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- May, 1968

*Just as there is a veil of ignorance for the individual,
So there is also a door to Knowledge.*

Mātri Vāni

How can there be an ego where the *Ātmā* is? In the sphere of 'mine and yours', there the ego exists, does it not? Renunciation and attraction dwell side by side. He Himself is both change and immutability. Live for the revelation of the Self hidden within you. He who does not live thus is committing suicide. Try to remove the veil of ignorance by the contemplation of God. Endeavour to tread the path of immortality: become a follower of the Immortal.

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To carry out scrupulously the Guru's instructions is the greatest service. It is written: "The gratification of one's own will and pleasure is called self-indulgence, the fulfilment of Sri Krishna's will and pleasure is called love." Therefore: to put into practice without reasoning the Guru's orders means engaging in the greatest service of all.

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Wherever you are, from that very state you must obey the Guru's commands. Of course, at times the Guru Himself arranges for the carrying out of His orders. If you exert yourself, the power to live according to His injunctions may manifest. One should have complete faith in the Guru's precepts.

* * *

This body is not here to reply to your questions. In actual truth this body does not stay with another, nor eat

or wear anything given by another, nor enter the home of another, nor converse with another. Then again, expressed from a different angle, this body, as it were, speaks to its own mothers, fathers and friends. To deliver a talk or lecture does not occur to this body. As you ring the bell so you hear the sound.

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He alone IS; therefore, He Himself speaks to Himself for the sake of His own revelation. The ONE who appears as movement as well as stability, He is also the *Akṣara*—that which is indestructible. On the surface and in the deepest depths is none but He; in movement He is spontaneous movement where, although ever remaining motionless, He is perpetual motion.

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The store of action which leads to vain results, vain experience—appearing to be quite useless—even in the guise of futility is He and no other. This is so where the question of store or no store of action does not arise, where everything exists, although there is nothing: One's own true Self—the Self reposing within Itself.

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The delightful words or sayings that help towards Self-realization, anything leading in that direction, should be accepted. Just as a thirsty man cannot forget water, so should one endeavour to keep the Goal awake within oneself.

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Different kinds of flowers are prescribed for different kinds of *pūjā*; similarly there are various mantras and various kinds of rosaries. To practise *japa* with the help

of beads is certainly necessary. But when *japa* comes about of itself—spontaneously—then of course there is no more need to count. However, as long as one performs *japa* by effort, one will have to keep count of it. There is all the difference between doing *japa* and *japa* occurring of itself. The mind must reach a condition where it cannot remain without the remembrance of God.

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One should make an effort to practise *sādhana*, in other words, to go to one's real home. If the mind is not turned in that direction there will be foolishness, misery—suffering. As if by compulsion the mind runs after the gratification of its desires, which leads to suffering. The mind has become uncontrollable. By the repetition of a divine name or mantra and by meditation this illness can be cured.

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You have not seen Him, but you are yearning for Him—because He is your very own. Does one pine for that which one is seeing? One's own has been lost, or rather is hidden behind a screen, this is why one is hankering after it.

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Mother—As I Have Known Her*

Girijashanker Bhattacharya

On the eve of the summer vacation of 1925, my very revered friend Rai Bahadur Pran Gopal Mukherjee, then Dy. Post Master General at Dacca, invited me there, holding but as a bait the likelihood of hearing the exposition of the *Bhāgavata* by two very learned Goswamis and also meeting a "Māji" who, the Rai Bahadur added, had impressed him very deeply. I did not give much thought to the Māji, but accepted my friend's invitation with some alacrity as both the Goswamis he mentioned commanded great respect as sound exponents of the doctrine of the Bengali school of Vaishnavism. So I went to Dacca; and a day or two after reaching there, I accompanied the Rai Bahadur and Srijut Nani Gopal Banerji, then lecturer in Sanskrit, Dacca University, to Shahbagh, a magnificent garden of the Nawab of Dacca. The late Ramani Mohan Chakravarti, known subsequently as Bholanath, husband of Ma Anandamayi, was Superintendent of the Shahbag gardens.

Ramani Babu was then living in a small building in the garden with his family, i.e. Ma Anandamayi and one or two other members. There were two rooms in the building, one rather small and the other a little bigger. The shades of evening were gathering, and the extensive and carefully tended garden looked sombre owing to the tall and leafy trees, filling our hearts with reverence, while the sweet perfume of the numerous flowering plants nearby added a rare charm. We were given *āsanas* on the floor of the bigger room and near the door between the rooms sat

* The following are portions of an article published in the book :
"Ma Anandamayi" by Devotees, in 1946. The book has been exhausted years ago and will not be reprinted.

Ramani Babu while in the small room sat Mataji. She did not yet speak to any stranger, and questions put to her would be answered through Ramani Babu. She sat partly veiled so that I could not get a full view of her face.

No sooner had I taken my seat, than I felt myself in a peculiar state of mind, of which I had had no previous experience and the reason for which is yet a mystery to me. I had gone to see Mataji with hardly any preconceived notion, and indeed I did not expect to be very much interested. The state of mind of which I speak, is difficult to describe; in any case I cannot give an adequate idea of it. All thoughts and ideas seemed to have vanished from my mind; and practically oblivious as I was of the surroundings, there was a sense of pleasure, very great pleasure, arising from what I do not know. Almost as long as I was in the presence of Mataji my mind was in that state. I left the place however with the Rai Bahadur, somewhat surprised at what had happened, and spoke to him about it on the way. He gave me the *sāstric* name for it. What struck me then, as it strikes me now, is that this was an experience which came, as it were of itself. I should have regarded it as accidental were it not for the fact that a similar experience came to me next year (1926) at 'Shibnivas' in the Nadia District in the same circumstances, i. e. sitting near Mataji while the evening closed upon us. I was therefore led to think that on both these occasions, Mataji, for reasons best known to her, induced the peculiar state of mind in me, and since I found it very pleasurable I felt attracted towards her. Thus began an acquaintance which her ineffable grace has ripened into a relation no whit less dear than the dearest in the world.

By 1927, Mataji began to talk to all who sought her blessings, without the restrictions she had imposed on herself so far. Oh! For the glorious days we passed in her company then! Now she does not enter the dwelling-rooms in the residence of *grihasthas*; and wherever she goes she has

to be accommodated in a temple, dharmasala or ashram. But in those days she came to our homes just like a member of the family. The ladies of the house would prepare their beds alongside that of Mataji where they would sleep with her. But generally sleep there would be very little, for there would be *kirtana* and conversation with her till very late at night, sometimes even till the early hours of the morning. On those occasions Mataji would listen sympathetically to all, sometimes speak of her own early experiences and above all, by kindness of speech, gracious looks and sweet manners, inspire not only love and affection for her but also a faith that her presence enveloped us and would protect us in all circumstances. We did not care to ask ourselves whether she was a *Siddha Mahātmā* or an *Avatāra* (divine incarnation). We felt that she was *Mother* and that we might depend upon her. Could we but be with her always in this life and hereafter, we thought we would be perfectly happy, and more we did not want. Thus it is seen that she made an assault upon our hearts, and they were hers before we knew it—the intellect came into play much later.

In February 1945, Mataji's bhaktas at Berhampore (Bengal) made arrangements for celebrations lasting for a fortnight in view of her presence in their midst, and some *sannyāsis* and *sādhus* travelled all the way from Benares and other distant places to attend the function. I met there a very learned Swami of the *Śrī Sampradāya* who had come from Vrindaban. In the course of conversation he asked me : "What do you think of Anandamayi Ma?" I replied in a non-committal manner : "The Divine Power (*Daiṁ Śakti*) seems to be manifest in her." The Swamiji said : "Mataji is certainly a saint of the highest order. We cannot however, believing as we do in the *Śāstras* (Hindu Scriptures), agree with people who declare that she is an *Avatāra* or that she is the *Bhagavati* Herself."

Another very old saintly person, widely recognized as a *sādhu* of high order, on the other hand, prostrated himself

before Mataji, saying that she was the Universal Mother Herself (*Svayam Jagadamba*). When someone asked Mataji why she allowed him to fall at her feet, for at this his disciples were mortified, she replied: "Tell them that the feet of the Baba are always on my head."

I am of the opinion that for us it is an idle and entirely meaningless discussion whether Mataji is an *Avatāra* or a *Siddha Mahātmā*. While all other creatures come to the world in accordance with the law of *karma*, the *Avatāras* come of their own free will. *Siddha Mahātmās*, as is well known, are also free from *māyā* and come to the earth of their own will, proceeding from their *samskāras* of doing good to the world. Some hold, however, that the difficulty of regarding Mataji as a *Siddha Mahātmā* is unsurmountable. For we have no information of any *sādhana* by her in this body.

On this point there is no room for any doubt. I have made enquiries for myself. The first occasion when Mataji was discovered to be in *Bhāva Samādhi* was when she lived in our village (Ashtagram), and I have the evidence of reliable people, indeed of everybody living near about the place, that it lasted for nineteen hours during which she was, as it were, lifeless, so much so that ants gathered round her eyes. The different stages that she seemed to pass through after this came naturally and were completed within a short time and also without any instruction whatsoever from any living being, indeed, for some time, in spite of the opposition of relatives. All this points to the strange but incontrovertible fact that the various stages and forms of *sādhana* or spiritual exercises and evolution took place automatically in her body without any active agency on her part. The theory that her *siddhi* has not been attained in this body but in a previous one does not either seem to be tenable since she has said that she had no previous birth.

Again "*Brahmavid Brahma eva bhavati*" ("one who

knows the Brahman becomes the Brahman Himself"). This too some hold is not applicable to Mataji because, as she says there has never been any question of knowing or not knowing so far as she is concerned. This superconsciousness may be regarded as her very nature (*svabhāva*).

This diversity of opinion regarding her essential nature hardly touches Mataji and her reply to those who ask her : "What really are you ?" hits in my opinion the nail right on the head. She says : "I am what you think I am."

In 1927, when Mataji was staying with us for a day or two at Rajshahi, late Professor Aswini Kumar Mukerji put some questions to her. In those days Mataji used to have *Bhāva Samādhi*, sometimes so deep that she seemed almost lifeless. Hardly could any respiration be perceived and the pulse felt at the wrists. Sometimes again she would roll from one end of the room to the other ; and on one particular occasion in 1926, I remember she moved forward and backward on a fairly large platform in the Ashram of the late Balananda Brahmachari Maharaj at Deoghar. Her movements were so rhythmical and yet so awe-inspiring that I, for one, was reminded of the Cosmic Dance of Devi Kali. Again at times, Mataji would in her *āvesha* (trancelike state) utter sweet and sonorous *stotras* (verses) not however in ordinary Sanskrit and with a preponderance of seed *mantras* (*bijas*).

Referring to Mataji's deep *samādhi*, Professor Mukherji asked : "How do you feel when you are in that state ?" I am afraid she will not answer such a question now. She tried then also to avoid answering ; but the Professor, old as he was, respectfully insisted. Mataji then said : "As you sit in this room you can see everything outside through the doors and windows, but when they are shut you cannot. This body feels as if all its doors and windows were shut. Again when you take a handful of mud and wash it in the water of a pond you see how finely it spreads on the water, So does this body feel". I do not know what

Prof. Mukherji understood but to me the meaning was clear. I understood Mataji to say that she became inwardly conscious while her outward consciousness received a check for the time being and she had a sense of expansion—Infinite Consciousness and Infinite Expansion.

Then the Professor asked: "Do you perceive the presence of any god or goddess at that time?" Mataji tried to parry a good long while saying that gods and goddesses might be seen if one wished to do so. But the Professor insisted: "Do *you* see them?" And finally she said: "They were seen before." I understood therefore, that she had passed from all forms to the Formless. Thus must all seekers after Truth and Reality do before their efforts are crowned with success.*

Mataji, to me, is one through whom shines forth in all its effulgence the Infinite, and when I bow down to her, I bow down to *It (Tat)*. At the same time, however, I am not blind, nay I value very much the human kindness in her, her solicitude for the least of our comforts when we are with her, the sweetness of her speech and smile, the affectionate inquiry about our welfare. Call her an *Avatāra* if you like or a *Siddha Mahātmā* if you prefer, it makes no difference to me for all practical purposes.

Is it a tiny tot that has been brought to her? See how her face beams. Does a school or college girl want to talk to her? How kindly she receives them! Can you be half as tender as she is to the sick and decrepit? And has anybody ever had elsewhere such a balm of sympathy at the loss of a near and dear one? Yet, if you are tired of walking in the mazes of philosophy, in a few words she points out the way and you are thrilled with surprise and

* In Mataji's case there was never any effort. All the various stages came to her of themselves and as a play, not in order to attain anything.

delight. Or if in your *sādhana* a knot has to be straightened out, seek her help and see what happens. *Avatāra*, *Siddha Mahātmā*, whatever she may be, above all she is the Mother, ever tender, ever helpful, radiating love and affection. Her very sight purifies and ennobles.

That expression "shine forth" which I have used reminds me of an experience. It was in 1926 or 27 at Shahbag and I saw her on my way to my native village. It was about 9 o'clock in the morning. She was sitting on a cot in a small room and I was squatting on the floor. There was some ordinary conversation and for a fraction of a second I looked away from her. The next moment when I turned to her, gone was the Bengali lady and instead a resplendent form with light shining out of every pore of her body dazzled my eyes. I remember, I asked myself: "Where is the third eye?" On other occasions as well I noticed similar transfigurations. It seems to me she no longer has these transfigurations, nor does she have *avesh* or *samādhi*. Instead she seems now to live forever on a plane difficult or impossible for ordinary people to conceive. Once she was asked in my presence whether those who are ever conscious of the Brahman have dealings with people. Her reply was in the affirmative. I feel she is now like that. Sympathetic and tender she undoubtedly is, yet a mystery seems to envelop her. I feel she has travelled away from us although I know that nothing can be more false than this. She once said: "Are we separate?" Nay, Ma, I know we are not and in this knowledge is bliss; but I want to realize the truth of it, be always conscious of it.

Were I to point out one characteristic which above all shines in Mataji, I would at once say, "Non-attachment." She is kind, no one can be kinder; she is affectionate, no one can have more affection; she is sympathetic, no one can be more; she is solicitous of our welfare, I have not seen greater solicitude in anyone. My young daughter-in-law was with her at Vindhyachal for a few days and every letter

she wrote was full of the description of what Mataji did for her, how she took care of her. So that in spite of her shyness she was not in the least uncomfortable. Even now, when speaking of Mataji, her face lights up with joy. This is the feeling everyone has in the company of Mataji. And yet she is completely non-attached, nay it is because she is unattached that she can be so affectionate, so sympathetic, so kind. A non-attached person having no axe of his own to grind is the fittest to be really charitable and kind. From this non-attachment again proceeds another peculiarity of Mataji: nobody, whatever his character, seems to be unwelcome to her. Her patience too is inexhaustible. In Calcutta I have seen her surrounded by innumerable people almost the whole day and far into the night. She had the same gracious demeanour throughout and her kindly smile never left her face. People of all sorts and conditions come to her and probably no one goes away without feeling, however slightly, the better for the visit.

The next characteristic of Mataji that I would mention is her unwillingness to impose her will upon anybody. I have never known her do so for all these twenty years and more. She suggests, she recommends, she says it would be proper to do such and such things under the circumstances, but with a fine delicacy of feeling, never insists upon anyone following a particular line of action, both in matters earthly and spiritual. Indeed, the liberty she gives to all, often makes us apprehend that there is not sufficient cohesion among her followers. This does not trouble her in the least, for she is not out to form any new sect or party. On the contrary, all sects and creeds dissolve of themselves in her presence and under her influence.

Mataji is absolutely without any *sankalpa* i.e. motive. This sounds strange to ordinary mortals all whose actions proceed from a purpose. When asked what should be done in future regarding anything, her habitual reply is "*Jo ho jaye*"—wait for whatever happens. This is not putting off things

in the manner of lazy men, but it means that she acts spontaneously on the inspiration of the moment. Frequently has it happened during her travels that railway tickets have been bought at her direction for places not very far although her ultimate destination was far enough. Starting from Calcutta, for instance, tickets were purchased for Benares, where again without interruption the journey was continued to Delhi and then in a similar manner to Simla. This kind of motivelessness I have noticed in other great saints as well. It is this want of purpose that makes Mataji's actions tantamount to *Līlā* and indeed the actions of personalities like her make it possible for us to believe that the whole universe is the *Līlā* of the Eternal.

Mataji's way of bringing others to her point of view, if necessary, is also peculiar. I will give an instance. It is well known that Bholanath would, at times, like a stubborn child insist on doing things that happened to come to his mind. In this as in many other things he was a veritable child, simple, frank, truthful and always anxious to help. Mataji, as is also well-known, would never directly go against his wishes. Indeed, on this point as in everything else, she set an example to the most devoted of wives. On a certain occasion in my house at Rajshahi, Bholanath insisted that a goat should be sacrificed. I was in great difficulty, for I could never think of doing such a thing. As luck would have it, someone happened to bring a goat along to the great joy of Bholanath. I spoke to Mataji, without his knowledge of course. She said: "Wait and see what happens." I was extremely worried. She, in the meantime, lay down and seemed to go to sleep. Preparations were made to take the goat with suitable *pūjā* to a Kali temple. There was some delay, in any case arrangements for the sacrifice were not made quickly enough and when the party with the *pūjā* arrived at the temple, the priest said *Dashami*, (tenth day of the moon) having set in a few minutes before, there could be no animal

sacrifice that day. I did not think I was yet out of the wood, for Bholanath might have insisted on the sacrifice the next day, but to my great relief he forgot all about it. And Mataji? What did she do? She sat up when the party had started for the temple.



Neither by knowledge of the *Śāstras* nor by *sādhana* am I qualified to say what Mataji really is. To me she is more or less a fascinating mystery, an attractive and elevating personality with Infinity brooding over her. To know her is definitely blissful. Thousands all over India have now come in contact with her and to say the least, hundreds have been attached to her.* It is not at all likely that all these will have the same idea about her. May we have regard for all of them nevertheless; for truth is elusive and has many facets. Dull uniformity is not its hallmark. The man who *sincerely* regards Mataji as but a woman of extraordinary spiritual development, is in my opinion more blessed than one who *lightly* talks of her as a divinity that has strayed into our world of dust and storm. The great thing is to fix our attention upon Mataji, her words and actions, not at all the sundry theories and legends that float upon the stream of popular opinion. I may even go further and say that we should beware of the legends.

May the bliss of Mataji descend upon us all! May we all realize the truth about her! May we all be one in her Infinitude.

Om Shanti

* This article was written in 1945 or 46.

Some Recollections*

Arun Prakash Banerji

I.

It was Easter 1942. I had gone to meet Mataji in the Kishenpur Ashram on the Dehradun-Mussoorie Road. This was my first visit to Ma after I had met her at Lucknow a few months ago. On reaching Dehradun I came to know that some devotees were expected to come from Delhi for their annual *kirtana* in Mataji's presence. It was to take place on Easter Sunday from sunrise to sunset. On the previous evening all arrangements were completed. Some of the Dehradun devotees wanted to give a feast (*bhāndāra*) on the occasion and sought Ma's permission. She asked: "How many people are you going to provide for?" One said: "Two hundred." Mataji remained silent. Another said: "Ma, if you permit, we can make arrangements for, say, three hundred." Still Mataji kept quiet. A third said: "Ma, without your permission nothing can be done." Mataji looked up and said: "All right, let us hope that your wishes will be fulfilled."

The market was about five miles from the Ashram. Provisions had to be purchased the evening before. The bhaktas were busy.

Next morning the *kirtana* started with due rites and solemnity. The hall and the verandas were all packed, the crowd even over-flowed into the garden. Besides listening to the *kirtana* everyone wanted to have *darśana* of Mataji. The beggars and the sweepers of the locality also turned up, even passers by on their way to Mussoorie and other curious sight-seers, on noticing a crowd, flocked into the Ashram.

* Reprinted from the book "Ma Anandamayi" by Devotees, which has been out of print for nearly 15 years.

At about noon, Mataji withdrew from the hall and retired to her small room upstairs. Then she summoned those who were arranging the feast and asked them if they were ready. One of them said frankly : "Mataji, our arrangements are complete, but we had only about four hundred people in view. Now we find that more than five hundred are to be fed." Another : "The market is far off, otherwise something could be done." A third pleaded : "If we put off the meal until a little later we might manage." Mataji could no longer remain silent. "It is already noon; are they not hungry ?" she said and became silent. But soon afterwards she added : "No, they are to be fed, and fed immediately." Again she stopped for a moment and then spoke with a clear voice : "Make arrangements for serving them. The meal should be over within an hour and a half. Not one should go without food. Leave this body alone. Report only if there be any shortage. Otherwise do not come to me." I was present there. We all felt uncomfortable. But Mataji said with perfect ease : "Go and do as you are told. Do not forget, not one should go unfed. Don't be unhappy. God's service must be done with a cheerful heart."

I was perplexed. I was only an onlooker and could not help in any way. I made up my mind to avoid the meal knowing the situation. I no longer felt hungry. But after, a few minutes, Gurupriya Didi came to me in haste, saying : "Dada, please come soon. Haven't you heard Ma's command ? Everything must be over in an hour and a half. Won't you help by joining us without delay ?" I cast my thoughts aside. Mother had offered the boon of this meal and as her child I must enjoy it.

I took my seat with the crowd and began to eat the delicious things provided. Everyone was happy. Those who served seemed quite free from anxiety. I ate almost double the usual quantity. The meal proceeded in the midst of a good deal of laughter and merriment with

occasional shouts of "Jai Mā".

After the repast I went upstairs but did not want Mataji to discover me. I stood behind the door of her room, then with a happy heart prostrated, whispering to myself: "Ma, bless me that I may be worthy of a feast like this which brings your grace."

Those in charge of the *bhāndāra* were coming up to report to Mataji: the hour and a half was over. They opened the door and I found Mataji sitting in her usual tranquil mood. She smiled and asked: "What news?" The devotees cheerfully replied: "Ma, everyone has been fed sumptuously. We never had so much pleasure in serving food." Mataji asked: "What about your provisions?" One of them burst out: "More than five hundred people have eaten and yet there is enough left for two hundred more." Mataji said gravely: "This is very good. Not a particle should be wasted. Let those who come or are staying here be fed again in the evening. Everything must be consumed to-day. If it cannot be eaten here, let it be given to those outside who are hungry."

We all left her for an hour or so for rest. Our minds were busy with the laws of arithmetic: how could eatables for four hundred people satisfy more than five hundred and yet enough be left over for two hundred more? It was very baffling.

2

Shall I relate another incident of the same afternoon, when five *sādhus* arrived from Hardwar. There, at a religious meeting, acute controversy had arisen between them over some passage of the scriptures, for they were of different schools of thought. It was about to end in bitterness, when some gentleman implored them to accept arbitration. It was somewhat difficult to find a suitable arbiter who would be acceptable for purposes of settling disputed points of the *Sāstras*, particularly to *sādhus* belonging to

different sects. At last they suddenly agreed to refer the matter to Sri Anandamayi Ma. So they had come to her. They entered the Ashram scowling and full of gloom. When they were taken upstairs to Mataji's room, I followed them. Briefly told of the situation, Mataji smiled and entreated them to be seated in their daughter's room. Then she asked for fruit and sweets to be brought for their refreshment, but they refused to eat. Mataji insisted, saying: "When you have come to your little daughter, you will have to pay heed to her wishes." This was not a mere request but a command of love. The sadhus refused no longer. Then they asked to be left alone with Ma. After an hour the door was opened. They came out full of smiles, almost embracing each other. And Mataji's laughter filled the room. I could not help wondering how Ma, quite untutored in the *Sāstras*, could have settled the dispute.

3

In 1942, Mataji spent part of the summer in Bhimtal and I was privileged to stay with her. She was repeatedly asked to visit some ardent devotees in the neighbourhood. She was to return in three or four days, but actually stayed away for eight or ten days. Four or five of us remained at Bhimtal. The weather suddenly changed; there were showers and it grew cold. With Mother away, there was no warmth left in our hearts. My old trouble, asthma, re-appeared. I had great difficulty in breathing during the night.

Incessant coughing forced me to sit up. I thought of Mataji. When would she come? Just before starting, she had told me: "Baba, stay here like a good boy." I had not been a good boy, so I was visited with this malady. How long could I wait without treatment? I wanted to see a doctor in Lucknow, but of course with Ma's permission. But she delayed.

At last she came one evening at dusk. Someone who had accompanied her came running to my room. "Dada,

how are you? Ma was very anxious to return on your account. For the last few days she repeatedly said that you were not well. Are you not well? Mataji has come. You will soon be all right."

I was no doubt relieved by her return but did not show satisfaction. I was inwardly displeased and unhappy. When she knew of my illness, why did she not come earlier?

The person who had reported to me, returned to Ma, perhaps to inform her about me. On her way she paused for a moment at the door of my room and looking towards me, said: "Baba, are you oppressed with trouble? Don't you worry. Everything will be all right."

Then she went away. Her talk fell flat on me and I found no solace. I now had to make up my mind to return to Lucknow next morning for treatment. I did not go to Ma. People flocked to her room and I could hear their happy laughter and rejoicing. Perhaps she was relating some of her experiences. But I was in no mood for such stories. The night was fast approaching. My mind was overlast with the thought of the troubles and vexations in store for me during the night. Everyone in the premises was happy with the exception of my poor self. Whether I ate anything that evening I do not remember. But solitary, brooding, hopeless I was, feeling that Mataji was cruel, indeed very cruel to me. I tried to console myself with the thought that what was to happen must happen, and that there was no help. I reflected bitterly: "What am I to Ma?" Such considerations tormented me and made me even more miserable.

It was past midnight. The paroxysms of asthma, the difficulty in breathing and the strain of sitting up for a long time with practically no food, was more than I could endure silently. I came out of my room to go to Mataji. The door of her room was ajar. A lamp was burning inside. Mataji could not possibly have seen me as I stopped just behind

the door. I hesitated to enter and thought of returning. But I heard Ma's voice. "Come in!" she said. My burden was already considerably lightened. I went inside. She said: "Baba, you are suffering much, aren't you?" "I do," I answered, "I am unable to lie down and sleep."

"You will be all right, if you can just lie down and go to sleep," replied Mataji.

"But this is not possible. I have not slept for several nights and I am unable to stand it any longer."

Said Ma after a slight pause: "Do you keep a lamp burning in your room?" "I don't," I replied.

"Do you keep the doors and windows open?" "No, I keep one window open for ventilation."

"Do you use a blanket or a quilt?" "A blanket." "That is all right." She was silent for a moment. I also waited. Then she said: "Will you do one thing?" "I will, Ma, what is it?"

"Close your doors and windows as usual. Put out your lamp. Then go to bed. Before lying down make a clear resolve that you are going to sleep. And then lie down for rest. Will you do this?" I looked dully towards the wall and said: "I have done all this many times, with no effect."

She said with some warmth: "Do it once more as you are now told and do not worry!"

I did not know what to say, I kept quiet; then slowly left the room. I remembered her advice: "Do not worry!" but my mind was busy. How will it be possible? If I love Ma, it may be possible. If I fix my attention on her, it may be easy. Love alone can calm down all mental disturbances. Thoughts like these kept running in my mind. I went to my room. I did as I had been ordered. Before lying down, I sat on my bed with folded hands in order to say my prayers but I could not pray. All my pent-up feelings broke out into sobs and I burst into tears. I

needed rest. Would the divine Mother give me what I needed?

I lay down. Within a minute or so my eyes were closed and I fell asleep without any effort.

Next morning I got up late. When I opened the door of my room, Lina, a sweet girl-visitor who is no more alive, came running and said: "Dada, were you sleeping? Mataji enquired about you several times." I felt ashamed of myself and went straight to Mother's room.

She smiled and said: "Well, Baba, did you get sleep?"

"I have never slept so happily in all my life. I felt I was sleeping on the lap of the MOTHER." "Yes, it is the MOTHER's lap where everyone sleeps. She is loving. Is not sleep a manifestation of the MOTHER?"

That evening, I joined the happy gathering in Ma's room and laughed and jested with them. But all of a sudden I remembered that the night was approaching and feared that my trouble might recur. Mataji could read my thoughts. She at once said: "Baba, do as you did last night; *just as you did*. But you should go to bed earlier to-night. Better go now and rest."

I prostrated, inwardly praying for her blessing, and retired. I had plenty of sleep that night as well and had almost become normal. The third night again Mataji's counsel bore fruit and I no more feared the recurrence of my troubles.

Then I went to Ma when she was alone and said: "It seems to me that I have become all right. There is no trouble anymore. But do please tell me how you have cured me! You did not give me any medicine. You did not touch me. When you looked at me, I could hardly look you in the face, so full of worries and anxieties was I. When you talked I examined myself and found that I was not worthy of being your son. Tell me, Ma, how have you cured me? Or tell me what to do if the

disease recurs." Mataji looked at me with great concern, saying: "Why should the disease recur? It is already gone." I said: "Shall I take it that you have cured me?" Mataji looked up with a smile and said: "You should know that you have cured yourself."

I exclaimed in surprise: "What!"

Mataji repeated with great affection: "*It is you who have cured yourself.*"

I could not understand, but there was no mistaking her love and affection. I wanted no more. Some of my more sceptical friends ask me at intervals: "Did you have any more attacks?" I am happy to be able to answer them all in the negative.

4.

One more episode of a still more intimate nature. A son's relation with his mother must always be somewhat personal. But the feeling of love and gratitude or of repentance impels me to put on record some of my experiences so that others may also share them.

It was in summer 1943. I had gone to the Ashram in Raipur, Dehradun, for a short respite. On arrival I came to know that Mataji had also come down from Almora in connection with some *yajña* (sacrificial ceremony) at Sahasradhāra (about five miles from Raipur) and was staying there. I felt happy and eventually met her there the same day. I found her in her usual tranquil mood, spreading happiness around her. Two or three days later, when the actual rites and ceremonies were over, she came to the Raipur Ashram for a halt. She was to return to Almora very soon. I was a mere witness to the daily gathering of men and women who came from Dehradun and attended on her. I had so far no opportunity to meet her in private. When at last I did so, she said to me: "You are also going to Almora." "Mataji", I replied, "I have not brought the necessary outfit and Almora is a cold place." "It does not

matter, you will be given all you need." I was at the point of arguing but Mataji said : "It is settled then that you are going to Almora."

I remember the state of revolt I was in at that time. I was a pray to the blackest despair. I knew I was helpless and yet resented the idea of being helped. I wanted to be left alone. That was why I had chosen to come to Raipur, a comparatively solitary place, in order to regain the composure of my mind, but mataji took the task into her hands. I had to accompany her.

We were a party of four including Mataji. The story of our journey from Dehradun to Kathgodam alone would fill pages. But I must hasten to that part of the story which concerns us here. Just before we reached Kathgodam, Mataji disclosed her intention of going to Nainital. This is just like Mataji. She never announces beforehand what she is going to do. I was perplexed. "I am not going," I said. "What is the matter with you ?" said Ma. "Nainital is a very cold place, colder than Almora, and you know I have no warm clothes with me."

Mataji interrupted me : "That is known. You will get all you need. So come along. Our stay in Nainital will be very short, say three or four days, then you will also proceed to Almora."

I had no inclination to go to Nainital, so I looked round and said : "Mataji, you have got so much luggage with you. Allow me to go ahead to Almora and take the extra luggage with me. Those are things meant for the Ashramites of Almora. Why carry them unnecessarily to Nainital ?"

Mataji seemed to consider my suggestion and then said : "All right, if you want to go, then it cannot be helped."

It was midday. Kathgodam was hot and stuffy. Some lemonade was prepared and given to us. Fruit was also served. Mataji look the trouble to explain to me all about the road from Almora Motor Station to the Ashram.

It was about two miles. But she told me not to take the undulating bridle path although it was a shortcut. According to her, the motor road was always to be preferred, considering my age and strength. I was not paying much heed as these details, I thought, were known to me owing to my long stay as a teacher at Almora twenty years ago. Yet I was not altogether inattentive, because whatever Mataji says, even her lightest words command attention, partly because of her charming manner. She then gave me her hurricane lantern and instructed me to be very careful on my way. I thought this was but the outcome of a mother's anxiety for her child. I remember boarding the mail-car and Mataji standing there watching it go. I felt proud of the occasion.

As soon as the car began to move, I felt very unhappy and forlorn. Why did I choose to leave Ma? The car was ascending the motor road and the landscape should have attracted me. But everything appeared stale and hackneyed to me. Why did I not go with Mataji? There was none to talk to me. I was sitting beside the driver and thinking of Mataji. Sometimes I would doze off. In this manner, the tedious journey at last came to an end.

It was dark when I alighted at Almora station. I remembered Mataji had given me a lantern. How very thoughtful of her! She had anticipated its need although I had no idea then. The coolies picked up the luggage and began to move off. I had given them positive instructions of the route as Mataji had told me. But they chose the short cut. I discovered it too late. It was no longer possible to retrace my steps. So, with some apprehension, I followed them with unsteady steps. The path became narrow, craggy and full of sudden ups and downs. I would survey a few feet of ground with the lantern and then plod on. My nervousness increased and I almost seemed to lose my grip over myself. We had almost reached the Ashram when my foot slipped; I stumbled and fell down. One of

the coolies threw off his load and came running to me. The chimney of the lantern was broken. My hands were bruised and my thighs bleeding. I had also received a severe jerk in my hip. I however stood up and began to reprimand the coolies. But was it their fault? Like good brothers they took me to the Ashram and there I lay down as I had reached my journey's end.

When Mataji arrived three days later, I was somewhat better. but still confined to bed. The inmates of the Ashram had given me blankets and all I needed. They were extremely attentive to me and I should have been happy. But one question vexed, almosted tormented me. If Mataji had known of the impending accident, why had she not told me about it.

When Mataji came, I was eager for her sympathy. So on her approach, I said: "I had an accident." But to my mortification I found her stiff. She said: "I do not want to hear." Then she moved in another direction to attend to some *sādhus* who had come with her from Nainital. It was a sharp rebuff.

Two or three days after, when the *sādhus* had left for Badrinath and the Ashram had become comparatively quiet, Mataji came to me and said: "Now, what about the accident you had?" I said: "Mataji, the other day I wanted to tell you but you did not want to hear. Today you wish to know but I do not feel like speaking."

Mataji said: "It was for getting this reply from you that the question was asked."

I could no longer bear my condition. I said: "You knew of the accident but never said a word about it. Instead of it you gave me instructions for guidance."

Mataji was listening. I continued: "If you think that I am grown up enough to follow your commandments, I must make it clear that I do not feel worthy or competent to receive your advice and follow it. I think I am yet a baby in that respect. If you can accompany your child in

all his troubles and ordeals, I remain with you. If not, let us part company. The child is sure to perish. Who can enable a motherless child to survive ?”

I do not know why I spoke in this strain. It was not a very childlike statement. But I had no time to analyze myself, perhaps I was incapable of it. Mataji looked blank, like a white sheet of paper. The next moment there was a great change in her face. I could discern there all my faults writ large. She had taken upon herself the burden of my heart. I knelt down at her feet and my tears showed that I could no longer think of separation.

5

One last episode. This time an episode purely of imagination, a dream. Dreams about Mataji can be narrated by many of us. Mine is a gift to those who are dreamers like myself. I dreamt I was strolling through a rural lane. The path moved in a zig-zag manner and beautiful flowers and green creepers were visible on both sides of the fences. There were gardens and villas on either side. Occasionally there would be an isolated cottage. I reached a cottage that was visible from the lane. I slowed down my pace and stood at the garden gate and observed that Mataji could be seen on the veranda of the cottage. When I saw her I entered the gate and seemed to have reached my destination.

When I approached Mataji, I was startled to find that she had a baby on her lap. What was this ? There was no one else whom I could ask. I looked at Mataji. She looked towards me but immediately was all attention to the child. How was the infant related to Ma ? What an odd question to ask ? Are we not all her children ? But the question persisted in my mind. I was, no doubt, her son, but in what sense was the baby hers ? What did it matter if he happened to be the physical son of Mother ? So I argued in my dream.

Mataji was, all the time, fondling the baby. I thought to myself to put the question in a suitable form. "How does the baby get his nourishment?" I said. Mataji smiled: "Baby does not like milk from outside, I have to suckle him."

I felt compassion for Mataji: I began to scrutinise her appearance. She looked considerably reduced and her collar-bones were visible. Surely the child was a demon and was sucking her blood and living on it. I began to detest the child. The baby too, perhaps detested me. Lying on Mataji's lap, he began to stamp his foot on the ground. Was he not kicking at me? So I thought.

Suddenly my feelings changed in my dream. He was, after all, Mataji's own son. If I could love her so much, could I not love her baby as well? I looked at the child and tried to feel love for him. Mataji saw my affectionate looks and said: "Would you like to take the baby on your lap?" Realizing that Mataji might get some relief, I at once sat down and extended my arms. Mataji placed the child on my lap.

I felt happy. I began to ask myself, how could I atone for my previous resentment towards the baby? I had thought of him as a demon. I thought that he wanted to kick me. So if I love him I must touch him affectionately.

I thus touched his right foot and at heart tried to feel that I really loved him. But now something occurred that can only happen in a dream. His foot dropped out as if it were an artificial one and along with it the entire leg came out, stuck to my hand and dragged my hand towards my own right leg. There the entire limb of the baby vanished. I was extremely upset. I quickly placed my fingers on the baby's left leg. The same thing happened: the left leg in a similar manner merged into my own left leg. His right and then left arm, and afterwards other parts of his body which I was quick in grasping in succession thinking of them to be separate tangible entities, proved