the way they are meant to. You must know that it is we who are destroying ourselves. Creatures eat other creatures in order to preserve themselves. So it must be said that one creates oneself, establishes oneself as well as destroys oneself, all within one's own self. You can see that a tree, after being planted, is nurtured; yet its fruits are eaten. But the fruits contain seeds for future trees, a fact which reveals that all the power of the universe dwells fully in every form everywhere, and in everything. In the spiritual world, those who can establish themselves in the Self (*Ātmā*) - which is at the root of all that is created, preserved, and destroyed - can continue to function in the material as well as spiritual worlds with the same attitude. There could be a state where the question of participating in creation, preservation, or destruction, becomes irrelevant." Many such discussions were held.

Jyotish said, "From what You are saying it is clear that You are the absolute One whether in the gross, the subtle, or the causal body

since the aspect of *sanskār* in You is non-existent. We merely pray that You remain as You are within Yourself, but also that we can have You amongst us in our every day life. The important thing is that Your body must be preserved for our sake." I said to him, "If you desire such a thing strongly enough, and if this Body's *kheyāl* is there also, then it will happen on its own. To the Supreme, others' desires and One's own desires or lack of desires are all one." For several days this attitude continued and then gradually things became normal again.

The *Sādhak's* Body during *Sādhanā*

At one stage if the *sādhak* is obstructed in perfecting his *sādhanā* by another, then the latter may be adversely affected. If the *sādhak* is of an elevated stature he may take all impediments upon himself and so spare others, or even change their course of life. However, if he is not advanced, then he may harm himself. Only a very small part of this is being revealed, for there is no reckoning the number of stages there can be.

Generally you calculate time in terms of minutes, hours, days, months, and years. You undergo so much change within a single minute. Just as children play games, similarly when this Body played the game of *sādhan līlā* for a while many changes of form and *bhāv* occurred in the course of one minute. How can you reckon all that in terms of days and nights or hours of the clock? You see, you think of everything as subservient to time! But in Supreme Reality there is no time, no day or night, no light or darkness. As long as one is dependent on norms, which means bondage, the question of existence and non-existence, of life and death and change will arise no matter what you may say. This world spells mortality through the cycle of life and death which imprisons humans. Therefore, the *sādhak* has to be left alone so that in the course of *sādhanā* the manner in which he will pursue the goal of being established in his innate state is revealed within. If faced with too many obstacles he may even leave his body, provided he has attained that capacity. After all, during his *sādhanā*,

the body works like an engine moving in whatever direction is necessary. Faced with obstruction, the engine may seem inclined to stop. A *sādhak* of a certain stature can even keep the body in a completely inert state. Again, it may not be possible for anyone to obstruct his path. It is up to the *sādhak* whether or not to consider an obstacle as such. Anyway this is the *sādhak's* story; so leave this Body out of it. The wilfulness of your foolish Daughter is quite another matter.

Daily Walks in the Fields

After moving to the small room at the Ramna *āshram* this Body remained seated in the same posture on the bed for about fifteen days at a stretch. The thought did not occur to Me, nor anyone else, that I was not moving from that bed. People came and went and I would talk to them sitting in the same place. Once they left, I kept sitting or lay down in that position. I ate My meagre fare in that position and only left the room once or twice for the toilet, that too not regularly. Otherwise I did not walk at all.

Then one day, at someone's urging, I started to walk out of the room when suddenly Khukuni said, "Mā! Why are You walking in this way?" I replied, "Why, I am walking normally!" She said again, "No, Your feet are not stepping properly." Laughing I said, "Why not? See I am walking quite normally! This is the normal way I walk, isn't it?" Greatly distressed Khukuni then exclaimed, "Sitting for so many days You have forgotten even how to walk! Do You want to stop walking as well?" By now she was almost in tears, and when Jyotish arrived she told him, "Mā is not able to walk. What is to happen?" I heard their talk and laughed for I found that I was just the same; there was no pain in My back nor any discomfort of any kind.

The next morning Jyotish arrived very early and Bholanath told him, "Let us go for a walk." We walked for a while and then came to the *āshram*. For three or four days Bholanath made Me walk like this with Jyotish and then gradually things became normal. Khukuni was overjoyed.

Following Bholanath's instructions, Jyotish arrived unfailingly at five every morning in order to take Me for a walk in the grounds.³ As long as I was staying in the Dhaka *āshram*, there was never a lapse - not even for a single day, whether it was summer, winter or the rainy season. Nothing, not even communal riots⁴ or being unwell could deter him from performing this daily duty. Jyotish would stay in the *āshram* sometimes till ten or eleven in the morning and on Sundays or holidays till one o'clock in the afternoon. I never saw him sit in front of Me or even go to the toilet. He would start out from his home which was about one and a half miles from the *āshram* at four every morning, attend the *Ushā āratī* at the temple and then come to our room. One day, seeing him standing from morning till night, I told him, "Know that this is also a *yogic-kriyā*; standing in this fashion you are automatically performing *sādhanā*."

I would usually get up in the morning and wait for him, although sometimes I would get up after his arrival. One day as I lay alone in the small room at the *āshram* I had a vision of Jyotish's *samadhi* (from his previous life) in the northern side of the room. Later when Bholanath came to live in that room, I stayed on that side.

Sacred Thread to Jyotish

One day after returning from our walk, I sat down. Bholanath was there as well and we were conversing on the topic of the sacred thread and its use. Then I took off the gold chain that I wore like a sacred thread and said to Jyotish, "Come closer. Let me put this sacred thread on you. From today know that you are a *Brahmachārī*." His eyes filled with tears and he said, "It is beyond my capacity to accord it its due respect. However, I shall try to carry out Your instruction to the

³ This went on for nearly three years starting from late 1929 till May 1932

⁴ The 'All India Muslim League' was formed in Dhaka on December 30, 1906 under the patronage of the *Nawabs* of Dhaka and Awadh (Lucknow). From 1930 onwards the League became a driving force behind the creation of a Muslim state with its communal root in Dhaka and it had the blessings of the British colonial Government. Efforts were made to disturb the communal harmony that existed earlier between the two major communities, namely the Hindus and the Muslims. The discord helped the British Government in furthering their policy of 'divide and rule'.

best of my ability." For about three years from that day he wore that necklace. Later, I took it back from him after putting a cotton sacred thread on him. Still later, when we were leaving Dhaka for Dehradun, I put the gold chain round Khukuni's neck, telling her, "You must perform your prayers every morning and evening with the recitation of the *Gāyatrī*."

Jyotish as Adopted Son

Bholanath stayed in Siddheswari doing his meditation and observing silence for some days while I stayed at the Ramna *āshram*. Things continued in this way for about fifteen to twenty days. Jyotish would often visit Bholanath on his way back from his office. One day, on hearing that Jyotish had again coughed up blood, Bholanath indicated that he should bring Me to Siddheswari the next morning. The next day Jyotish and I arrived at Siddheswari and both Bholanath and he went and sat next to the holy site. I too sat on one side. There was a pillar-like structure at the spot surrounded by a wooden railing, since the *Shiv-linga* had not been installed yet. Bholanath called Me nearer and I stood holding on to the railing. Bholanath asked Jyotish to come closer and the latter knelt down there. Bholanath then began to tell Me about Jyotish bringing up blood and Jyotish also joined in. As I listened to them I noticed a mark running from the crown of Jyotish's head down to his forehead, something hard and bony like the spine. I touched the place and showed it to Bholanath. Then, spontaneously the words came out of My lips. "These are *yogic* signs. Spiritual thoughts come naturally to anyone bearing this mark."

Bholanath indicated to Jyotish to take off his shirt and he complied. I sat near Bholanath. Suddenly adopting a most unnatural manner, Bholanath passed his hands all over Jyotish's body and then picking him up and raising him over his head, he twirled Jyotish once high in the air and then placed him on My lap as if he were a child saying, "Jyotish is Your adopted son. Today, at this holy spot, I give him to You. You must save him by curing him of this illness. Do not let him die of it. You must at all times give him Your special attention." I sat

silently. Jyotish, his eyes filling with tears, sat there for a little while like a child and then got up.

The next morning as we walked on the grounds Jyotish said, "How very fortunate I am! *Bābā* and *Mā* have both placed their hands on my head. *Bābā* accepted me as his son and placed me on Your lap. It was beyond all my dreams that a person as unworthy as I would receive such grace from You." He then said, "I have but one request. Bholanath has placed me in Your lap! I would like to have this auspicious moment captured in a photograph, *Mā*!" This Body replied, "If you so desire, tell Bholanath." Bholanath consented and next day three different photographs were taken by the photographer, Biren Shome of the three of us, in the same positions as the previous day. Once the photos were shot Biren Shome said, "Jyotish *babu*, how blessed you are! And I am also fortunate to have been able to take such a picture." When the pictures were ready Jyotish said, "How many people will understand the sublimity of these pictures?" One picture was of the altar at the holy spot. another was taken when Bholanath and this Body had placed their hands on Jyotish's head, and the third when Bholanath had placed Jyotish, as if he were a small child, on My lap.

About five or six months later, when the topic of these pictures happened to come up, Jyotish said again, "Who will see these pictures? Who will understand?" This Body replied, "Why, your wife!" But he replied, "Such good fortune is not mine."

Then this Body said to him, "There is something I have just remembered. Niranjan once sent us a telegram in Haridwar when you were in a critical condition, which we received only when we were in Rishikesh. There I 'saw' that you were very ill and looking like a small child; you were sitting on My lap with your wife standing nearby. This Body had then informed Bholanath that Jyotish would not die at this time. Bholanath too said the same thing. Now, after four or five years, what I had seen then has come to pass, with Bholanath placing you, like a child, on My lap." When informed, Bholanath exclaimed, "Yes, it is strange! I had completely forgotten about that! It was only in order to have him healed that I thought of putting him on Your lap."

When we went to Dehradun and people asked who Jyotish was, I would say "My adopted son." From that time onwards the local people began to call him 'Bhaiji'.



Shree Shree *Mā* and Bholanathji blessing Bhaiji in Siddheswari

Offering *Prasād* to Vultures

One day while walking I saw several vultures on the bank of a pond. I told Jyotish to give them some food, as it is their nature not to have anything besides meat. I said, "Arrange *prasād* for them one day. Just as poison brings about some reaction, so will *prasād*⁵." He replied, "As these words have found utterance through Your lips, I am certain that these birds will find their liberation on taking *prasād*." This Body said, "You talk about ordinary creatures, but these belong to a different type. Remember the maxim that Lord Shiva and Goddess Gauri are reflected in all living beings? Well, you must try to hold on to that idea in all simplicity."

The vultures were given *prasād* from the Ramna *Kālī bāri*. They flew in large numbers, squawking and screeching in joy to get to it. The next day many of the vultures were seen perched on the *āshram* walls and strutting about contentedly in the grounds for quite a while. Many gazed in surprise at this strange spectacle. *Prasād* had been placed on the ground for them a long distance away from the *āshram*, yet the next day they sat on the *āshram* walls as if to pay their respect to the deities! Not a single one was seen anywhere near the Ramna *Kālī bāri*, though it was also located nearby.

First Trip to South India

Acting on someone's suggestion, Bholanath and I set out on a trip to South India, accompanied by Shashanko *babu*, Kunja *babu*, Khukuni, Jogesh, Ashu and this Body's paternal aunt. We travelled from Waltair to Rameshwar, Kanyakumari and many other places in southern India. We then travelled to Vindhyaçal in northern India in time for *Durgā pūjā*. From there we headed east to Dhaka.

⁵ This Prasad constituted goats that were sacrificed and offered as bhog to Mā Kālī

Panchavati in the *Āshram*

One day in the course of a discussion it was decided to have a *panchvatī*⁶ established in our *āshram*. Bholanath collected the saplings of the five trees and planted them after performing the due rituals. Some days later the *ashok* tree dried up. Everyone thought it had died, but Bholanath maintained that it had not and looked after it with great care. Meanwhile Kamalakānta, while clearing the area one day, found the *ashok* tree in a dried up condition and threw it away. However, Bholanath planted it back once again after performing the necessary rituals, asserting that it would live. At this Body's advice a new sapling was also planted along with it. In time it was found that even the old sapling had taken root and had come alive.

A Young *Sannyāsi*

We were in Kolkata where *kirtan* was organised in the homes of those who visited this Body frequently. One day at Suren *babu's* place I saw a young man in a saffron robe standing at a distance. *Kirtan* went on until late at night. I was later told that for the past few days the young man was always present wherever this Body went for *kirtan*. The next day a woman came with two small girls and a boy, and bemoaned that her husband had abandoned her and their children. What was she to do now? At this point the saffron-robed young man arrived and it became clear that he was her husband.

He then told his story saying, "I had a good job and my family used to live with me. When my elder daughter was born I came to love her with all my heart, then the second daughter arrived. One day a sort of doubt entered my mind whether indeed I loved my elder daughter. I decided that I must find out what true love is. My entire attitude changed and I tried to explain this to my wife. For the last

⁶ A raised circular platform on the edge of which five trees are planted namely, *ashok*, *bel* (wood apple), *bot* (banyan), *pīpāl* (a type of fig tree), *amla* (myrobalan). Meditation is conducive under these trees.

eight months I have stayed away from home, and two months back I adopted these saffron robes. However, my wife will not accept my decision. Tell me, what am I to do?"

I told him, "Right now, you must try to pacify her." He said, "I sit quietly doing my *sādhana* on my own but they distract me and draw my mind away. What am I to do? Her father is quite well-to-do and she does not need to worry about her upkeep." His wife continued to cry harder. Some time later they left.

During the day I was visiting somebody's home where once again I saw him sitting at the back. Soon the wife too arrived with her two girls and said, "I am going to leave my children here and go away." The young man said, "Last night I explained the situation to her and she seemed to understand. I don't know why she has come here now." I told him, "No, she has not understood. Would she have come again if she had?" I told him again, "For the present you must take her with you and console her."

From Kolkata we went to Pābna to stay at Prānkumar's home and found that the young man had accompanied our group. He never approached Me but always remained at a distance. He stayed on there. The days passed pleasantly with *kirtan* and later we returned to Kolkata. After visiting various other places, we finally came to Cox's Bazar and stayed there for some days, often walking on the beach. One day I began digging a pit at one spot and Khukuni asked Me, "What are You doing?" I replied, "I am making a space for Myself." She said, "What are You saying?" I said, "Everything is My body, after all." She responded, "Something must have happened somewhere." I merely smiled. After this a letter arrived from Pābna indicating that that the young man had high fever and that he maintained silence when asked about his near and dear ones, although he answered other questions. A few days later another letter came from Pābna informing us that he had died. His wife had gone to Pābna to see his body. It became known that he had died on the exact day and time that this Body was trying to dig a pit on the beach.

Injury to the Idol of *Kālī*

In Cox's Bazar I laughingly said that I would twist My arm and break it, perhaps even cut it off. My demeanour was a little unnatural and Khukuni said, "Please do not have such fancies. No one knows what problems may be forthcoming!" A few days later news arrived from Dhaka that the gold ornaments on *Kālī* in the *āshram* had been stolen, and the thieves had twisted and broken the arm and made a small incision in one place. Later, on our return to Dhaka, the idol's arm was repaired with due attention paid to the sanctity needed for the occasion. A few months later the foundation was laid for the new temple.

Samadhis beneath Dhaka *Āshram*

While digging to lay the foundation of the new temple⁷ a number of *samadhis* were discovered underground, which necessitated enlarging the size of the temple. There were *samadhis* of several ascetics beneath the *āshram* building. Judging by the length and breadth of these *samadhis*, they appeared to have been of powerful build and some apparently originated from the western parts of the country. Steps were then taken for their proper preservation.

Departure from Dhaka⁸

After recovering from his illness, Jyotish had resumed work for a stretch of about four or five years. He then took four months leave with the intention of giving himself a change of climate. He had planned to go to Darjeeling, but somehow had not yet started on his holiday and so was still in Dhaka and would visit the *āshram* often.

One evening I went to Siddheswari with Biren and then to the Panchavati (Ramna *āshram*) talking to people while lying down. At nine o'clock that evening, I suddenly had a *khevāl* to leave Dhaka immediately, that very night. I called Bholanath and told him about

⁷ The foundation stone for the temple was laid in January, 1931.

⁸ Near mid-night on Thursday, June 2, 1932.

it. He asked, "Who else will go with You?" I replied "Jyotish is on leave, I shall ask him to accompany Me." Bholanath agreed and I told (Br.) Jogesh to get a carriage and fetch Jyotish but not to tell him anything. When he arrived I asked him what time it was and then asked him, "Can you come with us? If so, we must start immediately" He kept quiet for some time and then said, "I have to go home and get some money." I told him, "Take whatever there is in the *āshram*. Now tell Me if you can come" After asking him one more time he answered, "Very well, I shall do whatever You wish" By then people had started weeping in the *āshram* and Shashanko *babu* had a lot to say. He asked where and how I was going to live.⁹

We departed from the Panchavati and on reaching the station found there was a train waiting at the platform. When asked the destination for which the tickets were to be purchased, I told them, "We shall take this train as far as it goes" We boarded the train and it started moving



**Shree Shree Mā with Bholanathji and Bhaiji after leaving
Dhaka in June 1932**

⁹ No one knew where She was going or when She might return. It was according to Her *kheyāl*.

Epilogue

Mā continued to roam ceaselessly throughout India for the best part of the next 50 years. Ultimately many *āshrams* were built for Her all over the country and Her fame spread far and wide throughout India and beyond. Kings, prime ministers, dignitaries, scholars and saints, the rich and famous and the common man all bowed before Her. She became one of the best known and most highly respected spiritual figures of the twentieth century - indeed of all time.



Appendix I

Revelation of the Supreme One as Shree Shree Mā

In a thatched hut in the small hamlet of Kheora located in a remote corner of eastern India in the early hours of May 1, 1896, the **Omnipresent** chose to walk upon this earth as **Shree Shree Mā**.

As recorded in the book - *Svakriya Svarasamrita*, Volume 1 pages 8, 58-59 and Volume. 5 pages 128-133 details about **Shree Shree Mā 'prakash'** (advent) are given as follows:

In the divine circumstances of '*brahma-muharta*' witnessed by the God and Goddesses when the yogis, *rishis* and *munies*, *sādhus* and *Sādhaks* were busy in their spiritual pursuit and nature playing the primordial sound through the bamboo rushes behind the thatched room, the divine manifestation revealed Herself

1. There was no one in the thatched kitchen room when Mā appeared, not even a mid-wife, nor was there need for anyone, is this not surprising? Mā asks.
2. Mā's great grand-aunt who used to live next door, came at that moment and picked Mā from the ground. There is no mention of Mā's mother (*Didimā*)
3. Mā's prakash did not take place as the result of the union of those She would later refer to as Her parents.
4. Mā had no umbilical cord.
5. It appears Mā's father had not been present in Kheora for three years. During Mā's prakash there is no mention of him, - not even at the 'naming' ceremony.
6. In an orthodox Brahmin family, it is unthinkable that a kitchen would be used as the *delivery room*, particularly due to the traditional sense of ritual defilement associated with giving birth. In those days a

temporary hut used to be built next to the cow-shed and used for delivering babies, because this was considered to be both an auspicious as well as a healthy and antiseptic environment (It is well known that cow's dung and urine have antiseptic properties) Next door Mā's great grand-aunt owned a number of cows, so arrangements could have been made there if this was a normal, expected, delivery case

7. Mā did not cry at the time of Her 'prakash', like new-born babies do
 8. Mā questions, "Is it possible for a mother who has just given birth to carry the new-born in her arms, walk down three steps, then a further 12 yards to the 'tulsī manch' and return the same way?" One must consider the total lack of medical facilities in a far flung remote village in Bengal, at that time, more than a hundred years ago.

9. Mā hints that She would always hear *Didimā* say, even in Her childhood days: "Everything is God's creation, He is in everything, He alone does and is capable of doing everything. *Didimā* was always self-content with this firm belief."



Appendix II

Mā's Self Revelation¹

(This excerpt has been taken from Volume 1, pages 102-106 of IN ASSOCIATION WITH SRI SRI MA ANANDAMAYI, by Amulya Kumar Datta Gupta.)

"In connection with Mā's use of the terms 'Khanda' and 'Akhandā'² I asked, 'Mā, when You are in Your all-comprehensive form, can You have cognizance of us?'

The question made Mā 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 akhandā 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 akhandā you do the very same thing. But I have no limits no bonds. I am khanda and finite in so far as 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 said, 'Mā I had a talk with Jyotish Babu in connection with the writing of your biography. I had said to him, 'You see, it is imperative that a biography of Mā 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 Mā wills it Besides, I think that Mā will soon reveal Herself For, it is seen that Mā 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 '

Mā 'What do you make of Me?'

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, Kalī, or Durgā 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 Mā?"

Mā smiling said with a fair amount of emphasis, "What you have understood is the Truth itself."



Appendix III

Granthī Chakras

In tantric terminology, the 'three knots' representing different spiritual planes of evolution are known as:

Brahmā Granthī – (Knot of Brahmā)

Vishnu Granthī – (Knot of Vishnu)

Rudra Granthī – (Knot of Rudra or Shiva)

Brahmā Granthī is believed to be located in the area of the navel, that is *Manipur Chakra*, representing the knot of *sansār*, the world of 'names and forms' and is the first obstacle in the growth of the spiritual aspect of the individual self, or *jīva*. This knot obstructs the ascent of *kundalinī* to move to higher circles or planes.

This world of names and forms enters us through the five sense organs (eyes, ears, nose, tongue and skin) creating ambitions and desires within us that traps the mind and dominates most of our consciousness. Untying this knot frees one from the bondage caused by attachment, and unless one is able to do that one cannot meditate effectively.

After *Kundalinī* passes through and properly unties the Knot of Brahmā, the images from the realm of names and forms no longer interrupt the meditation of the aspirant.

Vishnu Granthī is located in the area of *Anahāt Chakra* (heart chakra), and presents the next obstacle in the path of the *kundalinī*. This knot produces *karuna* (compassion), attachment to the cosmic good, and a keen desire to help suffering humanity. It also creates desire to preserve ancient knowledge, traditions, institutions, and

spiritual orders. This attachment is further strengthened and inspired by the heart chakra - the chakra of devotion, faith, and love and may cause bondage. Only by true discrimination, knowledge, and faith can one untie the Knot of Vishnu and realize the purpose behind the cosmos, which is part of the divine plan. One can become liberated from the traditional bonds that are deep-seated within the genetic code of the aspirant. Then the individual ego dissolves and the will of God prevails.

Rudra Granthī is located in the area of the third eye known as *Ajna Chakra*. This is the last knot and after untying it the aspirant establishes himself in the sheath of Bliss (*Ānandamayee kosha*). Here the time-bound consciousness dissolves and the *yogi* is established in infinity. However, if the *yogi* is attracted to clairvoyant power, siddhis, and miracles then his progress to transcend the *gunās*, and become *gunātita* (beyond the aspects or qualities) and establish himself in eternal bliss, complete union, and nondual consciousness, is arrested.



Appendix IV

Mahāvākyas: Great declarations of the Vedas

Mahāvākyas: Great declarations of the Vedas, the most ancient scriptures of the world. These are numerous and appear throughout the Vedas in different places of the text. However there are four popularly known *mahāvākyas* culled from four Upanishads, one from each of the four Vedas.

Though every *mahāvākya* is complete in itself and has the potential to grant liberation to a deserving aspirant, the essence of the four *mahāvākyas* in sequential order, provides a roadmap for *sādhana*.

Prajñānam Brahma ‘Consciousness in Brahma’
(Aitareya Upanishad, Rig Veda)

This first *mahāvākya* denotes a statement of definition of Truth. It declares that Consciousness, the spiritual core that enlivens each of us, is the same all-pervading Consciousness in all beings and things.

Tat Tvam Asi: ‘That Thou Art’
(Chhāndogya Upanishad, Sāma Veda)

The second *mahāvākya* is a statement of instruction that a *sādhak* is not a limited personality as he imagines himself to be but verily the supreme Brahma

Aham Brahma Asmi: ‘I am Brahma’
(Brihadāranyaka Upanishad, Yajur Veda)

The third *mahāvākya* is a statement confirming experience of the Truth by the *sādhak*

Ayum Ātmā Brahma. ‘This Self is Brahma’
(Māndukya Upanishad, Atharva Veda)

The fourth *mahāvākya* reflects on the *sādhak* when he establishes himself in his real nature, the Self-omnipresent and eternal.

In Shree Shree Mā’s *sādhanā līlā* we find all four stages of revelation in the different paths of *sādhanās* that She played whether in the realm of *Bhakti*, *Tantra*, *Yoga* or *Gyān* or in the rituals of other religions and faiths. All these took place during a period of eight months of Her *sādhanā līlā* on different astral planes during Her stay in Bajitpur.



Appendix V

Bholanathji (1881– May 6, 1938)

(Known as 'Ramna Pagla'—The Essence of Ramna heritage)

Throughout history it is observed that each time the Diving Being manifests in human form, a group of eternal disciples accompany Her or Him. Such a disciple was Bholanathji. This *līlā* is the story of *Bābā* Bholanath as an aspirant of a very high order, who under the guidance of an extraordinary and perfect Divine Guru (Mā) was able to reach the pinnacle of *sādhanā*. He was an integral part of Mā's *līlā* and without him *Matrī līlā* would have been incomplete. It was a *guru-sisya* relationship where even the slightest human tendency was channelised towards the Sublime.

Bholanathji, formerly known as Ramani Mohan Chakraborty, was born to a well-known Brahmin family in Ātpara, Bikrampur (Rampal area of Munshiganj), near Dhaka. The family has a history of outstanding *sādhaks* and every seventh generation witnesses the arrival of a great saint. The advent of Sri Ramani Mohan Chakraborty is indeed such an event.

His parents were Jagabandhu Chakraborty and Tripura Sundari Devi. They had ten children and Bholanathji was their third son, born in 1881. His marriage to Nirmalā Sundari Devi (Shree Shree Mā Ānandamayee) took place on Sunday, February 7, 1909 in the village of Kheora, Tripura state. When his wedding was fixed, he was employed by the police department. Bholanathji was around 27 or 28 years old and Mā was 12 years and 10 months old at the time of their wedding. Bholanathji's mother was not living then and his father passed away two years after the marriage.

Bholanathji was a large-hearted person, simple and helpful, particularly if someone was in distress. He was accessible to everyone and very fond of children. Throughout his life, his exemplary character is demonstrated in his role as the ideal consort, partner, *sisya* (disciple), and protector of the Divine Being, Shree Shree Mā. He had complete faith in Mā's integrity and Her spiritual power. The divine play (*līlā*) of the two, Mā and Bholanath, is unsurpassable in its uniqueness. It is fascinating and intriguing—a supernatural *līlā* that uplifts one's mind from the mundane to the spiritual plane.

After performing serious *sādhanā* as per Mā's instruction at the Siddheswari and Tarapīth temples, he attained enlightenment and was referred to as 'Bholanath'. He had received direction from Tara Mā to visit certain *siddha pīths* (holy places). His alacrity in climbing the Himalayas during the Kailash *yatra* (pilgrimage) in July, 1937 was noteworthy. When asked, he said it was due to the *shakti* (divine power) of Tara Mā. He had also done *sādhanā* in Uttarkashi for about three years on the bank of the Ganges and had established a *Kālī* temple there.

Soon after his marriage he lost his job in the police department and worked on temporary jobs for almost four years. In 1913 he got a permanent job as a Law clerk in the Settlement Department of the Estate of the *Nawab* of Dhaka at Astagram. The people of Astagram were *kirtan* lovers, and so was Bholanathji himself. Mā's divine intoxication and ecstasy in *kirtan* was exposed to the public for the first time here as were signs of the various stages of *Bhakti sādhanā* in Her.

Bholanathji was transferred to Bajitpur in October 1914. Mā joined him in 1918 (*Āshār* (June-July)). During Mā's *sādhan līlā*, he played the role of a protector. This role continued even when he moved to Dhaka in April 1924 as the caretaker of the sprawling gardens of the *Nawab* of Dhaka in Shahbag. In early 1928, the property of the *Nawab* of Dhaka came under the Court of Ward and Bholanathji's job was terminated with that of the others. Thereafter on Mā's advice, he led a detached life mostly immersed in *sādhanā*. On special occasions he used to worship Mā, not only in Dhaka but at other places also.

He was initiated by Mā on Friday, December 1, 1922. Bholanathji had been an ascetic in his previous lives and as revealed by Mā had done *sādhanās* at Ramna and Siddheswari. Probably the name of the Siddheswari tree was derived after his attaining *siddhi* (realization) under it. Mā disclosed that every 5,505 years, spiritually sublimated saints regularly visited this place and performed special *kriyās* there. These were performed by Mā and Bholanathji there around 1926. Mā divulged that even Adi Sankaracharya was associated with this place.

The white-ant mound at Siddheswari appears to be Bholanathji's *sādhanā* spot in one of his previous lives. While building the foundation over the holy spot,¹ no one was able to break this mound out of fear. Mā sent Bholanath from Shahbag to do the job. The holy earth of the ant mound was mixed with clay for making the sacred image of *Durgā* for the *Bāsanti pūjā* as per Mā's instruction. The size of the *Durgā* idol was of Mā's height. Though Bholanathji had expressed his desire to perform *Durgā pūjā* during their stay at Bajitpur, Mā finally fulfilled his wish at Siddheswari with the celebration of *Bāsanti Durgā pūjā* on March 20, 1926. This event signifies a correlation to Bholanathji's connection to this spot in his past life. Mā had later revealed that, even in his past life, Bholanathji had performed *Durgā pūjā* at this holy place.

Furthermore, the installation of a *Shiv-linga* at the holy spot by the name of *Mahādev* had a special significance. Mā's revealed that Bholanath was none other than *Mahādev* Himself! (Refer chapter four).

During the construction of Ramna *āshram* near Ramna *Kālī* temple, several *samadhis* of *sādhus* were found. Mā had indicated that many saints had performed their *sādhanā* here for centuries and the entire place is strewn with their *samadhis* and that Bholanathji in one of his past lives had owned a house here (refer Chapter five). She had also indicated that a *Durgā bāri* (place of worship of goddess *Durgā*) existed in Ramna *āshram* much before Ramna *Kālī* temple. It has been traced that the Ramna *Kālī* temple was established about 500 years ago by Swami Gopal Giri of Badrinarayan at Joshi Math, and

one can presume that he might well have been Bholanathji in one of his previous lives.

From the above facts it is seen that Siddheswari signifies an important centre of *Tantric sādhanā* over many centuries where *sādhus* had practised intense spiritual austerity and one of them had attained Divine perfection (refer sub-heading 'Departure from Dhaka' in Chapter eleven). Bholanathji's dedicated *sādhanā* in this place spread over several past lives as an ascetic of a high order ultimately found fulfillment with the divine manifestation of Shree Shree Mā *Ānandamayee*.

At 56 years of age he embraced the life of an ascetic (*sannyāsi*) on the banks of Manas Sarobar lake near Mt. Kailash on July 4, 1937, with the *sannyās* mantra emanating spontaneously from Mā's lips. He was named Swami Tibbatānanda Tirtha. Bholanathji's life illustrates all the four stages of life as prescribed in the scriptures, namely: *brahmachārya*, *gārhastha*, *vānaprastha* and *sannyās*. He left his body in the divine presence and care of the Bliss permeated Mother at Kishanpur *āshram* in Dehradun on Friday, May 6, 1938 for the final merge with the Supreme.

Jai Ma!
Coordinator



Appendix VI

Location of Ramna Maidan & Shahbag

The present city of Dhaka is 400 years old and located north of the ancient city which is along the Buri Ganga river. At the time of this narration, Dhaka was the second largest city after Kolkata in undivided Bengal. The city could be reached from Kolkata by train from Sealdah railway station to Goalanda port on the bank of the Padma river, crossing the river by steamer and then continuing by rail to Dhaka.

Dhaka was a walled city and on the northern side was an ornate gate, known as 'Singhadwar'. From here the 'Rajpath' (Royal way) started with the Ramna Maidan on the east and the garden of Shahbag on the west. The Shahbag gardens were restored of its lost splendour by Sir Nawab Khwaja Salimullah in the early twentieth century.

The Ramna Maidan covered a circumference of 2 miles. A towering spire of the Ramna Kali temple could be seen from far distance. It was a land-marked structure. On the south of the temple there was a large pond with steps (*ghāt*) leading to the water, only a remnant is now left.

At the centre of the Ramna Maidan was a dilapidated temple along with the ruins of an āshram and old fruit-bearing trees and bushes that were surrounded by a wall. It is believed to be an important spiritual centre of *yogis* and *sannyāsīs* established by the Adi Sankaracharya. The last occupant was Gopal Takur and Mā had indicated while She was in Bajitpur to Bholanathji that this was his house in previous life. Later in this very place Shree Shree Mā's āshram came up. The entrance to the āshram was from the east. In front was the Annapurna temple and to its south was the Nātmandir. In between was a small Yagna shala in front and behind it was Mā's paduka mandir. Behind the Annapurna temple was a small Shiv temple

with a curved snake entwined around the steeple. On the north-west of the Annapurna temple was Mā's kutia and on the south-west of the Nātmandir was the Panchavati. East of the Panchavati was located the Pitri mandir and besides these there were other structures.

North of the Mā's (Ramna) āshram was a huge mound covered by banyan trees (bat) and on the east by teak trees that adjoined a north-south elongated pond. On the other side of the pond was a mango grove. Circumscribing all this except the southern large pond and its surrounding grazing land was the Ramna race course.

Along the west of the Rajpath was the garden of 'Shahbag' spread over a mile. To enter Shahbag one went through a large iron gate and up the pathway to the large courtyard of an imposing hall with arches and marble floors. This building was known as the 'dance hall' and during Shree Shree Mā's stay from April 1924 to early 1928, the hall was used for kirtan and came to be known as 'Nātmandir'. On either end of the hall were two ornate circular rooms. On the northern side of the hall there was a large pond, encircled by a charming garden growing both indigenous and exotic flowers. It was enclosed by a pathway encased on either side by brick lining.

Across the courtyard and beyond the straight pathway was a *mazhār* of a fakir beneath a huge 'mallika' tree. Nearby there was an artificial fountain with four deep tanks on four sides. They could be used for bathing and for swimming. South of these were different types of trees and shrubs such as babul, bel, hibiscus, land lotus, tagor and fruit bearing trees like dumur (fig), bilati gab, mango, jamon, jackfruit, chalta, guava, jamrul, golapjam and a lichi orchard. West of this there was a fully laid out round pond for the bath of the Begums; it was mechanically filled with water and provided with an aqueduct for draining away the water on to a drain. High walls surrounded the pond. On its east was an east facing crescent-shaped building with two rooms and a plantain orchard on the west.

Further north-west surrounded by a beautiful garden with a courtyard was an impressive 'dalan' known as 'Khana ghar' (Dinning Rooms). North-east of this was a beautiful *mazhār* of the famous fakir - Shah Saheb, guru of the founder of this garden in whose honour

Shahbag had been named. Southern side was a nursery under shade formed by huge creepers spread over on iron frame mounted on pillars. Below which were grown small plants. Little further to the south was a big triangular platform (bedi) on which were placed many types of plants in tubs.

North of the 'Khana ghar' was a pond with steps on all sides leading to water; its water was used for drinking. A little further east of it was the dance hall (Nātmandir).

On the northern side of the Shahbag garden was a forest with a zoo. Beyond it was a huge palace known as 'Parī Bag' (Garden of fairies). Further north of the palace was a forest known by 'Dayani Bagh'. In the southern corner of the Shahbag there is a Gurdwara built to commemorate the visit of Guru Nanak to Dhaka in 1504.

When Mā and Bholanathji used to stay in the garden of Shahbag, it was well kept, beautiful and had an heavenly atmosphere in the presence of Mā and the *mazhār* of the fakirs. Presently the gardens do not exist anymore and the area is occupied by the Art faculties of the Dhaka University.



Glossary

In Sanskrit, the vowel 'a' appearing at the end of the word and shown as '(a)' is pronounced as half of short vowel. The longer versions of the vowels 'ā, ī, ū' Sanskrit words have been spelt according to their phonetic sound

Many Indian words that have found their place in the English dictionary have not been italicized in the glossary

<i>abhāv(a)</i>	- - -	Non-existence/ absence or negation, feeling of deficiency.
<i>achaitanya</i>		Insensibility. Lack of Pure Consciousness
<i>ācharya</i>		Preceptor.
<i>āchman(a)</i>		The act of purifying oneself by sprinkling a tiny amount of consecrated water into one's mouth from the palm of the left hand with the ring finger and thumb of the right hand, while reciting a <i>mantra</i> , and repeating this thrice before commencing worship.
<i>Agrahāyan(a)</i>		Eighth month in the Bengali calendar corresponding to November-December.
<i>ajapā-japa</i>		<i>Japa</i> happening on its own at the uvula of the throat irrespective of consciousness for <i>japa</i> .
<i>ajapā-yoga</i>		A condition when <i>japa</i> takes place continuously with the uvula.
<i>ākārshan</i>		Attraction.
<i>akshar(a)</i>		Mystical sound - syllable Literally means 'alphabet'
<i>Akshay Tritīyā</i>		Third day from the new moon in late April or early May; it is believed by the Hindus that on

	this date the <i>Satya yuga</i> - 'Golden age' had commenced.
<i>amāvasyā</i>	New moon.
<i>amāvasyā bhog(a)</i>	Food offered to God on occasion of the new moon.
<i>amrit(a)</i>	Divine nectar, ambrosia.
<i>ānanda</i>	Joy, bliss.
<i>Ānandamayee</i>	Bliss permeated.
<i>Ānanda Bhairavi</i>	One of the forms of Lord Shiva - female aspect
<i>Ānanda Rām(a)</i>	Joyful state of Self.
<i>ananta</i>	Endless, infinite.
<i>ananta-līlā</i>	Eternal divine play.
<i>anganyās</i>	Act of touching different parts of the body to invoke the concerned gods, as one recites (mentally) the different incantations before a <i>pūjā</i> (ritualistic worship).
<i>anishṭ(a)</i>	Harm.
<i>ānnā(s)</i>	Coin used in India before India decimalized its currency in 1957. It was equivalent to one sixteenth of a rupee.
<i>annāprāshan</i>	Ceremony of feeding rice to a baby for the first time.
<i>Annapūrnā</i>	Hindu goddess symbolizing the divine aspect of nourishment.
<i>antaryog(a)</i>	Spiritual experiences through the union of soul and Self.
<i>ārati</i>	Devotional ceremony in which incense, lamps, camphor, flowers and other offerings representing the five elements and the five senses - the totality of the human being - are waved before the object of adoration at the end of the ceremonial worship.
<i>āsana</i>	<i>Yogic</i> posture or physical pose.
<i>asan</i>	Small mat to sit on the floor.
<i>Āshār</i>	Third month in the Bengali calendar corresponding to June-July.

<i>ashok</i> (tree)	Name of a tree that helps an aspirant if he/she meditates under it
<i>āshīrbād</i>	Blessing Betrothal Ritualistic ceremony blessing the bride and groom-to-be.
<i>āshraṃ</i>	Monastery/Hermitage
<i>Ashtabhujā</i>	A hill in Mirzapur district of India, famous for worship of <i>Shaktī</i> - divine creative power.
<i>ashtamī</i>	Eighth day in the waxing phase of the moon. The second day of during the <i>Durgā pūjā</i> .
<i>Āshvin</i>	Sixth month in the Bengali calendar corresponding to September-October.
<i>Ātmā(an)</i>	Soul.
<i>Ātmā Rām(a)</i>	One immersed in Self.
<i>avatārs</i>	Various incarnations of gods.
<i>avidyā māyā</i>	Illusion springing from ignorance.
B.A.	Bachelor of Arts - Graduation from college.
<i>bābā</i>	Form of addressing a person as son or father.
<i>babu</i>	Addressing a gentleman respectfully. Used as a suffix to the first name.
<i>bāhon</i>	Carrier A specific animal that is attached to a particular god or goddess. Also symbolizes control over specific human characteristics by the god or goddess.
<i>Baisākh</i>	First month of Hindu calendar corresponding to April-May
<i>Baisākhī pūjā</i>	Worship of Shiv-Durgā or Rādhā-Krishna in Bengal on the first day of <i>Baisākh</i> or on <i>Akshay Truṭyā</i> . Elsewhere in India the harvest festival is celebrated.
<i>bandhu</i>	Friend.
<i>bāri</i>	Temple; literally means a house.
<i>barna-bodh</i>	Elementary book of Bengali alphabets.
<i>Bāsanti pūjā</i>	Worship of Goddess <i>Durgā</i> in spring.
<i>bātāsās</i>	Puffed sugar pieces.

<i>bel</i>	Marmelos fruit, wood-apple.
<i>Bhādra</i>	Fifth month in the Bengali calendar corresponding to August-September
<i>Bhagabān</i>	1. Supreme Reality, endowed with infinite power, boundless compassion and unlimited knowledge - the highest epithet of Godhead. 2. A term used for the personal God of a devotee.
<i>Bhāgavat</i>	A popular, ancient Hindu scripture - one of the Puranas dealing with the life and divine 'play' of Sri Krishna and other historical incarnations and facts.
<i>bhai</i>	Brother
<i>bhajan</i>	Devotional song/ hymn
<i>Bhakti-yoga</i>	<i>Yoga</i> of attaining union with God by following the path of devotion.
<i>bhāv(a)</i>	1. Inner feeling. 2. Spiritual ecstasy, generally emotional in nature. 3. Divine mood.
<i>bhāv-granthīs</i>	Various moods stored as knots in one's <i>sanskār</i>
<i>bhikshā</i>	Alms, food or that which is offered to a monk or <i>brahmin</i> .
<i>bhog(a)</i>	Food offered to God.
<i>bīj</i>	Seed of <i>Mantra</i> ; mystical sound.
<i>bīj-mantra</i>	Sacred hymns or words or sound through which divine power is transmitted.
<i>bolo hariḥbol</i>	'Say <i>Hari</i> 's (God's) name'.
<i>Boromā</i>	Mā's grandmother's aunt.
<i>brahmachārī(s)</i>	A person leading a pious life and observing strict celibacy, normally refers to a bachelor.
<i>Brahmachārya</i>	Purity of body and mind, the first stage of life as prescribed in Hindu sacred texts.
<i>Brahma</i>	The Supreme - absolute existence, knowledge and bliss.
<i>brahmin</i>	Person born into the highest or priestly caste among the Hindus.

<i>Bī āhmani Devi</i>	Goddess <i>Brāhmani</i> - female aspect of <i>Brahmā</i> - creator of universe
<i>Brahmā</i>	Creator of Universe
<i>brahma-muharta</i>	Three hours before sun rise, normally from 3 to 6am, ideal for <i>sādhanā</i> .
<i>brahmatalu</i>	Crown <i>chakra</i> in one's head where <i>Brahmarandhra</i> (<i>dasamadhar</i>) is located - the opening in the head known as 'anterior fontanelle'.
<i>chādar</i>	Cotton shawl.
<i>chaitanya</i>	Absolute Consciousness The essence of <i>Ātmā</i> or <i>Brahma</i> - the Supreme Spirit
<i>Chaitra</i>	Twelfth month in the Bengali calendar corresponding to March-April
<i>chakra(s)</i>	A disc. Centre of psychic energy in the human system In yogic context it is 'vortex or whirlpool'.
<i>chalkumro</i>	Variety of gourd, known as white pumpkin.
<i>Chandī</i>	Chapter from the Māikandeya Puran in honour of the goddess <i>Durgā</i> .
<i>Chandīpāth</i>	Recitation of <i>Chandī</i> .
<i>chapātti</i>	Freshly rolled unleavened wholewheat flat bread cooked on a griddle.
<i>charanāmrita</i>	Water used to wash the feet or toe of a deity or revered person
<i>chhatu</i>	Powdered gram or barley.
<i>chinmoy(a)</i>	Essence that permeates divine consciousness A state of consciousness beyond <i>Prakṛiti</i> (primordial matter) i.e. beyond nature, time and space.
<i>chirā</i>	Pressed rice.
<i>chitta</i>	The plane even subtler than mind.
<i>Chhotomāmā</i>	Younger maternal uncle
<i>cubits</i>	Ancient measure usually the length of the forearm, roughly 18 to 22 inches

<i>Dādā</i> or <i>da dargah</i>	Elder brother Shrine built over a grave of a Muslim saint(Sufi).
<i>Dākshāyanī</i>	Female creative power of <i>Brahmā</i> - the creator; literally means dexterous lady. One of the daughters of king Daksha who was married to, Shiva.
<i>dāl</i>	Pulses.
<i>darshan</i>	Seeing or experiencing.
<i>dashamī</i>	Tenth day from new moon.
<i>Dashamī pūjā</i>	Fourth day of the <i>Durgā pūjā</i> which is the tenth day from the new moon.
<i>devi</i>	Goddess.
Dharma	Religion. The principles of living as enjoined by the sacred scriptures.
<i>dharma buddhi</i>	Regard for justice or uprightness; right-mindedness.
<i>dhārmic</i>	Religious.
<i>dharamshālā</i>	Rest house providing temporary accommodation to pilgrims.
<i>dhāranā</i>	Concentration.
<i>dhyān(a)</i>	Concentration of mind in meditation
<i>dhyān-mandir</i>	Meditation room.
<i>didi</i>	Elder sister.
<i>didimā</i>	Maternal grandmother.
<i>dikshā</i>	Initiation.
<i>Dīpānvitā</i>	New-moon in the Bengali month of <i>Kārtik</i> (October/November) also known as Diwali or Deepavali - festival of lights.
<i>Dol</i>	Festival of colours celebrated on full moon day generally in the month of March, associated with childhood <i>līlā</i> of Lord Krishna playing with <i>gopis</i> in Vrindaban located 160 kilometres south of Delhi city.

<i>drishti</i>	Literally means focussed attention/vision/gaze. In case of <i>Mā</i> refers to the source of sight, that is self
<i>Durgā</i>	Incomprehensible One; 'Difficult to reach', the Universal Mother; She rides on a lion (or tiger) and carries a weapon in each of her eight or ten arms symbolizing the powers of the Self against ignorance and evil. She is evoked against all forms of evil - physical and metaphysical. Considered the consort, the <i>shaktī</i> , of Lord Shiva.
<i>Durgā pūjā</i>	Worship of the goddess <i>Durgā</i> . It is held twice a year during the months of <i>Chaitra</i> [March-April] and <i>Ashvin</i> [September-October] for five days from the sixth day of the waxing of the moon as per the lunar calendar.
<i>fakir</i>	A Muslim ascetic.
<i>Ganesh(a)</i>	God of wisdom and success
<i>Gāyatrī</i>	A Rig Vedic mantra, invoking the inherent powers of evolution and enlightenment, it reads as follows: "Om bhur bhuvaha suvaha, tat savithur varenyam. bhargo devasya dheemahi, dhiyo yonaha prachodayāt " Translation "We contemplate the glory of light illuminating the three worlds: gross, subtle and causal. I am that vivifying power, love, radiant illumination and divine grace of universal intelligence. We pray for the divine light to illumine our minds."
<i>ghar</i>	Room.
<i>ghāt</i>	Stairs on the bank of a river or pond that leads to the water.
<i>ghee</i>	Clarified butter

<i>ghot (ghara)</i>	A round metal container with an upturned rounded rim
<i>Gītā</i>	Sacred book of teachings of Lord Krishna to Arjun(a) on the battlefield of Kurukshetra, that embodies the systematic concept of moral living and harmonizes many doctrines of Hinduism.
<i>gomukhi</i>	Special <i>Yogic</i> posture.
<i>Gour</i>	Incarnation of Lord Krishna who appeared in Bengal circa 1494 and became known as Sri Krishna Chaitanya
<i>granthī(s)</i>	Literally means knot. Also represents centre of psychic energy in the human system, particularly along the spine or head.
<i>granthī chakra</i>	Knot; joint; node - representing centre of psychic energy of the subtle body in the human system, along the spine
<i>gārhashta</i>	Married 'householder'; the second stage of life as per Hindu mores.
<i>gunās</i>	Attributes, characteristics, qualities
<i>guru / gurudev(a)</i>	Spiritual guide. A respectful way of addressing the spiritual guide.
<i>guru-ishta</i>	When the Preceptor and the beloved Deity become one.
<i>gyān</i>	Knowledge of Reality, wisdom (self-knowledge).
<i>gyān-yoga</i>	Path of knowledge leading to the realization of the Self as taught by the Upanishads.
<i>Hanumān</i>	Black-faced monkey God who played an exemplary role during Lord Rāma's advent to this earth.
<i>Hare Murāre, Madhukaitabhāre</i>	A phrase from the stanza containing the names of Lord Vishnu or Krishna and the two demons, Madhu and Kaitabha (representing human lust and

	greed). killed by Vishnu, the Lord Preserver of the Universe
<i>Hari</i>	Supreme Lord, <i>Nārāyan</i> , Vishnu, Krishna.
<i>Haribol</i>	Singing the name of <i>Hari</i>
<i>Harimām</i>	Chanting in praise of the Supreme Lord, <i>Nārāyan</i> , Vishnu, Krishna
<i>Harir lūt</i>	Scattering puffed sugar pieces as <i>Prasād</i> at the end of a <i>kirtan</i> session among the audience so that the distribution is without discrimination.
<i>hasta kundali</i>	Circular demarcation drawn by hand on the floor or on any object.
Hindustani	Person from the west of the then Bengal province (undivided Bengal), speaking Hindi was referred to as Hindustani
hookah	Water pipe used for smoking tobacco
<i>havan</i>	Act of offering oblation to the sacred fire
I.A.	Intermediate of Arts, a level of education between high school and graduation
<i>ichcha-shaktī</i>	Will power; force of volition
<i>Irha (Idha)</i>	Subtle channel that extends from the base of the spine to the medulla on the left side of the spine.
<i>Ishta</i>	One's tutelary Deity; literally means 'Beloved'.
<i>Ishtadevi</i>	Tutelary Goddess, the chosen deity of one's worship; literally means 'beloved'.
<i>Jagadhatri Devi</i>	Goddess of the Universe.
<i>Jagat-guru</i>	A <i>jagat guru</i> is a spiritual teacher of the World who is able to create worlds, transmit power onto others without losing one's own power.
<i>Jai Shiva Shankara</i>	
<i>Bom Bom Hara Hara</i>	Song in praise of Lord Shiva.
<i>Jaishtya</i>	Second month in the Bengali calendar corresponding to May-June

<i>jalashuddhi</i>	Purification of water through recitation of <i>mantra</i> .
<i>japa</i>	Repetition of <i>Mantra</i> or a name of God
<i>jaratā</i>	Inertia
<i>jatra dal</i>	Wandering rural theatre group.
<i>Jethimā</i>	Aunt - Wife of father's elder brother.
<i>Jhulan</i>	Worshipping of Lord Krishna and Rādhā on a decorated swing.
<i>Jhulan Pūrṇimā</i>	Festival of <i>Jhulan</i> is celebrated to mark the divine play of Lord Krishna and Radha sitting on a decorated swing. The celebration takes place in the month of Sravan (July-August) from the eleventh day of the new moon to full moon.
<i>ji</i>	Used after a name as a sign of respect or reverence.
<i>jīvātmā(an)</i>	Embodied soul.
<i>jīv(a) buddhi</i>	Human / earthly intelligence
<i> jyoti</i>	Light, flame, luminosity, effulgence
<i>katcheri</i>	Collectorate.
<i>kadai</i>	A wok.
<i>kākā</i>	Paternal uncle. Father's younger brother.
<i>Kāl</i>	Custodian of Death; Time
<i>kalajar</i>	Sun fly fever, mainly prevalent in Bangladesh
<i>Kālī</i>	Dark-skinned, four armed goddess of destruction. She wears a garland of skulls (or severed heads) around her neck and a skirt of severed arms - both symbolizing the destruction of egotism. With one left hand she wields the sword (<i>khargo</i>) of spiritual wisdom and with the other carries a severed head (ego) Despite her fearsome appearance her two right hands are held in gestures (<i>mudrās</i>) that indicate: 'fear not' and 'blessing'.
<i>Kālī bāri</i>	Temple of goddess <i>Kālī</i> .

<i>Kālī pūjā</i>	Worship of goddess <i>Kālī</i>
<i>Kamalā and Bagalā</i>	Two of the ten forms of goddess <i>Durgā</i>
<i>kantha japa</i>	Doing <i>japa</i> with uvula of the throat
<i>kar japa</i>	Doing <i>japa</i> by touching the tip of the thumb to the central portion of each section of the finger.
<i>karanyās(a)</i>	Movement of fingers as part of a ceremonial worship
<i>karma</i>	Action with a sense of doership
<i>Kai ma -yoga</i>	<i>Yoga</i> of attaining union with the Supreme through selfless action, performance of one's own duty and service to humanity
<i>kartāl</i>	Cymbal.
<i>Kārtik(a)</i>	Seventh month in the Bengali calendar corresponding to October-November.
<i>Kāshyap</i>	A family lineage of Bengal - descendant of an evolved saint <i>Kāshyap Rishi</i>
<i>kāt ghar</i>	Wooden house
<i>kavirāj</i>	Ayurvedic doctor.
<i>Kechari mudrā</i>	Tongue is elongated to a length where the tip of the tongue can touch the space between the two eyebrows. Then the tongue is turned inside and upwards to touch the palate and it closes the posterior nasal opening at the mouth of the well of nectar. This <i>mudra</i> enables yogi to be free of all physical discomforts including diseases and decay of the body.
<i>khānā</i>	Dining; Food.
<i>khānā ghar</i>	Dining room.
<i>kheyāl</i>	Generally speaking, a sudden and unexpected psychic emergence, be it desire, will, attention, thought, fancy, feeling, consciousness, memory or knowledge. In case of <i>Mā</i> , as there is no ego, it means a spontaneous upsurging of the Divine Will expressed through Her
<i>khichuri</i>	Rice cooked with pulses, spices and ghee.

<i>khīr</i>	Thickened sweetened milk.
<i>khoi</i>	Parched rice.
<i>khol</i>	Two-sided drum on a baked earthen shell.
<i>khurimā</i>	Aunt; Wife of father's younger brother.
<i>khushi</i>	Smile/Joy.
<i>Khushir Mā</i>	Mother of smile/joy.
<i>kirtan(a)</i>	Chanting or singing the names or glories of God.
<i>koshā-kushī</i>	Special shape vessel made of copper for holding water during worship.
<i>kripā</i>	Grace. Mercy. Compassion. Blessing.
<i>Krishna</i>	Hindu deity - incarnation of Vishnu, Lord of Sustainer of Universe.
<i>Krishna -līlā</i>	Divine play of Lord Krishna.
<i>Krishna chaturthī</i>	Fourth day in the waning phase of the moon.
<i>kriyā(s)</i>	Literally means actions, activities, but in Mā's case it may denote spontaneous <i>yogic</i> processes, <i>yogic</i> postures induced by movement of the awakened.
<i>kumārī</i>	Eternal Virgin perceived as the youthful aspect of the <i>Devi Shaktī</i> or the Divine Feminine power that is perceived in Hindu philosophy to be the Mother of all creation.
<i>kumbha</i>	Urn; water vessel.
<i>Kumbha mela</i>	Gathering of ascetics in particular holy places like Haridwar, Allahabad, Nasik and Ujjain at the time of rare alignment of solar bodies that normally occur once in twelve years.
<i>kumbhak(a)</i>	Retention of breath - - a religious exercise which consists of closing the mouth and nostrils so as to stop breathing.
<i>kumkum</i>	Red-paste.
<i>kund(a)</i>	Hole. Pond. Cavity. Pitcher. Sacrificial pit.
<i>kundali</i>	To draw a circular demarcation on the floor or any object.

<i>kundalinī</i>	The primordial cosmic energy located in the individual, it is usually thought of as lying coiled like a serpent at the base of the spine - <i>muladhara</i> and on it being aroused, the play of different <i>chakras</i> begins.
<i>kutiā</i>	Hut.
<i>Lakshmī</i>	Goddess(es) of wealth and prosperity with four arms and golden complexion, holding lotus in her hand representing beauty, purity and fertility. Her four hands denote the four ends of human life: <i>dharmā</i> - righteousness, <i>kamā</i> - desire, <i>arthā</i> - wealth and <i>moksha</i> - liberation from the cycle of birth and death.
<i>Lakshmī pūjā</i>	Worship of Goddess of wealth and prosperity.
<i>lichis</i>	Sweet, juicy, white fruit with a reddish brown skin and a hard seed inside, it is available during the summer months.
<i>Līlā</i>	Divine play.
<i>linga</i>	Oval shaped stone normally taken from the Narmada river (west flowing river in central India) Considered a symbol of Shiva and worshipped throughout India.
<i>Mā</i>	Shree Shree Mā Ānandamayee - Bliss incarnate Mother.
<i>Mā Kālī</i>	Mother <i>Kālī</i> - goddess of destruction.
<i>M.A.</i>	Master of Arts.
<i>Māgh(a)</i>	Tenth month in the Bengali calendar corresponding to January-February.
<i>Mahābhārat</i>	Ancient historical epic depicting the story of Krishna, the Pāndavas and Kuru dynasty. A literary classic spanning eight centuries
<i>mahābhāv(a)</i>	Highest type of self-dedication to the Divine.
<i>/mohan bhāv</i>	

<i>Mahādev(a)</i>	Deity known as Shiv(a).
<i>Mahādevi</i>	Goddess <i>Durgā</i> .
<i>Mahākāl</i>	Destructive manifestation of Shiva. Literally means: Supreme time or the concept of time that is beyond human comprehension.
<i>Mahālaya</i>	Day of the new moon in the month of <i>Ashvin</i> (September/October).
<i>mahāprasād(a)</i>	Food offered to God which has been specially accepted / blessed.
<i>Mahārāj(a)</i>	King of kings.
<i>Mahāshaktī</i>	Supreme force; the Creative/ Divine power.
<i>Mahashay</i>	Respectful way of addressing an elder.
<i>Mahāshamī</i>	Eighth day in the waxing phase of the new moon during <i>Durgā pūjā</i> celebration in the month of <i>Ashvin</i> (September/ October).
<i>mahātmā(s)</i>	Great soul; usually designated to a 'sannyāsi or saint'.
<i>mahāvākya</i>	Great declaration that bring instantaneous revelation.
<i>Mahāyogi</i>	One who is established in <i>yoga</i> . Union with self.
<i>Maheshwar</i>	Name of Shiva.
<i>māla</i>	Garland.
<i>māmā</i>	Maternal uncle.
<i>māmimā</i>	Aunt; Wife of mother's brother.
<i>māmuli</i>	Meagre amount of bonus.
<i>mandal</i>	Circle, sphere.
<i>mandap</i>	Enclosure.
<i>mandir</i>	Temple, abode of God.
<i>Manasā</i>	Goddess of the serpents.
<i>mantra</i>	Sacred syllable or word or set of words having divine power that are transmitted to the worshipper. On their repetition and reflection one attains perfection or realisation of the Self
<i>mantra-chaitanya</i>	Revelation of essence of <i>mantra</i> .
<i>mantra-pratyaksha</i>	Revelation of <i>mantra</i> .

<i>māshimā, māshi</i>	Aunt. Mother's sister
Matriculation	Completion of schooling.
<i>Matrī līlā</i>	Divine play of Shree Shree Mā.
<i>Māyā</i>	Phenomenal nature - that is transitional, ever changing; worldly illusion
<i>mazhār</i>	Grave of Muslim saint or fakir.
<i>mey ayā</i>	'I have come'.
<i>mimosā</i>	Sensitive leguminous plant.
<i>mishtānna</i>	Sweet prepared with milk, rice and sugar.
<i>moun</i>	Silence.
<i>mudrā(s)</i>	Settings of fingers and palms in a particular gesture indicating a particular mystical mode; also may mean a particular posture by any limb or part of the body.
<i>muni(s)</i>	Sage, saint.
<i>munsiff</i>	A judicial officer.
<i>murti</i>	Idol. The image of a God or Goddess.
<i>naivedya</i>	Offering of fruits and sweets placed before a deity at the time of worship.
<i>nām</i>	Name of any aspect of Godhead.
<i>Namāz</i>	Muslim prayer or worship of God.
<i>nām kirtan</i>	Singing the names of God.
<i>nām ras</i>	The nectar of nām. The bliss experienced on taking God's name.
<i>namaskār</i>	Bowing in humble reverence.
<i>Nārāyan</i>	The god Vishnu.
<i>Nārāyani</i>	An epithet of goddess <i>Lakshmī</i> , <i>Durgā</i>
<i>nāmandir</i>	Assembly or dancing hall within a temple.
<i>Navamī</i>	Third day's worship of <i>Durgā</i> .
<i>Navarātri</i>	Nine nights in the waxing phase of the moon during which <i>Durgā pūjā</i> is celebrated in the month of <i>Ashwin</i> (September/ October).
<i>Nawab</i>	A Muslim king.
<i>neem</i>	Margosa.

<i>Nirmalā</i>	Immaculate beauty.
<i>Nitya-līlā</i>	Eternal divine play.
<i>padmāsana</i>	<i>Yogic</i> lotus posture.
palanquin	Covered box-like carriage used to carry a single person inside and borne on shoulders of men.
palanquin bearers	Men carrying the palanquin.
<i>panchvati</i>	Raised circular platform on the side of which five trees are planted - ashok, bel (wood apple), bat (banyan), peepul (a type of fig tree), amla (myrobalan). Meditation under these trees is conducive.
<i>pān</i>	A roll of betel leaf with pieces of areca, lime, spices and catechu that is chewed as a stimulant or mouth freshener.
<i>pāndā(s)</i>	Guide in religious places.
<i>panjābi</i>	A shirt with loose sleeves.
<i>Pāo/ poā</i>	One quarter of a seer - approximately 250gms.
<i>Paramātmā(an)</i>	Supreme Soul.
<i>Pārvati</i>	Consort of lord Shiva - another form of <i>Durga</i> .
<i>pāth</i>	Reading of religious or spiritual books and scriptures.
<i>Phālgun</i>	Eleventh month in the Bengali calendar corresponding to February-March.
<i>Pingālā</i>	Subtle channel that extends from the base of the spine to the medulla on the right side of the spine.
<i>pipul</i>	Sacred fig tree of the Hindus.
<i>pishi</i>	Aunt. Father's sister.
<i>pitā</i>	Father.
<i>Pous</i>	Ninth month in the Bengali calendar corresponding to: December/ January.
<i>Poush sankrānti</i>	Last day of the month of <i>Poush</i> , falling in m January.

<i>Prajna Chaitanya</i>	Super mind, associated with the causal body in the deep sleep state.
<i>prakāsh</i>	Revelation, light.
<i>Pranab</i>	A title for 'Om', meaning "Life-ness" or "Life-Giver." It is the primordial sound, controller of the life force within the individual being and the cosmos.
<i>pranām(a)</i>	1. To bend and touch the ground with one's forehead in the presence of a deity - Obeisance 2. Genuflection - a gesture of reverence.
<i>prān-pratisthā</i>	Rites of infusing life into the idol. Consecration of the idol.
<i>prān-vāyu</i>	Life force, vital energy.
<i>pranayām</i>	<i>Pran</i> : life force or vital energy with breath, and <i>āyām</i> : to suspend or restrain. It is a process of breath control having effect on the life force.
<i>prārthanā</i>	Prayer.
<i>prasād(a)</i>	Food offered to a deity or saint becomes <i>prasād</i> when accepted and thereby blessed; sanctified food; consecrated food.
<i>pūjā</i>	Ritualistic worship
<i>pūjā mandap</i>	Temporary enclosure for ritualistic worship.
<i>pulāo</i>	Rice cooked in clarified butter, spices and other ingredients.
<i>pundit(a)</i>	Learned person.
<i>pūrak</i>	Inhalation of breath.
<i>Purna Brahma</i>	
<i>Nārāyan(a)</i>	The Supreme Being, with and without attributes and beyond.
<i>purnāhuti</i>	Final oblation that concludes the ceremony or culmination of all activities successfully.
<i>Purna-kumbha</i>	Gathering of ascetics in four holy places - Haridwar, Allahabad, Nasik and Ujjain in different years during rare and auspicious alignment of planets. This occasion occurs

	normally once in twelve years at a particular place and involves four special baths in the holy river on special days.
<i>purohit</i>	Priest.
<i>rābri-doi</i>	A thick sweet yoghurt.
<i>Rādhā</i>	Consort of Lord Krishna.
<i>rajas</i>	Denoting qualities of restlessness, dynamism, mental agitation, authority.
<i>Rām(a)</i>	An incarnation of Vishnu; son of Dasharatha, king of Ayodhya.
<i>ras(a)</i>	Joy, delight, emotion, flavour, taste.
<i>rechak(a)</i>	Exhalation of breath
<i>Rig Ved(a)</i>	Oldest scripture of the world revealed to the Vedic Rishis (seers) during meditation, containing sacred syllables, words or stanzas having divine power.
<i>rishi</i>	Seer, sage.
<i>Rohini</i>	Name of a star.
<i>Sādhak/sādhikā</i>	One who does spiritual practices, an austere endeavourer.
<i>sāadhanā</i>	Spiritual practice for the purpose of preparing oneself for Self-realisation.
<i>sāadhan līlā</i>	Spiritual play.
<i>sādhū</i>	A pious, holy, virtuous, righteous or chaste person.
<i>sakhī</i>	Companion.
<i>sākshī</i>	The witness, the intuitive faculty.
<i>samādhi</i>	State in which the mind is either completely concentrated on its object of contemplation (<i>savikalpa samādhi</i>), or ceases to function and only Pure Consciousness remains, revealing itself to Itself (<i>nirvikalpa samādhi</i>).
<i>samadhi</i>	Denote the grave of a holy person (saint).

<i>sāmvedi</i>	Related to the third of the four Vedas.
<i>sandesh</i>	A sweet made of cottage cheese, thickened milk and sugar.
<i>sandhyā</i>	Specific prayers and rituals performed at the 'juncture' (<i>sandhis</i>) of the day-dawn (morning), noon and sunset (evening) by the initiated Hindu.
<i>sandhyā kriyās</i>	Actions pertaining to movement of fingers as part of a ceremonial worship while doing <i>sandhyā</i> .
<i>Sankalpa</i>	Will, volition, mental determination, desire.
<i>sankrānti</i>	Last day of the month in the lunar calendar.
<i>sannyās(a)</i>	Monastic life. Renunciation. The last stage of one's life as prescribed in Hindu sacred texts.
<i>sannyāsi</i>	One who renounces all possessions, attachments and surrenders one's self to the Divine. An ascetic.
<i>sansār(a)</i>	Earthly life carrying the propensities of a series of births and deaths
<i>sanskār(a)</i>	Impressions, dispositions, psychic traces that are retained in the mind after any experience or brought over from previous births.
<i>Sanskrit</i>	Classical language used in Hindu scriptures.
<i>saptamī</i>	Seventh day in the waxing phase of the moon.
<i>Sharadiya</i>	Autumnal.
<i>Saraswatī</i>	Name of the goddess of speech, learning, music and eloquence.
<i>sārī</i>	Single piece of silk or cotton fabric that is draped round the body by women in India.
<i>Sarvam khalvidam brahma:</i>	All is pervaded by the Supreme; all, indeed is Brahma.
<i>satsang</i>	Association with a great soul or discussion on spiritual subjects. <i>Sanga</i> (association) with <i>sar</i> (truth).

<i>Sattā</i>	Existence, embodiment, undivided whole.
<i>sattva</i>	Denoting qualities of creativity, inspiration, mental quietude, piousness.
<i>sāttvik(a)</i>	Endowed with purity and quality of goodness.
<i>seva</i>	Service.
<i>Shaivites</i>	Followers of Shiva.
<i>Shākta</i>	Worshipper of the Divine Energy - <i>Shaktī</i> - the dynamic Real of the Supreme Being, one form being <i>Kālī</i> .
<i>Shaktī</i>	Female energy (Goddess). Power, universal, innate, eternal and supreme power identifying with the ultimate reality and looked upon as divine Mother
<i>shalgram shilā</i>	Black fossil like stone from the source of the Gomti river at Muktinath located beyond Ananpurna peak of the Himalayas. It is worshipped as the incarnate symbol of Vishnu/ <i>Nārāyan</i> . It is believed that when a <i>tulsī</i> leaf is placed at the source of the Gomti river, a <i>shalgram shilā</i> would emerge from the water.
<i>shamshān</i>	Cremation ground.
<i>shashthī</i>	Sixth day from the waxing phase of the moon - the day of ceremonial purification rites of Goddess <i>Durgā</i> during <i>Durgā pūjā</i> .
<i>Shastras</i>	Scriptures.
<i>shastric</i>	Pertaining to the laws, rites and rituals as described in the scriptures.
<i>shat-chakra</i>	Six esoteric discs located in the spinal column of the subtle body within the human.
<i>shatchakra-bhed(a)</i>	Penetration of the six mystical circles within the body.
<i>shaitan / shaitani</i>	Devil / feminine devil.
<i>shinnī</i>	Offering made by mixing flour, banana, milk, sugar and coconut.

<i>Shiv-linga</i>	Oval shaped stone - a symbol of Shiva is worshipped throughout India.
<i>Shiv(a)</i>	Name of God meaning 'One who is all Bliss and the giver of happiness to all.' He is also considered the Dissolver and Liberator. often mistakenly thought of as 'destroyer'.
<i>Shiv pūjā</i>	Worship of Lord Shiva
<i>Shivrātri</i>	Worship of lord Shiva on the new moon occurring in late January or early February
<i>Shivo 'ham</i>	I am <i>Shiva</i> .
<i>shlokās</i>	Sacred Sanskrit stanza. Verses or hymns.
<i>shrāddh(a)</i>	Funeral ceremony; obsequial rites.
<i>Shree</i>	Respectful way of addressing a saint.
<i>shūdra</i>	Individual born into a lower caste.
<i>Siddhāsan(a)</i>	<i>Yogic</i> posture that is conducive for attaining one's spiritual advancement
<i>siddhis</i>	Supernatural power attained by the <i>sādhak</i> through <i>sādhanā</i> .
<i>Sitā</i>	Consort of lord Rāma, a name often given to a woman.
<i>Sitā devi</i>	Addressing the wife of lord Rāma with reverence.
<i>So 'ham</i>	"I am That." or "I am He."
<i>Sraavan</i>	Fourth month in the Bengali calendar corresponding to July-August
<i>Sri</i>	Equivalent to mister Used before a man's name.
<i>sihandil</i>	Vessel meant for containing the fire for <i>yagna</i> .
<i>Sūrya-pranām</i>	Salutation to Sun God.
<i>Sushumnā</i>	Subtle passage in the midst of the spinal column, corresponding to the spinal cord, that extends from the base of the spine to the medulla oblongata in the head.
<i>sūtra</i>	Sacred thread worn across the left shoulder.
<i>Svayam prakāsh</i>	Revelation of the Self/Self- luminous.

<i>swabhāv(a)</i>	Natural propensity. Innate tendency. Inherent nature.
<i>swabhāv-vibhūti</i> <i>swāmi</i>	Inner divine power intrinsic to Self. Literally, "I am mine" - in the sense of absolute self-master. Also, used in reference to <i>sannyāsis</i> , since they have vowed to pursue the knowledge of the Self.
<i>tahuri</i>	Extra bonus.
<i>tamas</i>	Denoting qualities of laziness, dullness.
<i>tāndav-nritya</i>	A frenzied dance associated with Lord Shiva. According to Hindu mythology, Shiva's Tandava is a vigorous dance that is the source of the cycle of creation, preservation and dissolution.
<i>tantradhārak</i>	Assistant priest who during a ritual follows the text in the scriptures.
Tantra	Particular path of <i>Sādhanā</i> that emphasizes the repetition of a <i>mantra</i> and other esoteric practices related to the latent cosmic powers in the human body usually thought of as the Divine Feminine.
<i>tāntric</i> <i>tapasya</i>	Pertaining to Tantra; worshipper of Tantra. Act of purification for elimination of samskara and vasana thereby awakening man's latent power.
<i>tattva-pratyaksha</i>	Revelation of the divine essence of one's object of worship.
<i>tilak</i>	A dot or dash of sandalwood paste or sacred ash put on the forehead.
<i>Teerthabasinī</i>	Residing deity of holy places.
<i>tithi</i>	Day linked to Lunar phase.
<i>trātak</i>	Gazing steadily on a small dot, point, <i>yantra</i> .
<i>tulsī</i>	Fragrant plant of the mint family called basil, that has a sacred role in Hindu rituals.

<i>tulsī mālā</i>	Rosary made out of <i>tulsī</i> stem
<i>Ushā</i> <i>ushā ārati</i>	Dawn. A common girl's name. Devotional ceremony at dawn to the object of adoration.
<i>vāhans</i> <i>Vaidya (caste)</i>	Carriers Caste among Hindus that practised traditional medicine (ayurvedic).
<i>Vaishnav(a)</i> <i>vānaprasth(a)</i>	Follower of Lord Vishnu. Forest dweller - the third stage in the Hindu system of life. A life devoid of want (hermit).
Veda(s)	Sacred scriptures of the Hindus that were revealed by the Supreme to several <i>rishis</i> . The oldest scriptures of the world.
vedic <i>vibhūti (1)</i>	Pertaining to Vedas. Manifestation of Divine power or glory, might, prosperity; splendour; miraculous powers, superhuman power.
<i>vibhūti (2)</i> <i>vighraha</i> <i>visarjan</i>	Sacred ashes from a sacrificial fire. Idol The image of a God or Goddess. The ceremony of immersion of the idol in water - pond, lake, river or sea.
<i>Vishvarūp(a)</i>	Universal form of the Supreme encompassing all forms.
<i>Vishnu</i>	One of the Hindu trinity. Preserver of the Universe.
<i>vrata(a)</i>	Voluntary religious observance, vow, a resolution, keeping fast.
<i>yagna</i> <i>yagna-kund</i> <i>yagna-mandap</i>	Oblation to a Deity offered to sacrificial fire. Receptacle for maintaining the sacrificial fire. Design drawn on a plain surface upon which fire is lighted for <i>yagna</i>
<i>yantra, yantric</i>	1. A mystic design/diagram

2. An instrument

3. One who acts as a tool in the hands of the Lord Himself.

<i>yog(a) āsanās</i>	Various forms of <i>yogic āsanās</i> (postures): <i>goumukhi āsana, padmāsana, siddhāsana</i> etc.
<i>yoga</i>	Literally it means union. Any one of the various methods of achieving union of the individual consciousness with the Supreme Self.
<i>yoga-vibhūti</i>	Manifestation of divine power through the practice of <i>yoga</i> .
<i>yogaj buddhi</i>	Superior intelligence or super consciousness
<i>yogi</i>	One who has advanced in the practice of <i>yoga</i> .
<i>yogic kriyās</i>	Activities pertaining to <i>yoga</i> .
<i>zamindar</i>	Landlord



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Jai Mā!
Coordinator



Names of Persons associated in *Mātri-Līlā* as per text

Location: **Kheora**, the village where Mā manifested as a new born.
Shree Shree Mā's Father: Bipin Bihari Bhattacharya, referred as Dādāmoshai

Shree Shree Mā's Mother: Mokshoda Sundari Devi, referred as Didimā

Shree Shree Mā's Grandmother

Khurimā: Grandmother's aunt; Mā used to address her as 'Boromā'

Chikon didi: Grandmother's friend

Srishdādā: relative of Chikon didi

Shree Shree Mā's Sister: Surobalā

Shree Shree Mā's youngest Sister: Hemangini, Mā used to call her 'Hemi'

Shree Shree Mā's Husband: Ramani Mohan Chakraborty, known as Bholanath or Pitaji

Sitanath Kushari: Bholanath's eldest brother-in-law from Dougachchi in Bikrampur

Ekabbar: a Muslim girl

Nirmalā: Mā's childhood friend with whom Mā used to sing devotional songs during *pūjā*.

Location: **Sultanpur**—Mā's Maternal uncle's home

Shree Shree Mā's second Uncle: Pandit Sarada Charan Vidyasagar, Mā used to address him as Chhotomāmā or Sonamāmā.

Shusila didi: Mā's cousin

Location: **Sripur**

Revati Mohan Chakraborty: Eldest brother of Bholanath

Promoda Devi: Sister-in-law of Bholanath

Ashu: Youngest son of Revati Mohan Chakraborty

Labanya: Ashu's sister

Location: **Bidyākūt**— Mā's Paternal home

Behari Bhattacharya: Uncle of Mā

Ambika Charan Bhattacharya: An uncle

Upendra Chandra Bhattacharya: Cousin (Father's elder brother's son)

Durgā Mohan Bhattacharya: Father's cousin

Harish: Peon

Location: **Astagram**

Jaishankar Sen, the landlord

Sarada: Jaishankar Sen's son, Mā addressed him as 'Bhaidādā'

Harakumar Roy: Jaishankar Sen's brother-in-law

Madhubabu

Kshetrababu

Gagan *Sādhu*: Singer of holy songs

Location: **Bajitpur**

Nishikanta Bhattacharya (Smritibushan): Mā's maternal cousin, Mā addressed him as Thakurbhai

Jadunath Bhattacharya : Mā's Brother known as Mākhan

Gyān Chakraborty and his wife Amiya: lived with Mā & Bholanath

Rash Behari Dutta: Superintendent of *Nawab* estate

Ushādidi (Usha Guha): Rash Behari's daughter

Janakibabu (Janaki Nath Guha): Son-in-law of Rash Behari Dutta; husband of Ushādidi

Rebatibabu: Munsiff

Jamini (Jamini Kumar Chakraborty): Bholanath's youngest brother

Dr. Mahendra Nandi of Kalikachcha, a well-known doctor and spiritual person

Shivananda: the ascetic

Akshay: Servant

Sarala: Part-time maid

Kshetrapal: Exorcist

Kshetrapal: A neighbour

Location: **Dhaka**

Motori: Bholanath's second sister, a child widow

Bengi: Bholanath's third sister: Formal name: Mokshoda Sundari Devi.

Kali Prashana Kushari: Bholanath's third brother-in-law: Inspector of Police.

Moroni: grandniece of Bholanath

Jyotish Chandra Roy, ISO, popularly known as Bhajji

Dr. Shashanko Mukherjee: Retired Civil Surgeon of Dhaka, later took sannyas, and acquired the name Swami Akhandananda Giri.

Khukuni: Third daughter of Dr. Shashanko Mukherjee: Formal name: Adarni Devi, Mā named her Gurupriya and *āshram* inmates addressed her as Didi (elder sister)

Nirmal Chandra Chatterji. Eldest son-in-law of Dr. Shashanko Mukherji {Lived in Kashi (Varanasi)}

Biren Chandra Mukhopadhyay: Eldest son of Dr. Shashanko Mukherji (A professor at Agra University)

Nandu: Youngest son of Dr. Shashanko Mukherji

Kunja Mohan Mukhopadhyay: Younger Brother of Dr. Shashanko Mukherjee. Lived in Kashi (Varanasi) and after taking sannyas was known as Swami Turiananda Giri.

Jiten Mukhopadhyay: Nephew of Dr. Shashanko Mukherji (Eldest son of Kunja Mohan Mukhopadhyay)

Rai Bahadur Jogesh Chandra Ghose: Overall incharge & Trustee of *Nawab's* estates

Prafulla Ghose and his wife, Hiranmoyee. third son and daughter-in-law of Rai Bahadur Jogesh Chandra Ghose

Bhudevbabu (Bhudev Chandra Basu): Younger son-in-law of Rai Bahadur Jogesh Chandra Ghose

Bhramar: Grand-daughter of Rai Bahadur Jogesh Chandra Ghose

Nityananda Giri: Monk in-charge of the Ramna *Kālī* Temple.

Gokul Thakur: Owned the land with the dilapidated house & temple where Ramna *āshram* was later built.

Baul Chandra Basak. Lecturer at the Law School of Dhaka

Nanibabu (Nani Gopal Bandopadhyay): Professor at Dhaka University

Prāngopalbabu (Prāngopal Mukhopadhyay): Deputy Post Master General of Dhaka

Pramothobabu (Pramotho Nath Basu): Deputy Post Master General of Dhaka and later the Post Master General of India at Kolkata

Pratul. Pramothobabu's son

Girijababu (Girija Shankar Bhattacharya). Professor at Rājshahi College

Atulbabu (Atal Bihari Bhattacharya): Professor at Rājshahi College
Rajendra Chatterjee

Radhacharan Biswas: Sub-inspector of Police

Surenbabu: the Post Master

Nishibabu (Nishi Kanta Mitra): son of the landlord of Shamsidhi near Dhaka.

Lilly: Nishi Kanta Mitra's daughter

Jogesh Bandhopadhyay

Purna Sarkar

Niranjan Roy: Assisstant Commissioner of Income Tax, Dhaka

Brahmachārī Jogesh: Jogesh Chandra Ray.

Brahmachārī Kamalakānta

Bhupendra Narayan Dasgupta of the Dhaka Agricultural Office.

Rajendra Kushari: Bholanath's childhood friend

Jogendra Kundu of Bhagyakul estate

Mathurbabu

Bhagabān Brahmachārī, a spiritual guru

Anāth Das

Nagen Dutta

Purna Kavirāj: Ayurvedic doctor

Binoybabu

Biren Shome: Photographer

