

# MA ANANDAMAYEE AMRIT VARTA

A quarterly journal dealing mainly  
with the divine life and sayings of  
Sri Anandamayi Ma

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**Ma—just before taking her bath in the seas  
in front of the ashram in Puri (Orissa) in 1954.**

**— Courtesy : Km. Chitra Ghosh**

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## MATRI VANI

Spoken word, verily, must be of Him alone, All else is but futility and pain.

\* \* \* \* \*

When the mind is centered in God in unbroken awareness there is hope of full vision and revelation.

Endeavour to remain ever consecrated at His Feet by engaging in worship, japa, meditation, the study of sacred books, or in devotional music - whichever of them you feel inclined to at any particular time.

\* \* \* \* \*

Whether you like it or not, you will have to make the Eternal your constant companion - just like a remedy which has got to be taken.

Verily, of Him is all that need be said, the rest but vanity, woe.

Without loving God you will not get anywhere. Remember this at all times.

\* \* \* \* \*

When you first began to learn to read and write, you surely did not examine the reasons for and against it, did you ?

You accept what you are told. Even if all sorts of critical thoughts arise, call to mind that they are due only to your lack of understanding : they are certainly not the outcome of pure wisdom. Try to accept as much as possible, appropriate to the occasion. Discard laziness and exert yourself. It is natural that your mind should find all sorts of reasons for not doing *Sadhana* - yet your aim must be to persevere in doing it. Eschew such thought as : "I shall not be able to do it"; "It will not be possible".

Suffering is of the body only. Despite all such discomfort officials and business men attend to their work. How painstaking they are !

Create time for everything.

The purer, the more transparent you can make your mind, the greater the possibilities for spiritual progress.

\* \* \* \* \*

Be truthful in every way. Without purity one cannot advance towards God.

\* \* \* \* \*

Let your mind constantly dwell on the Supreme Reality - endeavour to let your thought be absorbed in THAT.

Be truthful in speech and rigorous in self-discipline at all times and devote yourself to the study of books of wisdom and to *Satsang*. Cultivate the company of those who are helpful in your quest, avoid those that distract you - in other words, associate with the Good and shun the merely pleasurable. If you live in this spirit, the help you need will come to you naturally unasked.

\* \* \* \* \*

To begin with keep up your habits regarding bath and diet, so that you may get undisturbed sleep. This will make it easy for you to think of God and to meditate. When the body is healthy it helps to fix your mind on Him. As you progress your diet and sleep will automatically undergo certain necessary changes.

\* \* \* \* \*

Spiritual inquiry has arisen from that which is the source of you and all that is manifest, that is "*Ishwara*", the Lord of the Universe.

To be sure, there is a way of approach even in terms of gain and loss: not to aspire to God-realization is loss and to aspire to it is gain - although He is Self-luminous. He and He alone is the one thing needful, all the rest is useless. Without Him man cannot live. Leaving Him there is no place to go. Therefore to exclude Him is impossible, He cannot be set aside. Because He is all in all, such is the nature and the mode of His play. Without Him man simply cannot proceed. He alone is. Through delusion you forget Him, all trouble is due to ignorance alone.

If man endeavours to live his life in the world according to "*dharma*", (the dictates of religion and righteousness), he will gradually overcome sorrow and will progress towards peace. Without Him Supreme Peace cannot be found.



## IN ASSOCIATION WITH MA

[Translated from Bengali]

— Amulya Kumar Dutta Gupta

Dhaka, August 20th, 1939

Sadek Khan, the Personal Assistant to the Commissioner called on Ma along with two other Deputy Magistrates. Ma was told that when She had been to Coxbazar, Sadek had been the Sub-Divisional Officer there. Ma told him :

"Baba, just as you receive a pension for working in your job, there is also a pension on this Path. In your present position, however much you may earn, you will never be able to satisfy all your wants. World means *duniya*, i.e. based on duality. Therefore there is happiness and sorrow, light and darkness, virtue and sin : The one is never without the other. Happiness is followed by sorrow and sorrow again by happiness. Therefore you must try to become established in your true Nature. When this is achieved you will find supreme peace."

Then the Senior District Magistrate, Manindra Babu arrived. When he was introduced, it was mentioned that he was unmarried and was practising yoga. Ma asked him :

"Baba, so you have not tied a garland round your neck and are practising yoga ? *Hathayoga* or *Rajayoga* or some other yoga ?"

Manindra Babu : Not *hathayoga*; I practise *rajayoga*. Previously I could be at it for long hours and liked it a lot; but now, due to laziness, I cannot do very much.

Mataji : Laziness is certainly an obstacle, an enemy. Well, has this yoga that you practise become natural to you ?

Manindra Babu : I do not understand it. Often it seems to have become natural to me, yet at other times I doubt whether this is so.

Mataji : Have you learnt this yoga from a Guru ?

Manindra Babu : In the eyes of the world, I have no Guru, but I know full well that I have a Guru.

Mataji (laughing loudly) : Without asking questions, information cannot be elicited.

### August 23rd, 1939

I had heard that Sri Ma was arriving at Dhaka by the Calcutta Mail today and departing for Kheora.

There was a large crowd at the station by the time Mataji arrived. She sat down smilingly under a flowering Gul Mohur tree at the end of a platform.

Ma was saying :

"The road is long, time is short, keep on walking without idleness. You are enjoying the pension earned by your worldly labours, now try to earn a pension also in the spiritual world. Otherwise you will have to return again and again. If you try hard, you can obtain a pension in this very life or at least reduce the chances of having to return many more times. But if you do not work you will be obliged to take another return ticket. Already you have taken so many return tickets, oh so many :

Manmohan Babu : We know how to earn a pension in our worldly life. Please tell us how to do so in our spiritual life.

Mataji : If you practise faithfully what you have learnt from your Guru, your pension will be provided.

An old man : I wanted to stay with you but you would not let me do so !

Mataji : Could you have stayed merely because I asked you ? You would then have started worrying about your son, your daughter and the grandchildren (Everybody laughs). It is better for you to stay at home and do your work there. Suppose your children wanted to leave home and pursue a religious life, would you not have pointed out to them that if they practised their religion by forsaking you, they would not attain their spiritual goal. Similarly they can also retort that since you have brought them into the world, you should not forsake them now. (Everybody laughs).

The old man : So then tell me please what I should do now !

Mataji : Stay in your house within closed doors. This will be as good as not staying at home. But your children will be satisfied to see you in the premises.

The old man : Is it possible to live within closed doors in a household ?

Mataji : Can you live in a *dharmasala* ?

The old man : No, I can't.

Mataji : Can you not convert your house into a *dharmasala* ? I strongly advise all to do so !

The old man : What is the use of promising something which I know I cannot do ?

Mataji : You mean to say you cannot convert your house into a *dharmasala* ? What else is it but a *dharmasala* ? You presume that you own the house, that your son and daughter are yours .. but when you breathe your last, everything will have to be left behind. Then, where will your house be, where your son and daughter ? This is why everybody should understand that he is living in a *dharmasala* . "Our real home is not here. My son and daughter don't belong to me, nor do I belong to them." How do you feel about thinking on these lines ?

The old man : When thinking in this fashion one cannot live a family life.

Mataji : Why don't you relax your hold, stand apart as an onlooker and see whether your household still functions or not. He who really owns your house and family, He will arrange for everything. Once you can place your trust wholeheartedly in Him, He is sure to run your household very smoothly.

Furthermore, you have not been born with the sole object of living a family life. See what a state you have reached by doing so ! Your black hair has turned white, your teeth have fallen. How long will you continue to misunderstand your role in the comedy of life for the Real ?

Listen, it is no good remaining in abject poverty all your life. As it is we live in constant want. No sooner do we satisfy one want, than a new one crops up. Having built one house you then hanker after another, or you wish to replace your old car by a new one. In this manner you spend one life after another in the attempt of fulfilling your worldly desires. It is good to call a halt to this incessant craving. This is why I say, it is no good to remain permanently in poverty, in other words to let constant wanting be your second nature. It is much better to strive towards redeeming your *prana*.

The old man : By '*prana*' do you mean the act of inhaling and exhaling ?

Mataji : Yes, we talked about this subject only the other day. As the *prana* , He resides within each creature. He is the Life of all lives (*praner prana*), the Supreme Life (*mahaprana*). Ever remain in His presence. At all times repeat His name with every breath. You will realize everything in this way. Creation, preservation, destruction; all the paths of spiritual enquiry, of action, of devotion are all contained in this process. The sense perceptions, such as sight, taste, smell, etc: the individual, the world, the One with attributes and devoid of attributes, are all embraced in this process.

The world is manifested as the *prana* (life force) in waves. This is *Prakriti* (Nature). One must rise beyond this Nature. Just as still water can be reached by pursuing flowing waves, so Supreme Life (*mahaprana*) can also be realized by performing *sadhana* with every breath (*praner sadhana*). This kind of *sadhana* can



be practised in all states. God Himself is present as the breath. Nothing can be achieved without breath control. What I said about sitting in one's house with the doors shut means just this. To withdraw the senses from their objects of enjoyment means to close the doors. Otherwise, what would be the use of sitting in one's room within closed doors ? (Smiling) You should partake of several different preparations when taking your meal; then only can your intake be increased.

Pramatha Babu : Ma, please make sure that this is done by us !

Mataji : What does partaking of different preparations mean ? *Japa*, meditation, reading scriptures or religious books one after another, so that you can devote more and more time to this. Should you be unable to perform *japa* beyond a certain length of time, turn to reading spiritual books or listen to talks on spiritual subjects or do *kirtan*. This is what is meant by partaking of several food preparations.

The old man : This seems to be very difficult.

Mataji : Do you want to set to work or do you just want to eat and drink and sit idle ? Can you afford to behave in this manner ? How is it possible to earn your pension if you do not work at all ?

Pramatha Babu : Why does not the Mother prepare food and feed the children ?

Mataji : When will She do so ? When they really pray to Her to prepare food for them. Rely on her entirely like an infant and you will see that She will make all necessary arrangements .

When grown-up children request their mother : "Ma, please cook our meals and feed us !" The mother may then turn round and say : "Why should I ? Can't you cook for yourself ? Or else get married so that your wife may cook for you !" (Everybody laughs loudly).

As the time of departure of the train was nearing, Sri Ma stopped talking and Bhupati Mitra took the opportunity of asking Her something concerning the Dhaka Ashram. I heard Ma reply :

"I have nothing to say on this. You should all get together and decide whatever is best for you. If the Ashram belonged to me, perhaps I might lay down certain rules and regulations. But there is nothing that can be called my own. I did not even decide on the site where the ashram should be built. It is true that I used to come to this place from time to time even before the ashram was built. Therefore, Jyotish (Bhaiji) thought it was my *Kheyal* to establish an ashram here. Actually those who had in the past performed their spiritual practices in that place used to take me there. That is why I say that I have nothing to say on the subject of ashrams. Carry out whatever you think best. Those who gave the inspiration for building the ashram are looking after it, and will continue to do so".

## 29th August, 1939

Sri Sri Ma's new Ashram at her birthplace in the village Kheora was ceremonially inaugurated today.

From there Sri Ma visited Sultanpur, Comilla, Chittagong, Vidyakut, etc. and eventually came to Dhaka for a day only, on Sept. 13th, 1939. On hearing this, I at once went to the Ashram. There, a brief conversation concerning Sobha Ma's meeting with Ma at Comilla ensued.

I asked Ma, "To have a genuine desire and to stimulate a desire is surely not the same thing. I at first misunderstood what you were saying. I noticed another thing : whenever you asked Shobha Ma a question on any essential point, she would reply without any hesitation so that one could not help being impressed or amazed.

Mataji : When a thing is being discussed, it is better not to refer to any particular person and whatever I say now should also not be construed to refer to any particular person. You should specially keep this in mind !

You were talking about answers to questions on essential truths; do you know how this takes place ? Even in the material world you may have noticed that when someone acquires special proficiency in any particular subject, he can talk at length on other similar subjects. If he is thoroughly acquainted with a certain aspect of some branch of knowledge, he can talk on other branches also in a balanced way. The same applies to the knowledge of essential truths.

Knowledge (*jnana*) may supervene in three different ways. One possibility is to acquire knowledge by the study of scriptures. Another way is to have certain inner experiences during their studies. As one progresses and has more and more experiences, one's understanding of the scriptures starts undergoing all kinds of changes. These changes can be of endless variety.

There is yet another kind of knowledge which is not based on the study of scriptures and the like. This is Self-revealed. Just as the juice of ripe fruit flows of itself so this knowledge reveals itself. These three types of knowledge cause different kinds of *bhava* and different behaviour. By observing the attitude of mind and the conduct of persons who have acquired knowledge, it can be understood whether their knowledge is based on the scriptures or on their own inner experience.

The same applies to *samadhi*. People frequently say, "so and so goes into *samadhi*". So I should like to ask what are the characteristics of *samadhi* ? Only by watching the symptoms of the body one cannot decide on the type of *samadhi*. Someone may have closed his fists and it may be impossible to open them even by force. In another case perhaps one hand is lying crosswise on the other. In a third

case, may be, the feet are crossed, or else both hands and feet are static in a crossed position. But just by noticing all this one cannot say whether it is a *samadhi*.

I : Ma you made us understand at Navadwip that if someone by the force of some *bhava* closes his fists in the intensity of feeling and loses outer consciousness, then this is not a case of *samadhi* . If one tries to hold on to any *bhava* by force this may happen. Here desire and passion are still present, so it cannot be termed as *samadhi* .

Mataji : Yes, but do not belittle such a state. It is no mean achievement to curb all worldly thoughts and concentrate only on a single type of *bhava* for some length of time, one can slowly proceed towards fulfilment. You must have observed food being cooked in steam. This process is somewhat similar. If one notices that while boiling something in steam, the steam is not being dispersed away, then one understands that the food will be boiled on its own, and the more it is boiled the more will its colour change. Likewise, if by forsaking all other thoughts, someone remains absorbed in one particular type of *bhava* then he is gradually transformed both within and without. By remaining in such a state for some length of time, he will eventually attain perfection (*siddhi*).

I : Does one retain any knowledge of the outer world when in a state of *samadhi* ? Once, when explaining to us the state of *samadhi* you had said that, supposing you were conversing normally and felt the urge to answer a call of nature; then suddenly a state of *samadhi* supervened and you lost consciousness of this. Three or four hours may have passed in such a state. Later, when you returned to your normal state you again felt the call of nature with the same intensity as before the *samadhi*, not more, not less. But during those three or four hours that had elapsed in *samadhi*, did you retain any knowledge of the outer world ?

Mataji : You have referred to the urge of nature's calls. During *samadhi* bodily urges are kept in abeyance. Everything is thrown up and one merges into Oneness. Later after having gradually become completely still, the previous state may again be resumed. This may be repeated several times. You may perhaps have noticed that I went to the toilet. Suddenly *bhava* intervened and all outer things were forgotten. Later, when the ecstasy became subdued, I may have relieved myself, but again on return to the *bhava*, outer things were stopped.

I : Ma, you have described what was happening inside your body. What I should like to know is this : Suppose you are lying in a state of *samadhi* and we start crying in fear because your *samadhi* does not seem to end. Would you in your state of *samadhi* be aware that we were weeping ?

Mataji : In that state there is no question of duality. All is merged into ONE. Everything is contained in the One—the fragments and the whole exist simultaneously just like water and its waves.

I : Ma you said that knowledge can come about in three ways : through a study of scriptures, through a combination of study and inner experience, and through direct vision. Can somebody who has not acquired any of these types of knowledge, take part in discussions on the essence of things ! Suppose he remembers his former birth, can he give instruction on spiritual truth ?

Mataji : The remembrance of previous births can be of many kinds. There is infinity in everything. Somebody may be able to tell about his father, mother, country, and so on of his previous birth. He may relate several incidents which can be proved to have actually happened. Others may have retained the knowledge acquired in a previous birth. Suppose someone has by spiritual practices attained to a certain realm (*loka*) and become closely connected with its Gods and Goddesses; he may then be reborn retaining the knowledge of all this, and be able to converse on vital matters of truth in accordance with it. How can one explain the different kinds of states that may be attained ! Everything is of infinite variety.

At this stage there was an interruption to Mataji's talk as many ladies had come to perform their *pranama*. The small room could not accommodate all the people, so Ma went to the Kirtan Hall. There I again asked :

"Ma, some people believe you to be totally perfect. Yet they cannot understand why you do not always answer their questions to their satisfaction. Why is this so ?

Mataji : (laughing) Look, you say, whosoever is completely perfect, why should he not be able to answer all questions at all times ? Actually if somebody is perfect in all respects, he is able to divulge all truths, whatever anyone present. Then again he may also adapt himself what he says to the grasping capacity of the people present. There are various aspects to this problem. But for this body there is no problem : whatever has to happen, is happening. This body has no particular *bhava*. At times certain things may be voiced by this body, but it is not at all concerned whether it satisfies people or not. At other times this body does not like to speak in any way that would hurt someone's feelings. Whatever is meant to happen does happen through this body. Where is the confusion in this ?

I : Everything is confusing. (Everybody bursts into loud laughter).

Mataji : If someone believes that I at times do not reply because I am unable to do so, why should I mind it ? I have no objection to anything you may say about me.

I : Well, Ma, what is the harm in there being a bit of ignorance together with perfection ? Do not knowledge and ignorance together make up wholeness ?

Mataji : Of course, there may also be a bit of ignorance within perfection, but do you know in what way ? This slight ignorance is completely under the control of the Perfect One, whereas the ordinary human being is subjected to ignorance. One who is perfect is not subservient to anybody or anything.

A number of similar subjects were then discussed. In the evening many visitors came to the Ashram. Manindra Babu, the Deputy Magistrate, asked some questions on the present state of the country. He said : "Ma, when will the oppression and injustice that can be observed in our country, end ? The nation seems to be heading towards destruction. What is the means to save it ? I do not want to say anything about myself, but what can be done to save the country or the nation ?"

Mataji : This is just the present way of this country. Such is the world--*duniya*, based on duality. There is bound to exist side by side joy and sorrow, truth and falsehood, war, dissention. At times there is peace, then again upheaval : like the waves which continuously rise and fall.

You have said, you do not seek anything for yourself, but this is not quite correct. You have identified yourself with the country so that its problems have become your own. Thus whatever you say about the country is also what you say about yourself. If you can merge yourself in something still bigger, such as the whole world, you will come to realize that these wars and dissentions are all part of the Almighty's *lila*. Sorrow and disaster come into being and are again driven away. It is He who is awakening in you the intense desire to change the state of affairs. Because He now wants things to change. He has aroused these feelings in you and in many others. If you look upon everything in this detached manner nothing will upset you anymore.

Mataji continued to converse in this way until late at night.

[ To continue ]



## AFTER THE FIRST MEETING

—A European devotee

Meeting Sri Ma in Madras resulted in some inner disturbances, but after a few months I was keen to meet her again. I learned that she was to be in Poona by mid-June (1972). This was a journey of not more than about 24 hours by bus and metre-gauge train.

When I reached Sri Ma's ashram in Poona, I found no sign of activity and was told she would arrive in a couple of days. I found a low cost student room, as this was near the university and explore the area. There was a small temple to the Divine Mother on the hillside above the ashram - inside was an orange painted rock, which was the image, and I noted that garlands were available there for devotees.

Waiting finally came to an end and at last Sri Ma arrived along with a group of cars. The assembled devotees could have her darshan for a short while and this was the situation for the whole 5 days I was there with her, as she was not keeping well. But she did walk up and down the verandah of her cottage, and I found myself gazing at her for hours, as one could not take one's eyes off her white clothed figure; it was so fascinating. Two incidents stick in my mind.

I had purchased a garland from the vendors at the Mother's temple, and bargained the price right down to a level I felt was reasonable. But when I tried to present it to Ma somehow I was not able to do so and I felt she would not accept it - the reason I came to understand was that I had "contaminated" it by reducing the price to the undoubtedly poor vendor. Thereafter I always paid the asking price of anything purchased for an offering. Sri Ma, pervading everywhere, was after all present in the whole process of offering including the purchase. Any "violence" in the scheme of things made the offering unworthy. At least that was the message I received.

When I came to return to Sri Ramanasramam I took leave of Sri Ma and she gave me the sweetest imaginable smile. As I did my pranams I felt within she was offering me her hand, if I wanted it, for help in my sadhana. Instantly something from within accepted the offer and it was as if we shook hands, "it was a deal".

On my return to Arunachala I told a friend about Sri Ma's continued stay in Poona, and he left very soon to see her also. He came back after a couple of weeks and told me of his stay and how Sri Ma, at his request, had permitted him to meditate before her for 15 minutes. Somehow that stuck in my mind, and I wanted

to return to Poona. I heard that she had suddenly left Poona on 5<sup>th</sup> August, giving the cars following her the slip, and could not be traced anywhere. No one, but no one knew where she was. It turned out she had gone to stay for a couple of days in the hall of a Siva temple in Sion, Bombay. It was looked after by old devotees of Sri Ma but all but one of them were in Poona. Swami Paramananda was with Ma but was told to stay indoors in case he was recognised. After two and a half days her presence was made known and she moved to the garden of B.K. Shah, where she usually stayed when in Bombay. After 4 days she returned to Poona. This unexpected long presence in Poona was totally at odds with her original program to go to Calcutta, Varanasi and Kankhal but it meant she was still there when I returned around 15<sup>th</sup> August.

On my arrival I was relieved to see the clothes lines with the drying white clothes, tiny white socks and yellow towels, which meant Sri Ma was there. This time the visit took on a different flavour, knowing Ma would be there for a couple more weeks and since her health was back to normal there was a full program every day. It was as if it was Christmas day every day. Upon my arrival I sat down with the devotees in the hall of the ashram and Ma was sitting on a bench in the corner, a yellow towel over her head. After about 20 minutes I became aware that my mind, which had been buffeted by the usual experience of traveling long distances by train in India, had become quite quiet and peaceful. It had happened by itself, unawares as it were.

A number of occasions stick in my mind after the 30 years that have passed since that visit to Poona. One day Ma visited the house of a devotee. A number of devotees accompanied Ma in cars. After we arrived an old man started reciting slokas, and his devotion was palpable. Looking at Ma, who was listening to him intently I noticed she no longer looked to be a woman of around 80, she looked to be so youthful, a girl of perhaps 25 - 30 years. As I gazed at her my mind tried to analyse what it was that made her appear so young. I failed but the fact remained.

Another time Dilip Kumar Roy, the well-known disciple of Sri Aurobindo, and singer, visited the ashram with Indira, the mother of his ashram. He was elderly and moved slowly and when he sang his voice was soft with his age. But as he sang his singing became stronger and stronger and he was sitting then upright and straight. It was almost a different person sitting there at the end of the recital.

During my visit Raksha Bandhan was celebrated. On this occasion a sister ties a coloured "rakhi" on the wrist of her brother as a protection. So too the Guru ties it on the wrists of disciples. The rakhi is a little coloured symbol with a variety of designs. I was watching Ma doing this and when she came to a German devotee of

many years, she happened to tie the Hindu aryan symbol like the Nazi Swastika (but the other way round). The devotee had been closely involved with the Nazi party during the world war, this was no coincidence, though I thought Ma would not have known of the use by Hitler of this symbol so similar to the Aryan one. One could see how this struck the devotee. That night there was 30 minutes of silent meditation to commemorate Sri Ma's self diksha, and Ma's touch would be felt by all.

Eight days after Raksha Bandhan was Krishna's birthday. It was the custom to celebrate this by having a dance by "cow herders" who would carry pots of curds on their shoulder. Ma joined in the dance and did a turn round with all the lady devotees. Then she threw curds into each person's mouth as prasad. When I saw her roll her sleeves up and put her hand in the pot it reminded me immediately of my physical mother. Of course the curds went not only in one's mouth but on one's face!

After my arrival I had requested one of Ma's girls if it would be possible to meditate with her (as had happened with my friend). I heard nothing for several days and on one day I had left the ashram to have some lunch nearby, when suddenly someone rushed up to say I was being called in response to my request. When I reached Ma's cottage I found to my dismay that Ma was on the chowki on the verandah surrounded by a group of people. Rather embarrassed I sat in front of her in the middle of them. After may be 15 minutes someone placed a piece of fruit in my hands as a hint that time was up. However not wishing to lose this opportunity I did not follow the lead as any Indian would surely have recognised it to be. I was waiting for some indication from within and it did not come. There was a ripple of laughter from those present. Finally someone whispered in my ear that a Maharaja had come to see Ma and Ma should attend to him. I immediately got up. To cap it Ma indicated I could take lunch at the ashram, but I declined as I already had lunch. To refuse prasad was another gaff, coming from Ma as this invitation did - which more time in India would have shown me.

By the end of a couple of weeks I was feeling ill and had decided it was time to go. I went to Ma's room to take leave and did my pranam. As I turned to go out of her room I found the door was closed. This took me by surprise and I did not know what to do. I was neither here nor there. Just at that moment Ma started speaking things to me, which when translated, turned out to be advice for sadhana. My immediate thought was "I cannot possibly do that". This was followed by another calming thought- "of course you can, if Ma asks you to".



I took a rickshaw to the station and got onto the train. I was just finding my reserved seat when I found to my dismay that my wallet had vanished from my pocket. I quickly got off the train—no money, no ticket. Luckily I had kept Rs. 4 or so in my shirt top pocket and it was enough to get a rickshaw back to the ashram. I was able to borrow some money from a German friend and my stay was thus extended until Ma left.

From that time I found myself always being drawn to visit Ma again, which was not so difficult as I was living in India. However I found that often if it was not the right time my body would feel disturbed if I pursued the plan and it returned to normal if I dropped it. Thus I could not go when I wanted. After some more months in this condition of wanting to go and not being able, at the point where I felt I badly needed to consult Ma on some important things, I felt that I could leave at last.

So I started off in mid December 1972 for Varanasi (since I had heard that Ma was there) without a train reservation. Berths had to be booked in advance and there was no time for this. The first night was sitting crammed in a passenger compartment until I reached a mid-way station where I could get a berth in an express train bound for Calcutta.

Reaching Howrah station I visited Dakshineswar and saw Sri Ramakrishna's room and the temple of Mother Kali, as well as the other places of his sadhana. A pigeon blessed me with its offering as I had darshan of the deities—I hoped it was a good omen. Taking the night train I arrived at Varanasi and went immediately to Ma's ashram in Bhadaini. The office told me of a dharmasala where I could stay and having found a room and had a bath I went to register at the hotel desk. I was shocked to be told I could not stay anywhere as I did not have my passport with me. Being the time of Mrs. Gandhi's "Emergency" there were new rules which I had not fallen foul of before, and previously I never carried my passport. I went back to the ashram and told them what had happened. Ma had just come out to give darshan and I could see them telling her my plight. After a journey of 3 days and nights things were not looking too good. Had I to go right back? Someone at the ashram suggested a visit to the police station and they in turn passed me on to the tourist officer - who was not available until next day. But where could I go now? I took a rickshaw back towards the station, quite at a loss, when someone ran out calling "cheap hotel, cheap hotel". My reply was: "No passport" but that did not seem to be a problem and I found myself in a room with a cow-dung coated floor and a single string cot all for Rs. 7. As soon as I settled in I was told I had to move out as the room had in fact been specially prepared for a bridal couple. At this time

desperation had set in and I refused to move. I bolted the door. I did not dare go out in case I lost the room, and so my idea to visit the ashram again had to be dropped.

The next day after being passed from one person to another, I was told by the police, I could stay but only in Ma's ashram. I knew that foreigners were not normally allowed to stay but I had no option but to ask. The answer was as I expected. I was completely at the end of my tether by then and the attitude "Ma - you must help" faded away and was replaced by "Now what shall I do?" Just at that very instant someone came running from Ma - who was walking in the next courtyard—to say that I could stay in a small cottage built for Ma but currently unoccupied, about 25 minutes walk from the ashram. So with great relief I moved my luggage there. That evening I could visit the ashram again and Ma was giving darshan in the Gopal Mandir. In the middle of the darshan the lights all went out. I had in my bag a candle and matches I had purchased for the cottage as it had no light. I brought them out. The candle was lit before Ma and darshan carried on. After may be 15 minutes the lights came on and someone snuffed out the candle—which made me sorry as I watched it smoke. Just then Ma indicated that they should light it again and it was done.

After darshan I returned to the cottage and slept on the floor in my sleeping bag. It was obvious that ants were enjoying the wooden door and window frames, which had been part eaten away.

The next day I went to the ashram in the happy expectation of seeing Ma again. At the very moment when she came out someone called me to say I had to return to unlock the cottage as it had to be sprayed by a pest-control company. All my bags had to be moved to a watchman's room and I missed darshan altogether. Returning later after the spraying I found the whole place awash with DDT spray, dead and dying lizards and creatures were everywhere. The place was cleaned out, the dead creatures removed but it was not a healthy environment in which to sleep, so I had no choice but to put my sleeping bag on the verandah, though December in North India is not warm.

Because of the police restrictions I was having my food at the canteen of Sri Ma's hospital next to the ashram. After a stay of 5 days Ma was to leave for Kanpur but I could not follow as I had to wait for my passport to be posted up from Sri Ramanasramam. The Christmas holiday was coming up and I was hoping it would arrive before. On Ma's last day before departing I was sitting near the Annapurna temple of the ashram when I happened to look at a picture of Sri Ma on the wall. It was as if there was a ray of light (though it was not light) coming from it. I looked at another picture and it was the same, as if it was alive with energy.

On the morning of her departure Ma was strolling round the ashram with a small group of devotees following. One of them was an American woman and I was able to hear part of her conversation with Ma, which was translated into English. She had asked a question about her sadhana and Ma asked what her practice was. She answered, "Transcendental Meditation". Ma repeated the words with her Bengali accent-she clearly had no idea what it was. Then she said some things that I do not recollect. The lady replied with a puzzled look that she did not understand what Ma had said and Ma's reply was "How can you fail to understand? This is God (she pointed at a temple roof), that is God (she pointed at a wall), that is God (she pointed at the ground), everything is God". Immediately the doubts of the lady were removed and she seemed very happy with the reply.

Sri Ma left and I had to remain another 5 days on my own over Christmas before the passport finally came. I was in fact just beginning to feel at home there, enjoying the atmosphere of the Ganga, when I was free to leave. But by then I had had enough and decided to take the train back to Tiruvannamalai, instead of following Ma.

Shortly after I arrived at Varanasi I had asked Chitra if I could have a private talk with Ma but at the time she was very busy. Finally Chitra said I could have my talk, but by that time I had lost the inclination. But the answer to my question did come and so clearly and plainly-no words could have conveyed it so well. An incident took place during this waiting period that somehow I knew instantly illustrated the answer to my question. It was as if Ma in the form of the "world display" was giving me the answer I had traveled 3 days for.



