

Sri Sri Ma Anandamayi

VOLUME V

GURUPRIYA ANANDA GIRI
(Sri Gurupriya Devi)

Translated by Tara Kini



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By Ma's grace, the fifth volume of Didi's diary has been translated into English. The work continues to be more than rewarding—Ma's life and activities being the most enjoyable satsang that one could ever desire.

I would like to thank Sri G. N. Roy Misra for his patient encouragement and advice. I am also very grateful to my husband for his regular and flawless typing of the manuscript.

Jai Ma.

U. Tara Kini

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Chapter One

PILGRIMAGE TO KAILAS

Sunday, 16 June 1937

At eight a.m. we set out for Kailas with Ma. Others who were with us were to return from Almora. They all wept while leaving Ma. Nagendada who had come from Calcutta, Naren Choudhary and family from Delhi, Hari Ram and Manik from Dehradun all returned. Ma, Bholanath, Jyotish Dada, Swami Akhandananda, Tunu (Prankumar Babu's son), Dasudada and a servant (Keshav Singh) and I set out on the journey. The hill tribe girl Parvati was also with us. She was waiting in Almora to accompany Ma.

At eleven a.m. we reached a forest bungalow in a place called Barchina. The scenic beauty was exquisite. We had refreshments and rested till three p.m. The bungalow was situated at a distance of seven miles from Almora. Before evening we reached a place called Dhoulchina which was another five and a half miles away. We cooked, had dinner and spent the night on the verandah of a Dak bungalow. On Monday June 17, we started at five a.m. and reached Seraghat eleven miles further.

Enormous trees grew on the banks of the river at Seraghat. We cooked beneath one of the trees and finished with the ritual of eating. We then lay down beneath the trees for it was difficult to walk in the hot sun. Ten or twelve coolies were carrying our luggage and walking with us. Five dandis had been hired along with fifteen coolies. Parvati was accompanied by another lady, her small daughter and her brother. They had two coolies with them. The coolies reached the spot, cooked *rotis* for themselves and lay down to rest. Each coolie

carries a maximum load of fifteen seers. A horse was not available for Tunu at Almora—a horse will be picked up on the way. As one *dandi* was spoilt, it was replaced by another one at Seraghat.

We could still spot a shop or two here and there, where we purchased rice, *dal*, *ghee*, salt and other essentials. We heard that no such shops would be available as we proceeded further. We had also carried some food items with us. We were told that nothing would be available beyond Garbiyan therefore we had dry fruit, sugar candy, pepper powder, tamarind pickles and other items packed with us. It is necessary to keep such items in stock to go across ice-laden tracks, as also warm clothing, goggles and water-proof material. We had heard that some travellers feel giddy and faint on the way to Garbiyan and so a lady at Almora had prepared a concoction of pepper, dried mango powder and other spices under the belief that it would keep our heads clear. We heard that it was difficult to cook beyond Garbiyan so that wheat flour, broken rice and other cereals have to be soaked in water and drunk—these items are also exorbitantly expensive. All were proceeding joyfully. But Ma, Jyotish Dada and I were not feeling too well. Today Bholanath went on foot for quite some distance; Ma and Akhandananda also walked for some time. Jyotish Dada and I remained seated in the *dandi*. What more shall I pen about the natural beauty of the Himalayan mountains? Many have written detailed descriptions. Probably it is this exquisite scenery that inspires people to venture into undertaking such hazardous journeys. Such surroundings and Ma amidst it all! When Ma walked on the mountain path, I watched her with the marvellous scenery in the background—it all appeared to be a reflection of Ma's beauty which seemed to be spreading its lustre. I am not exaggerating.

I write as my heart experienced the vision. Ma's entire form seemed to be seeped in a surge of great unrestrained *bhava*—her simple, sweet and lovely gaze was enthralling perhaps that is the reason I was so overwhelmed. I do not understand if Ma's beauty is also getting enhanced.

Ramitaran Babu (advocate) of Calcutta had written, "I would watch Ma's form from a distance in the Birla temple—without any decoration, but what a marvellous beauty she spreads all around her! She is surrounded by well-dressed and ornamented women, but her beauty makes them all look plain. And her laughter—sometimes sweet, sometimes trilling—how enchanting was that laughter! Even today these memories make me forget everything else. Truly, Ma's gait is so lovely—this is not only what devotees observe—anyone who watches Ma even once will comment on this. I sometimes told Ma, 'Ma, it seems you have grown taller than before.' Ma would laugh and say, 'And how do you say that? Do people ever grow taller after they grow old?' Ma's figure seems to be stouter, with considerable height—her countenance appears to glow. I had been saying, 'Ma, you have gone down—do put on some weight.' To which she had replied, 'Alright, you wait and see, I shall surely grow fatter.' When she had put on weight, she had declared, 'See, I have become fatter!' After some days I had observed that she was not as agile in her movements as she had been before putting on weight, so I had said, 'No Ma, don't grow any fatter. Now you must become slightly slimmer.' Ma then told somebody, 'Now I shall grow thinner for Khukuni had said, 'grow fatter—grow fatter' and therefore I had put on weight. But now she says it is better if I slim down. So now I shall have to become thinner.' I knew that she would really become thinner—everything goes according to her will. This is only an example of that fact.

That aside, today we have to eat something more before three p.m. and set out to reach some shelter before nightfall. The sky was overcast with clouds. At three p.m. we set out for a place called Ganai which was seven miles away and reached before dusk. There again we spent the night in a dak bungalow. Ganai had a post office as well. Not everybody is allowed to stay in a dak bungalow, but we had brought along a letter of permission.

On the way our companion from Garbiyan, Parvati, narrated an incident. About five years ago when she was in her village, she dreamt that she was going somewhere with a group of people. She could not see the faces of the people clearly—but she saw Ma as a lady wearing a white sari who appeared to be a 'Mataji'. She also saw Bholanath's face clearly. She had gone to Almora for her education, some time after this dream. Now after five years, having completed her studies, she was returning to her village with us all. Last time when Parvati saw us at Almora, she had taken one look at Bholanath, recollected her dream and decided then and there that she would go with him to Kailas. Ma had also specially requested Parvati to accompany us to Kailas. She had been waiting for a month to travel with us. What a surprising coincidence of events! Last time she had not revealed the occurrence of the dream, but this time she narrated it all. Hearing this Ma smiled and said, "She came to Almora for her education in order to make the dream come true!" How exquisite this place is!

On our way here we met a brahmin householder who asked, "Where is Mataji?" On being shown Ma's *dandi* he offered flowers and fruits at her feet and did *pranama*. At night the same brahmin arrived with some milk and vegetables at the bungalow. He was asked, "How did you know that Mataji was

coming?" He replied, "I read in the newspapers that Ma Anandamayi was going on a pilgrimage to Kailas. From that day I have been awaiting her arrival. Today I am blessed to have had the darshan of Ma's feet."

Who knows how many more devotees have been affected in this way? That may be the reason why the Compassionate One has left Bengal and got drawn to this part of the country. Now I observe how these people feel that Ma is their very own, though they are so slightly acquainted with her and call her 'Devi Bhagavati' and believe in her with simple, staunch faith.

Tuesday, June 18

At six a.m. we started from Ganai for a place called Beninag which is thirteen miles away. Water would be available there so we decided to eat and rest at Beninag. I forgot to write about an incident that occurred on the day before we left Almora. Naren Babu's wife dressed Ma in a silk sari with a red border, combed her hair, garlanded her and had a photograph taken. She then said, "Ma, I have never seen a cloth covering your head—today I shall cover your head." Ma replied, "No, let things go on as they are." Later the Compassionate Mother went to the Shiva temple, covered her head with a cloth and satisfied the desire of her devotee. Enchanted by her form draped thus, devotees fell at her feet and did *pranama*. Ma remarked, "Why, have you decked up a bride?" Naren Babu exclaimed, "How can Ma ever need to be decked up as a bride?" Ma, the unpredictable, pulled down the veil over her head as newly wedded brides do and the devotees burst into laughter. Naren Babu also took a photograph of Ma on the day of her departure for Kailas.

In the afternoon we reached a place called Rani after a ten mile trek where we stopped for a meal. At three p.m. we set

out for Beninag. The route was very steep and when we reached Beninag around dusk, we did not climb further to the dak bungalow but lay down on the verandah of a school building. That place, where we spent the night, was beautiful. One of our companions had a relative living here who had invited us all to this place. We found there a well equipped market, a good school and dispensary. Many people came for Ma's darshan.

Wednesday, June 19

By five a.m. we left for a place called Thala, situated ten or eleven miles away. The *dandi* bearers were now tiring out within a distance of one or two miles and stopping for rest. Jokingly, Jyotish Dada declared Swami Akhandananda the 'king' of the group and himself the 'heir-apparent'. When the *dandi* bearers resumed the trek and wanted to halt again, we discovered that Swami Akhandananda's *dandi* had hit against a rock and got broken, while a trunk had scraped Jyotish Dada's thigh which was now bleeding and his clothes had also got torn. This matter became the butt of jest. I said, "You had believed yourself to be the doer therefore the king and his heir-apparent are in such a state within the short distance covered!" Ma also laughed. Jyotish Dada joined in the laughter and said, "Don't forget to write about this in your note book!" Truly, when I think about it, there is something worthwhile in this matter.

On proceeding a little further Ma saw an old hill tribes-women walking with a bundle on her head. Ma called out to her saying, "Mataji, where are you going?" Without putting down her bundle the old woman replied, "I'm just going there," and continued on her way. The coolies were tired and they lowered our *dandis*. The old woman looked at Ma and

stopped short—slowly she came near Ma and sat down. Some children were with her and judging from the kind of clothes she wore, she seemed to be quite well off. She also seemed to be intelligent. She began speaking to Ma on various matters. When the coolies lifted the *dandis* and walked away, the old woman stood up saying, "Ma, your words were so charming that I could not go away and had to come and sit near you. We are poor what could I say to you by way of conversation—I sat only to listen to you speaking." Even after the *dandis* had travelled some distance we could spot the old woman gazing fixedly in our direction.

We reached Thala at ten a.m. and camped in the verandah of a school. This place also had a post office and other facilities. At Seraghat we had seen the Sarayu river and now the Ram Ganga was roaring past in Thala. This spot was also enchanting. The sight of the magnificent mountains inspired great thoughts and emotions in us. Whether or not this pilgrimage gives any other kind of merit, the natural beauty of the mountains rouses such lofty, free, steady and calm sentiments in our mind, that they cannot be compared with anything else. How very beautiful the scenery is! All those who have trodden this path will surely vouch for the truth of my statement. It is impossible to express in words, these feelings of the heart. However, we decided to spend the night in Thala.

Thursday, June 20

Early in the morning we left Thala. The day was already warm, though we had to wrap ourselves in blankets at night. The water is also getting cooler and for the last two days we have had very cold water. We proceeded ten miles further and reached Didihat in the afternoon where we halted for rest. On the way we met the Raja of Askote. He and his people had also

heard of Ma's trip to Kailas from the Raja of Dinaipur who was going to Kailas with Swami Jnanananda and others. They declared that they had been looking out for Ma all along the way. After paying obeisance at Ma's feet the Raja gave us a letter addressed to Askote, so that Ma would suffer no inconvenience after she reached there.

After eating our meal we set out for Askote which is seven miles away. We had heard that Askote had a good *dharmaśala* and we had decided to stay there. This morning we had got thoroughly drenched in the rain. The Raja of Askote is said to be related to the Raja of Tehri. These hill tribe kings are very rigid in observing rules. Though the Raja of Tehri had been abroad, he had to maintain Hindu disciplines strictly with regard to diet and other matters, when he was in his home land. The Raja of Askote is also very staunch in observing Hindu rules and regulations. Whenever he goes abroad he takes a brahmin cook from his place. He also reads the scriptures and performs the *pūja* regularly. I have also observed this about the Raja of Solan, who eats only with purified apparel on. His expression also reveals an inner purity.

By evening we reached Askote and put up at the *dharmaśala*. On reading the Raja's letter all the people around began filing in, enquiring about our requirements. They had fixed a meal for us. In a short while the Raja's sister, brother, sister-in-law and other ladies arrived for Ma's darshan. We were all feeling braced by the mountain air; Swamiji's *dandi* had been taken for repairs. Another *dandi* could not be obtained on the route and the coolies were very tired. It was beginning to seem difficult to reach Garbiyan. These coolies cannot lift more than twenty five or thirty seers each and their wages are one rupee per day per head.

Friday, June 21

We decided to halt at Askote for our meal. I observed that many people have got news of Ma's journey and have been awaiting her arrival. I jokingly remarked, "Ma, when you have so many children here, why would you sit out in Bengal! May be this is the reason you have been pulled hither." The Raja's courtier's wife and many other ladies arrived with flowers and fruits for Ma's darshan. At ten a.m. the Rani sent men to escort Ma to the palace. There she offered a big variety of dishes to Ma as *bhoga*. I heard that the Raja's brother, who lived at Almora, had written to say that Ma should be welcomed with reverence.

On the request of the Raja and his brother, we had our meal at Askote. All the food came from the palace. After lunch we set out for Balvakot which is ten miles away. On the way the courtier took Ma to his house and welcomed her with great affection. The members of the household earnestly requested Ma to return via this place. The Rani and other citizens of this kingdom expressed great happiness at having been blessed with Ma's darshan. The Rani declared, "Ma, our home has been purified by your visit." The courtier's son who lives at Almora had written home to say, "Ma is leaving for Kailas, welcome her with due respect." These people told us that this was why they were all awaiting Ma's darshan.

It was raining and it was also very warm, especially since we had been walking in the sun which seemed to be very strong. After the river Ram Ganga, we could see the Gauri Ganga which flowed very swiftly. We walked for five miles and then encountered the river Kali Ganga. The meeting point of the rivers Gauri Ganga and Kali Ganga is said to be the entrance gate to Kailas. Many have a ceremonial dip here and offer charities. The pathways have been damaged by rain and

the coolies are also tired. For want of water and shopping facilities we have not been halting at dak bungalows. In Askote we saw shops selling cloth and other items. The Rani had given her own *dandi* for Ma's use and Ma was now being carried in it.

It was after dusk when we covered the ten miles to reach Balvakot. However, we took the wrong path and could not climb high enough to find a suitable halting place. We decided to spend the night inside the *dandi* under the trees. Parvati had brought along a tent for Ma, which was put up and some of our luggage was also kept inside it. The Raja had sent a letter to the chief of this village and it was sent to him at the top of the hill. He arrived and said, "You have taken the wrong route—we have a school in our village above, where you could have stayed." It was not possible to climb to the village in the dark. The village chief had some cow's milk purchased for us. Just as we settled down somewhat comfortably, a violent storm broke out and the rain lashed at the *dandis* making us all, including Ma, wet to some extent. The rain continued unabated through the night. With the break of dawn we continued our journey in the rain. We left all our luggage; it could follow us later; only our five *dandis* moved forward.

We were now finding it difficult to proceed because of the rain. We got some milk in a village on the way (at two seers for a rupee) and drank it. In between the path was very bad and we could not cross the fast flowing river on foot. With great difficulty we sat on the backs of the coolies and crossed the river, while almost seven coolies carried Ma's *dandi* across. We had another river to cross, but by then the rain had abated and the sun was peeping through the clouds. At eleven thirty we reached a dak bungalow in a place called Dharchula. We put our wet clothes and blankets out in the sun.

As the coolies had not yet reached with our luggage we could not prepare any food. The hill tribeswoman, Parvati, was trying hard to help out.

The history of Dharchula has it that when Vedavyasa descended from Kailas, he had cooked food in a large vessel perched on these three mountain peaks. Since he had converted the three mountains into a fireplace the spot had acquired the name of Dharchula (*chula* means fireplace). The village was fairly big and the roar of the Kali Ganga was loud—it sounded like the sea. We were travelling along the bank of the Kali Ganga. We halted at a small dak bungalow which was surrounded by many lofty mountain peaks. These mountains like unshakeable, immovable *rishis*, seemed to be engrossed for aeons in meditation of the Universal Father. Outward disturbances cannot touch them. Underfoot, the river, too, seems to sing the praises of the Lord as she flows along. A deep emotion surges within because of the atmosphere here.

After the luggage arrived we cooked and ate by three p.m. We had procured some greens and vegetables on the way and we all enjoyed it. As many items are not available here we had to carry a number of things with us. As the path was treacherous we had to be ready for many contingencies and had, therefore, come armed with such necessities. We had had to carry all this from Calcutta to Almora and I had been perplexed for I had not been in touch with packing trunks and cases for a long time. Also, I had not found the need for so many things and was not being able to cope when faced with them. The boys were exhausted, doing the shopping, for whosoever remembered a particular item he thought would be needed, it was purchased immediately. Finally it was Ma who knew exactly what we required and instructed us about essential commodities. Later others told us that the same

items would be essential. When I could no longer manage the packing (the day before our departure) Ma sat near me and gave instructions which I followed. In a trice everything was well organized. My Ma is *purna* (complete) and therefore she accomplishes every job so beautifully. Nothing is either discarded or favoured by her. Every job is equally important to her—there is no differentiation between one and the other. Therefore she does perfectly whichever job is presented before her.

After the meal, before sunset, Ma took Jyotish Dada and went for a walk on the banks of the Ganga. On returning she told me, "Khukuni, Ganga took away the *kurta* you had made for me." I remarked, "Say you threw it in the Ganga. You did well." The *bhava* is not new to Ma, I have written many a time about how she has thrown *kurtas* and *dhotis* into the river. On being questioned she declares, "The water took it away," and flashes her sweet smile. Now she had again behaved similarly. She said, "This *kheyala* arose quite some time ago. It arose again now."

At night all the coolies were sent back for they were charging one rupee a day and on reaching Garbiyan where they would just sit around, they would still have to be paid ten annas a day. Their rates are rupee one for travelling and ten annas for waiting. A Rai Sahib here had received letters from Krishna Pant of Nainital and the Askote Raja requesting that all arrangements be made perfectly ready for Ma. They were now going to fix new coolies. They said, "The route now is going to be very difficult and these coolies are sturdier." The coolies who had been with us till now were tired and had decided to return the next day.

Tomorrow we have to stay here because the new coolies have to be brought from a distance of seven miles; they will

again weigh our luggage and carry thirty five seers each. We heard that the route from here to Garbiyan is very bad and in comparison the route till now had been very easy. Everyone was enjoying every moment in Ma's company. At midnight we slept. Two incense sticks had been lit near Ma in the evening. An Ustadji (who knew Ma) had arrived from Dehradun and was to accompany us to Kailas. He sang for some time and played the *bela*.

Almost everyone had gone to sleep and I was on the verge of falling asleep (next to Ma) when Ma called out from underneath the sheet which she had wrapped around herself. "Khukuni, have you fallen asleep?" I sat up instantly and asked, "Why did you call me Ma?" Ma replied, "Is there more incense? Light it and shut the window near me." I did accordingly but Ma remained just as she was, wrapped in a sheet. I lit the incense and asked, "Ma, has someone come?" Without moving, she replied, "Yes." No further conversation ensued, I wrapped myself in my sheet and lay down.

Sunday, 23 June

Ma rose very late and went to the Ganga. When she returned I washed her face and hands and made her drink some milk. We had been able to procure some cow's milk here. Ma again went to the banks of the Ganga with Jyotish Dada. I began cooking while Swamiji sat for his *sadhana*. Around eleven a.m. Ma was offered *bhoga* and then all sat to receive *prasada*. After lunch we all rested. I sat in the verandah. The natural scenery all around roused grave emotions in my heart for here Mother Nature seems to have assumed a very grave form. Though it did not rain, the sky was overcast with clouds.

As I have time today, I shall record an incident that occurred on June 14 in Almora. That night Baba Bholanath got extremely angry with Ma over a trivial matter concerning a cap. When Bholanath got very angry Ma clapped her hands and laughed aloud. Suddenly she went out. As she took Godavari with her she forbade anyone else from going out. Ma has sometimes been observed in such a state. I could not follow her and therefore stood in the doorway tortured by suspense wondering where Ma had gone. The next instant Ma walked in. Bholanath was still growling with anger. Ma stretched her hand in front of his face and began turning her fingers around and laughed loudly. A little later she moved away slightly and told Bholanath, "Quiet, quiet! This madness always!" The mood and form in which she behaved thus cannot be described in words. Tunu (Prankumar Babu's son) was pressing Bholanath's feet. Later he told us that on viewing Ma's fearful form that moment, he was shaking with terror. Dwaraka Prasad's wife (from Bareilly) and her sister-in-law (the wife of the D.P.M.G. of Nagpur) were sitting on a bedding nearby. They also happened to make eye contact with Ma at that moment. The D.P.M.G.'s wife said, "I had heard descriptions of the form of Kali Devi from my father when I was young," (ladies in this part of the country do not, usually, know much about Kali Devi). "I also saw Ma's similar form." Dwaraka Prasad's wife said, "Seeing her form today I realised that Ma is the Universal Mother." The others present did not reveal their individual visions. Each one witnessed a different form.

Once again Ma suddenly went outdoors, forbidding anyone from following her. At eleven p.m. almost everyone had left except Hari Ram. Bholanath had been sitting motionless, very quiet. When Ma went out he also strode on to the road—his anger had not quite abated. Dasu Babu ran out and

caught hold of Bholanath who shook himself free and continued to walk away. Nagen Babu and others followed Bholanath and stopped him. Meanwhile Ma had probably walked around the temple compound. When she saw Bholanath stalk out, she went past him like a streak of lightning, overtaking him. Though we ran after her we could not catch her. However, Bholanath was somehow made to return when all cajoled and pleaded with him. Hari Ram, Swamiji and I went in search of Ma and reached a tall temple building. Hari Ram climbed on to the verandah while I waited on the stairs. Hari Ram found Ma walking to and fro. Seeing him she said, "You people go away from here and tell Bholanath he can return to his place, else I shall set out for Kailas right away. He can follow with you all later on." "Witnessing Ma's form and hearing her firm command, Hari Ram descended trembling with fear and went into the temple to inform Bholanath. Bholanath was well acquainted with every state and mood that Ma could assume. He had already entered his room, covered himself with his blanket and laid down. We sat quietly. As it was so late in the night and as Ma was still outside, Swamiji stood on the street, unable to leave, yet hesitating to stay—such was his condition because of Ma's orders.

Meanwhile, Ma descended from the temple she was in and came to the courtyard of our temple. She asked Swamiji why he was standing in the street. As we were also shuffling in and out she called me and said, "You know well enough, then why do you come outdoors? Go inside quickly and go to sleep. I shall return whenever I wish." We went in and sat quietly. Those who had seen this form of Ma began to feel numb. They, who had never seen her do anything against Bholanath's orders as far as possible, they, who had seen Ma

always move and behave according to his wishes, they, who had always seen this attitude in her even amidst so many people and situations, they saw this aspect of Ma today and were dumbfounded with fear and astonishment.

A little later Ma entered the room as if nothing had happened—she walked in smilingly and said, "Why are you all seated? Are you unable to sleep?" Again she asked, "What, has Bholanath fallen asleep?" Naren Babu's wife replied, "Yes Ma, Baba has fallen asleep." Ma remarked, "Not at all. Alright, go and see" and she began laughing. Naren Babu's wife is a personification of straightforwardness and so is Naren Babu. He has been like a child in Ma's presence. Ma asked Dwaraka Prasad's wife and her sister-in-law in Hindi, "Why are you also sitting quietly? Will you not sleep?" They replied, "Why will we not sleep Ma." Ma said, "Then go and sleep quickly." They commented, "Ma, you are the Universal Mother" and folding their palms, they did *pranama* at Ma's feet.

Ma seemed to manifest a kind of restlessness—she got up and went inside. I followed her. She went near the beddings of Manik and Tunu and said, "What are you doing?" They awoke and came to Ma. She spoke softly, "How did all this happen..." etc. Ma seemed to be controlling a particular mood and therefore such restlessness was visible externally—this was clearly evident. Tunu, Dwaraka Prasad's wife and her sister-in-law had happened to catch Ma's gaze at the moment that a particularly savage mood was emerging and perhaps that quenched the mood there and then, for she had then controlled herself and walked out—otherwise who knows what more could have occurred! The very next day Bholanath declared that he would not go to Kailas for sure. Hearing him Ma told us, "Wait, I shall pacify my Gopal." She then went to him and spoke in myriad ways to win him over and finally

made him agree to start on the trip. She then came in to drink milk. Mysterious Ma's *lila* is unfathomable.

I shall now continue the narrative of our trip. At three p.m. Ma got up. The river is wide here. The hill-tribes people tie a rope on either shore and hang on it like monkeys to cross the river—we find it frightening to even look at them. Practice makes anything possible—this is an example of the saying. We shall leave this place day after tomorrow. As new coolies join us here, all our luggage has to be reweighed. Each cooly will carry thirty five seers of luggage and they will be paid one rupee per day each. These have been the wages from the beginning.

Here, I would like to mention an incident. We were unpacking and rearranging our luggage sitting in front of Ma as she instructed us to empty out things into tins. As I have mentioned earlier, we were unable to do such things properly without Ma's help. Ma sat near us and made us arrange the things in a big trunk. When it was done, people lifted it and estimated that the trunk weighed more than a maund (forty seers) and therefore we would have to remove some things from it. As Ma left the room she smiled and said, "Alright, thirtyfive seers is what it has to be, isn't it? You say it is five seers in excess." Then laughing slightly she said, "It may even weigh less!" Hearing this I immediately suggested, "Just touch it, Ma—then it will become lighter." Ma laughed and rejoined, "Your suggestions are also unique! However, there is no need to touch it." Finally when Rai Sahib brought the coolies that evening and had the luggage weighed, that particular trunk was found to weigh exactly thirtyfour and a half seers!

In the evening Ma went to the bank of the Ganga for a walk. Rai Sahib had sent mountain bananas for Ma. He was doing his best to provide conveniences for Ma. Around midnight Ma first went to Jyotish Dada and then to each one of us by turn

and asked, "Did you have any dream last night?" Every one replied in the negative. Then Ma said, "All these days I met no one and then yesterday a man came." Nothing more was said about this.

From now on we were to have six coolies per *dandi* as the path would become more and more treacherous. Nine other coolies were to carry the luggage. A *dandi* was hired for Tunu's use. The people here commented that after the Raja of Mysore, no other person had gone to Kailas with such a big group of people. Rigorous preparations were afoot. All coolies have a chief who is called 'Mate'. Around midnight we went to sleep. Parvati was accompanying us all along—her simple and straightforward behaviour is worthy of mention. Sometimes, like a little girl she pressed Bholanath's hand—whenever she was afraid of something enroute she would hold Bholanath's hand. She must have been twenty five or thirty years old but she had no inhibitions or shyness. As if she was a close friend from years.

Monday, 24 June

At seven a.m. we set out for Khela, ten miles away. The terrain was very rough. Ma got down from her *dandi* and made us also walk with her for the fear of falling off from the *dandi* was too great. Walking beside Ma, I went a little ahead of the others. Ma sat on a rock and began singing. A song in Bengali which meant,

"Return, return to your own home."

Hearing this beautiful refrain from Ma's lips in those quiet surroundings made me feel enchanted. When the others caught up with us, we continued walking.

On the way we met Ruma Devi, who is a famous lady here and is the disciple of Sri Sri Sarada Ma. She felt very happy to

have Ma's darshan. She accompanied us till Khela. We reached Khela around one p.m. The Kali Ganga was roaring beside us, rushing to meet the sea; she danced with abandon and her laughter rippled merrily as she ran to meet the ocean, oblivious of any obstacle or barrier. I felt that as she went along she was teaching humans the manner in which they should run to meet God.

Ruma Devi came to Khela with us. She is a *sannyasini*. Her nature is very calm. Her abode lies within these folds. She received *diksha* from Sri Sri Sarada Ma a year before the latter left her body. Ruma Devi has her *ashram* in Khela and she extends much help to pilgrims. The ideal in her life is service. Narayan Swami of Mysore and she live in the same *ashram*. Narayan Swami has many devotees; many ladies of the Almora Mission are his followers. The hill tribeswomen who went to Almora always made it a point to visit Narayan Swami or Ruma Devi on their way back.

Ruma Devi is about sixty years old. She sat near Ma for a long time and confided in her about events in her life. With the aim of attaining real peace of mind, she expressed the desire to live with Ma for a few days. She spent the night sitting near Ma in our tiny *dhermasala* and repeatedly expressed the joy she was experiencing from Ma's darshan. She said, "I feel the same kind of joy as I think I would feel in the company of my own mother. It seems I have never before experienced such happiness in my life."

Just before sunset two other hill tribeswomen arrived at Khela. They had seen Ma at Almora and had written to her sending her incense sticks. They had returned after passing their matriculation examination and now they were on their way for further training. When they saw Ma they came running to her as if they had known her for years. They fed Ma

with *papdi* which is made by mixing semolina or flour with sugar and spice and then roasting it in ghee. People here carry it along while travelling—we had also brought some with us.

In the evening an *asana* was spread on a rock and Ma sat on it, with all of us around her. Tonight again it was twelve by the time we slept. After praying for Ma's blessing Ruma Devi went to her own bedding.

Tuesday, 25 June

This morning there was a light drizzle. Ruma Devi and the other ladies went to Almora. They had advised, "Ma, if it rains too heavily, do not resume the journey, for the path ahead is very treacherous; the fear of an avalanche is great." We waited till seven a.m. and then set out. The route was very steep but the road was good. To enable the coolies to rest in between, Ma walked for some time and we accompanied her on foot. When the roads turned bad, the *dandis* used to knock against rocks and get damaged. Whenever we met workmen on the way we used to get the *dandis* repaired.

Now the river was no longer flowing near us and we could not hear its happy gurgle. For the past two days the weather was neither warm nor cool. Today we halted at a place called Pangu which was Parvati's husband's native place. We stayed in a school and arrangements were made for cooking in the courtyard. The rice, dal and other provisions were supplied by Parvati's home. We had travelled five miles to Pangu where we had lunch in the afternoon.

By three p.m. we set out again. The weather grew steadily cooler as we travelled further. At four p.m. Ma suddenly got off her *dandi* and began walking. Whenever she alighted we also got off behind her, but this time we did not see her getting down. Dasu Dada told us later that a hill tribesboy came to

Ma with two flowers and read out an invocation as he placed flowers at her feet. Ma commented to Dasu Dada, "Did you see how beautiful the children of this place are?"

Six miles ahead, was a place called Sirkha where we camped in a school for the night. The school was in the village and therefore we were able to procure foodstuffs. Dinner was cooked only for Dasu Dada and Tunu. Today we felt extremely cold. As soon as we reached Sirkha Ma lay down saying, "I shall not eat anything." We also lay down. It began raining and by two thirty a.m. the downpour was so heavy that our blankets got wet as we were lying on the school verandah. We opened our umbrellas and sat up. When the rain abated we lay down again.

Since the last two or three days we had been seeing snow on mountain peaks. The snow glistened in the sunlight; it was an extremely beautiful sight. In between we have been getting raw mangoes and I have been cooking them in dal, but for the past couple of days no raw mangoes have been available. In such cold weather mangoes could hardly be used anyway.

Wednesday, 26 June

In the morning we set out for Dipti which is situated ten or eleven miles away. At nine a.m. we halted at a spot to have some food. All along the way we saw dense forests. The scenery was marvellous and the silence was all pervading.

From Dharchula onwards we had not been able to travel more than ten or twelve miles a day because the route was so steep. Each *dandi* was being carried by six coolies, four lifted the *dandi* and two carried the foodstuffs. In between, the coolies were exchanged so that each one carried the passengers in turn. The path was wet because of the rain. Whenever

we came across any vegetables they were taken along as we would not be able to procure any more as we climbed further. Sugar now cost a rupee for one and a quarter seers.

Around one p.m. we reached Dipti. We found a room that looked like a cowshed, a part of which had been used to house a shop. This room turned out to be the *dharmashala* of this place. We spread a tarpaulin and made arrangements to spend the night there. By the time we cooked a meal it was nearing sundown. We heard that the route would become worse the next day.

Thursday, 27 June

This morning at six a.m. we set out for Malpa seven miles away. The journey turned out to be memorable. None of us mounted the *dandi* because the path was so bad it was difficult for any one to walk. With great difficulty, taking the help of the coolies we somehow reached Malpa by one thirty p.m.

Beautiful waterfalls decorated the path, but we were in no condition to admire them. Our legs were trembling and the sun was blazing overhead. Every moment we feared a fall. Amidst these troubles was a fresh obstacle—a group of sheep carrying loads tramped alongside! In these circumstances the up and down path seemed even more difficult. The path was broken down in places and no maintenance of any kind was visible. We heard that when the Raja of Mysore had travelled this path five years ago it had been repaired by the Government and since then it had not been touched.

Today, as we proceeded, Ma repeatedly told me, "Keep an eye on Baba's *dandi*." Walking ahead she again said, "Khukuni, come with Baba—he has got left behind." I could not understand why she was repeatedly cautioning me in this manner. Every day Baba's *dandi* got left behind anyway.

However a little later Ma's *dandi* collided with a projecting rock and was knocked down but Ma was unhurt. The *dandi* broke. Ma spoke at once, "I knew that one *dandi* would fall today—it was good it passed over me." Then Baba's *dandi* also got knocked down but he was saved.

There were no shops in Malpa and we could not procure any foodstuffs—we only managed to get some firewood. We had brought wheat flour and potatoes from Dipti and it was evening by the time we cooked and ate it. We had to cook outdoors and it was very difficult to get a fire started in the breeze; in addition, we were all exhausted.

The room we got to rest in was more dilapidated than the one in Dipti. To get some shelter from the rain, we had to manage in the room somehow or the other. The place was littered with goat droppings and garbage and the floor was made of mud. We spread the wax cloth and made ready to spend the night. Leeches were rampant in the hills and made it difficult for us to get any sleep. This room was infested with leeches, but we could do nothing for what alternative did we have?

The difficulties of the journey and the hard climb left us with hardly any energy to assist Ma. Jyotish Dada's condition was also very bad. Only Bholanath had arrived in fine fettle. He declared, "I did not find it difficult at all today!" It drizzled at night but we were spared from getting wet. It was midnight by the time we fell asleep. The menace of flies seemed to be increasing with height. Though the nights were cold the days were quite warm.

Friday, 28 June

We set out at nine a.m. and decided to halt at a place called 'Bodhi', seven miles away, for lunch. Today the path was

slightly better than yesterday's but it was undoubtedly terrifying. Our legs seemed to be giving way but we had to keep on. There was no question of halting anywhere.

At certain spots we had to hold on to coolies and walk. *Dandis* could not be used and it was a feat in itself for the coolies to carry our *dandis* along that treacherous route. How terrible the path was! One feared to even tread along it and these coolies casually lifted a *dandi* with a person in it and carried it along.

Around eleven a.m. we reached Bodhi. We took shelter in a school building. Having made a fire beside some rocks, we cooked a meal. This has been our routine for the past few days. After lunch we set out again at three p.m.

Garbiyan was only five miles away and we headed for it. As the path was very bad, we had to often get down from our *dandis*. The path had such large undulations that at times our legs were lifted high above our heads and our heads hung low while at other times our heads soared above as our legs dangled down. However, by Ma's grace we had been traversing the route without any mishaps. Sometimes a *dandi* fell, yet no one was hurt.

Bholanath was doing very well he was not the least bit fatigued. In spite of the difficult terrain that we had crossed, he would sometimes climb to a height, look back and descend to find out about our progress! The hill folk declared, "No one can outdo Baba when it comes to walking!" He was truly enjoying the journey and trekking without tiring. In the past couple of days he had hardly got into his *dandi*. He declared, "I feel inspired!" And so it appeared—I laughed and told him, "Our Lord of Kailas, Bholanath, is going to Kailas in great joy!"

As we neared Garbiyan, the scenic beauty became indescribably beautiful. We had no desire to leave the spot.

Chhayilek is a spot near Garbiyan. It is a plain dotted with little hills. It seemed as though the Infinite had been personified all around it. Flowers of various hues bloomed and some one commented, "This is floral garden designed by the Lord of Kailas." We came across snow which had collected here and there and the weather was now biting cold.

A coolie was suddenly bitten by a snake. Two days ago Ma had said, "I can see a black snake on the mountains." This snake was also black. Bholanath and the men with him attended on the coolie earnestly. Ma told the coolie to chew on a certain species of grass. His feet became swollen and he started foaming at the mouth. He was taken up the mountain along with Ma and Bholanath. Till now he has not got any worse.

At Garbiyan we put up at a school as the dak bungalow was full. To proceed from here a big group of people need to go together as the region is infested with dacoits.

As we reached Garbiyan the people who had received prior notice of Ma's arrival came to meet us. Parvati's house was only two and a half miles away and she was to go home. Some *sadhus* arrived to meet Ma. One or two of them were already acquainted with Ma.

The path has now to be covered on horse back or on yak back. We have heard that though the path is not so bad, the atmosphere is so rarefied that it becomes difficult to breathe. This is the reason why the *dandis* will not go any further.

Around one a.m. we slept. A pile of letters were awaiting us here. The post master had had them delivered to us. We have decided to halt here for a couple of days.

Saturday, 29 June

As we did not have to travel today we rose a little late. Some other travellers to Kailas had received news of Ma's

arrival and came to see her. A South Indian engineer was accompanying some *sadhus* from the Ramakrishna Mission to Kailas. He brought a big collection of fruits and offered them at Ma's feet. Swami Jnanananda of the Ramakrishna Mission, who had already been to Kailas thrice, was now travelling with Kumar of Dinajpur. Kumar came to meet Ma. The morning was spent thus. A wealthy gentleman called Nandaram Babu, who came to know about Ma's arrival in a letter from his daughter Randra Devi, arrived from Almora. He worshipped Ma and offered flowers and fruits.

All the people conversed about arrangements for our trip to Kailas. The Dinajpur group, the group from South India and another group planned to leave together the day after tomorrow. But they would need fifty five horses which we heard could be procured from the neighbouring jungles. They had still not arrived. We have to take a guide along. Mules and yaks were to carry our luggage and we were to ride on horses. The hire charge per horse was nineteen and a half rupees. Our trip to Kailas and back would take about three weeks. In addition, the horse keeper of each horse was to be paid twelve annas per day. The man accompanying each mule would be paid eight annas a day and the guide would take twenty five rupees and the cost of a horse. We will have to carry all the food we need for we will not get anything on the way till Takalkot. As no shelter is to be found either, we also have to carry tents. The tents are to be hired; four people can sleep in a tent. We also have to arrange tents for the horse keepers. All the luggage will be carried by mules. The preparations to go to such an inaccessible spot are naturally tedious. Sugar and potatoes are very scarce here and are exorbitantly expensive. Kerosene is ten annas a bottle and rice is as costly as two seers a rupee.

In our anxiety over the preparations of the journey, we hardly had time to think about such minor matters as the cost of items. This was indeed a unique kind of journey. As Ma was having a cold we were to stay on for two more days. Yesterday and the day before had been extremely tedious going, except for Bholanath who was progressing merrily. It is said that on this journey even a father is unable to enquire about his son, but Bholanath was not the least bit fatigued. Instead, the manner in which he was ascending and then descending again to encourage the strugglers seemed to reveal the manifestation of some divine power in him—else it would not be possible for him to exert himself to this extent.

We hear that it is possible to go to Kailas and return in eighteen or nineteen days, but some delay is inevitable and therefore we have to prepare ourselves for a three weeks long span. Here wheat flour is sold at four seers for a rupee and ghee at ten chatank for a rupee. The local people are beautifully built. After lunch we all rested. I sat outdoors admiring the scenic beauty all around—Mother Nature seemed to have ornamented Herself. This beauty rouses a lofty emotion in the heart.

There is no shop here but commodities like rice, flour, *dal* and ghee were all available from the residences of the local people. There are absolutely no flies here, but the village is very dirty. We got woollen footwear here—with soles made of string and the upper part reaching up to the knees. Tibetans and Bhutanese walk on ice with such footwear. We purchased a pair each of these footwear.

A *brahmachari* from Dehradun, who was known to us, had joined our group in the Indian Dharchula. On reaching here, he developed fever and chest pain because of the intense cold. We were hearing a variety of reports about the treach-

erous path ahead. Swami Jnanananda, who had been to Kailas three or four times, recounted the time he fell off his horse in a faint. We also heard many other terrifying stories. However, whatever Ma wills, will happen. We are with her and have no reason to fear. Ma has caught a cold. We all retired early to bed.

Sunday, 30 June

This morning, Kumar of Dinajpur came to offer *pranama* to Ma. He said, "I am about to traverse a difficult path. I have, therefore, come for your blessings. You are the Primordial Sakti—please give me the strength to complete this pilgrimage safely. I have heard many terrible tales and so I have come to seek your blessings. We shall leave today." Ma laughed and said, "God alone is to be trusted—He does everything. Whatever has to happen will happen. Repeat your *ishta mantra* and think of Him as you go on your journey." Kumar said, "Good, I shall do exactly as you say. I was unable to have your darshan even though I went to Dhaka. Now, I have your darshan in this out of the way place. This is my supreme good fortune. I hope that I shall have the darshan of your feet again." He bowed down before Ma and left. The other *sannyasins* who were with him and Jnanananda Swami came to Ma, did *pranama* and took her blessings.

Today they were all to set out—three or four groups together. Our day of departure was decided upon as Tuesday, the day after tomorrow. Ma's cold was worse. She said, "It will be better if you all keep healthy." We felt Ma's indisposition did not forebode good.

The local people gathered to discuss about arrangements for our journey. The beginningless and endless roar of the Ganga still echoed in our ears. Here the river was called Kali

Ganga. There was talk of a *dandi* being taken along for Ma, or for anyone who may chance to fall ill. The cost of taking a *dandi* to and fro would be one hundred and eighty rupees. In addition, we would have to take a horse and a tent for the coolies who would carry the *dandi*—this was the tradition here.

After lunch, we rested for some time; I spent the afternoon sitting inside a *dandi* which was out in the open. We have travelled one hundred and thirty six miles from Almora. The coolies who came with us from Dharchula had accompanied us till here and then returned. On our return journey also, Rai Bahadur in Dharchula will send us coolies when we write to him. We will not have to keep the coolies waiting here and pay for them. Food is so expensive here, it is difficult for poor people to survive. It is a different story for the natives—they own fields, gardens, cattle, goats and sheep. It is too expensive for outsiders to come and live here and therefore they return ere long.

Tonight, Parvati's mother came to meet us. She brought rice, *dal* and wheat flour with her and also a pair of Tibetan snow shoes for Ma. She had taken a 'Tapovan' from the Raja of Askote to construct an *ashram*, which she now wished to give to Ma. (Ruma Devi lives there). She had written to the Raja, making this request. Parvati and her mother entreated Ma so earnestly that she agreed to spend one night at their village (the capital of the Raja of Nepal) which was two and a half miles away, before proceeding to Kailas on Wednesday. It was midnight by the time we retired for the night.

Monday, 1 July

This morning the sun made an appearance—this place usually receives very little sunshine. Misty envelopes cause darkness most of the time. Ma went for a walk after washing

her face and hands. Seeing the sunshine, our spirits lifted. I had been feeling very cold ever since we reached this place. But in a little while clouds gathered again, darkness drew on and rain poured incessantly the whole day.

Today many hill folk arrived with *dal*, rice, *ghee* and other items that are necessary for our journey to Kailas. They also had Ma's darshan. They brought with them silver plated bowls and other offerings. They do not understand Hindi properly. They stayed for some time, did *pranama* to Ma and left. A local resident named Sandel Singh is to be our guide—the local people are making all the arrangements. The luggage to be loaded on mules had been weighed in the evening. It is a rule that each mule should not carry more than one and a half maunds. We heard that the charges are being gradually hiked—Swami Jnanananda heard about this. However, all the arrangements have been made and we are to leave tomorrow morning for Parvati's house. In response to their earnest request, we are to spend one night there. On Wednesday morning we are to start for Kailas. Packing in yet another novel manner, it was again late before we retired for the night. We are carrying fuel to last us fifteen days because we shall not get anything on the way. Managing and organizing so much luggage is driving us crazy. What a terrific pilgrimage!

Tuesday, 2 July

We had some refreshments in the morning and set out at ten a.m. for Parvati's house. We had to cross a river. Field surrounded us on all sides. Above us we saw snow capped mountains all around us. The path went up and down. Ma was in a *dandi*, while we walked. By the time we reached Parvati's house we were tired and exhausted. A tent had been put up for us. Somehow, we managed to spread blankets in the

tent and lay down. Parvati's mother came and fed Ma with milk from their home-bred cow and other eatables; she also brought all the requirements for us to cook a meal. By evening we all finished eating. At night it began raining. Rain water began dripping into the tent. We somehow managed to spend the night.

Wednesday, 3 July

Today we are to set out from Parvati's place after meals. We cooked, ate quickly and got ready for the journey. Twenty one horses accompany us. One *dandi* is being taken for Ma. Sandel Singh is our guide. His fee is to be forty five rupees in all. By one thirty p.m. we reweighed all our luggage and set out. Today's path was truly terrible. We were astride horses and feared we would fall any moment. The horses stumbled against stones and rocks and progressed slowly. After some time the path seemed less difficult—it was slightly flat and quite high. The route was full of rocks and pebbles—there was really no well defined path or road. Ice and snow surrounded us and there was absolute silence. As far as we could see, there was not a sign of human life. The place seemed very lonely and calm. We followed, one behind the other on horse back, moving slowly. Ma's *dandi* was left some distance behind. The path was very bad and we had to dismount frequently. We had to cross the Kali Ganga. All around, torrents gushed out of the mountain sides and a swift stream flowed down. In between, we had to cross water falls, ice blocks, as huge as mountains, had formed on the edges of our path. Our bodies were chilled by the cold. When we crossed the Kali Ganga, we left behind the Nepal Raja's kingdom and proceeded further.

We reached a place called Kalapani, seven or eight miles away, where four tents were pitched for our use during the

night. We had got wet on the way and it rained throughout the night. Most of us did not eat anything; Dasu and Tunu ate some *khichdi* and the servant Keshav Singh also got a share. They finished their meal somehow and lay down. The guide said, "Tomorrow we must go at least five miles ahead before we camp for a rest. The route is very bad and therefore we must eat before we start."

On all four sides there was nothing but a swiftly foaming river and enormous mountains for company. This was probably the first night we had spent thus. The ground was damp, so we spread the thick dotted rugs that we had brought with us. When we were astride our horses, wearing rain coats, caps and pyjamas like Punjabis, it was still and quiet all around. That was a unique journey! Our apparel was novel, the scenery was novel and our thoughts were novel too!

Thursday, 4 July

The morning was spent in cooking and eating. Though we had to cover only five miles, the route was so bad that we had to set out early. By eleven we were off, but it began to rain. However, what could be done—there was no other solution, so we wore suitable clothing, got on to our horses and proceeded in the rain. Ma was in the *dandi*. The route was bad enough to begin with, but with the rain it was even worse. We had to take the help of the grooms most of the time. In short, there was no longer any path to speak of. We heard that people would let loose goats which would lead them through these mountains. The situation did seem to be so! The hill folk were showing us the route to be taken; in between, we had to cross torrential water falls. In this lovely place, traders sit here and there with sheep and goats in tents. The downpour increased. The mountain residents were saying that they had

never seen such torrential rain before. We have observed that Ma is always accompanied by storms and rains during her travels. Whenever she starts on a journey, rains follow inevitably. In the bitter cold we were now swimming in water. Our bodies were numb and our feet were almost lifeless. Somehow, we managed to hold on to the rains and sit like blocks of wood. Such a state is difficult to describe; it can only be understood by those who have experienced it.

By one thirty p.m. we reached a place at the foothills of a mountain and discovered that to be the site of our camp for the night. All our luggage was drenched. Somehow, the guide managed to get his men to put up three or four tents for us. Parvati Devi, who had accompanied us, took the help of the grooms and lit a fire with the wood that we had with us in a small ramshackled goat pen which consisted of a rough pile of broken stones and rocks. Some of us went and sat around that fire and felt as if we had been granted a new lease of life. We did not even bother to see where we were sitting. After some time we realised that the pen was filled with the droppings of goats and sheep. The door through this pen was a small opening through which we had to squeeze in with bent head. In any other place, we would have found it impossible to enter such a room but in that freezing cold, for the sake of the warmth of the little fire, I sat there till evening. The rain did not let up. We took some fire into the tent and dried the clothes that Ma, Bholanath, Jyotish Dada and Swamiji were wearing. But no wood was available there and it was difficult to light a fire with the ice and water all around. Water was dripping into the fire that we had lit. We cooked some food, wrapped ourselves in blankets and lay down. Yet our bodies would not get warm. What an unusual journey! Since Jyotish Dada and father were suffering from upset

stomachs again. We boiled some beaten rice for them to eat. Thus we spent yet another night in the mountains. The name of the place is Dobraj. It is a small and convenient place for a night's stay. We were told that it was a good place to stay. On Friday, 5 July, we started our journey. We had to cross the Lipu Hill (that is, the Lipu Pass). We have been hearing right from the start that this is the most difficult part of this journey. We have to climb very high. We are already at a height of sixteen thousand feet and Lipu is at a height of eighteen or nineteen thousand feet. The descent from there is also perilous. The fear of slipping on ice haunts every step. If the ice is not thick enough, it may give way. In such a place, it is practically impossible to proceed in the rain. In the morning the sky was slightly clear and the grooms got the horses ready to start immediately. But then it started raining and so we decided to halt for the day and camp where we were. The guide did not have the confidence to set out in wet weather. We were to have set out in the morning and reached Takalkot by the evening. Therefore some food had been cooked the previous evening so that we could eat it on the way without halting. Now we ate the same food in the afternoon. Jyotish Dada had loose motions so he had some barley. Hands and feet numb with cold and it is difficult to write—my fingers refuse to straighten out. The downpour continues incessantly. The Indian brahmachari from Dehradun has been travelling with us. He had nothing with him and it would have been impossible for him to travel along. It has been decided that we will start tomorrow morning if the weather clears up. Takalkot is an important place. We have been told that we can procure many necessities there. The coolies in Dharatula

wore dhotis but the coolies here wear trousers and coats. It is impossible to walk around without that. At three p.m. some rays of sunshine broke through the clouds. We put our wet clothing out to dry. In a short while there was darkness again—but the brief spell of sunshine warmed our bodies, hands and feet. We even strolled outside for a few minutes and then hastened into our tents, unable to bear the cold. We were told that tomorrow we have to cross the Lipu Pass. We hear that some people are prone to faint and therefore we have to take necessary precautions. As it was likely to get colder, we wore warm trousers and coats and got ready. We are to leave early in the morning for otherwise we will not make it to Takalkot. Ma told everyone what to keep handy in case of giddiness or breathlessness. We were already experiencing some breathlessness there. Though the place was flat like a field we used to pant. By the time we walked even a little distance we were getting frozen by the cold but there was no way in which we could light a fire for we had no wood. The coolies were fetching damp sticks from a great distance to cook food. Ma had said, "If expense is not a problem then a hot bag and a camp cot should be taken along. Dry fruit has to be carried with us. If biscuits are to be eaten, they should also be kept handy." Some examples will be given to you later. Just in case of a cold, a hot bag, a camp cot, a hot bag, a camp cot. Saturday, 6 July. The morning was very cold. It was still raining. It had rained all night. But our guide, Sandel Singh, had the horses brought from the mountains and got ready to go for halting. Any longer meant too much of a loss for him. It is beneficial for him to finish the trip as quickly as possible. We took Ma's name as we dressed up and got ready to leave by seven a.m. The rain poured. Everyone was saying that if we covered the

distance intended today, the rest of the journey would be nothing to worry about.

Takalkot is about ten miles away. The sight that met our eyes when we reached Lipu was unforgettable! At first we had to traverse a steep climb; even the very remembrance of the way the horses negotiated that route is frightening. Then we saw snow around us here and there. A little further, there seemed to be a sea of ice on either side with the black mountain in between. The mountain was also dotted with snow. It seemed as if we were atop a bridge over the sea. Then we started the descent. We all had to walk because the route was across ice and snow. We could walk only with the help of the coolies because our feet slipped with every step. At that time it felt as if we had stepped into a sea of ice. Each one of us slipped and fell, sometimes to great depths, but no one was hurt as we only fell on soft snow. It was very difficult to manage to keep the layers of clothing on amidst all this. Our hands were numb and our fingers were crooked. We were sucking lime pickle and preparation of black pepper. I put some of these into Ma's mouth. I was unaware of which hand I was using to feed Ma—such was my condition! But honestly, even though the journey was so perilous, we did not experience any serious trouble. The exquisite scenery all around us in our present condition gave rise to a feeling of deep bliss within. Dasu Babu was so overwhelmed with joy that he said, "Ma! Ma!" and burst into tears. Bholanath did not eat anything saying that he would eat only after we reached Takalkot. He was walking with obvious relish. Swamiji had been left slightly behind. Ma said, "You and Jyotish look after Swamiji." She then returned and fetched him, saying, "I think there is no need to worry about anyone. Having said 'Jai Ma Tarini' I am free of all anxiety. I have all the confidence in the world. In fact

when we had descended she patted me on the back joyfully and I could see tears in her eyes as she said, "I understand that Tara Ma is looking after us all!" That joy had brought tears to her eyes.

By the grace of Ma and Bholanath we were travelling on this pernicious path with such joy. After walking for about a mile, we rode our horses again, while Ma got into the *dandi*. We proceeded after eating some food. We crossed the mountainous path in different ways. Finally we had to cross flat ground. We saw the milk-hued mountains with all kinds of plants and trees and viewed the scenic beauty around us as we trudged along. The sights were marvellous. By evening we reached Takalkot. Our guide went ahead and pitched our tents. As we reached Takalkot, some of the residents came and stood with such looks on their faces that we felt afraid. Later we came to know that they often loot people and that we would have to be very careful from now on. On the way we had caught sight of many caves in the mountains and heard that earlier *sadhus* inhabited these caves. From quite a distance we had been able to spot the residence of the ruler of this province and the temples of the Lamas. There were also some houses and shops. Atop every house small pieces of cloth strung up with rope fluttered. Similar pieces of cloth decorated the top of the ruler's residence and the temples. We saw many fields irrigated by canals; rainfall here is irregular.

The dacoit menace starts here. Our guide had brought a gun with him. Two *sannyasis* from Peshawar came to meet Ma. They were disciples of the Lamas here. Before reaching Garbiyan we had met three south India *sadhus*. I cannot recollect their names. We slept after taking the necessary precautions. The guide said, "Tomorrow we must finish eating

early and set out for we have to go another ten miles before we camp." No one here knows how to gauge a mile—the camp sites are located by rough estimation of the distance between them. At each site these people go and pitch tents.

"Sitting now, at night, and reflecting over the day's journey, it all seems like a dream. The travails of the trek were forgotten in the beauty of the scenery. What a sight it was! It is not possible to describe it in words. Viewing the variety of hues in the mountains, Ma exclaimed, "Look, look—the mountains seem to be clothed in tiger skins. How beautiful the sheep and goats are—their hair stretches from their backs to their feet. Their large curved horns look so graceful." The hair of these animals is used to make clothes, socks, blankets and such other items. The local people brought these items and we purchased some of them. As soon as we reached the camp site the horses were let loose.

Sunday, 7 July

By eleven a.m. we finished eating and set out for Ranglung which is nearly ten miles away. From the time we reached Takalkot to the time we left, I was witnessing an interesting spectacle. The people of Takalkot were staring at Ma from all around—she was constantly surrounded by them. They could not understand a word of what she spoke, yet they gathered around her in greater and greater numbers. At the time of our departure, a big crowd of men and women stood surrounding Ma's *dandi*. Some started touching Ma's feet. Ma caught hold of their fingers—they smiled happily. These people deal in animal hair in Tibet. They brought many kinds of articles for us to see.

We reached Ranglung by six p.m. We saw many temples on the way. The stones that were used in their construction

had inscriptions carved on them which the horse grooms described as *Omkar*.

The pinnacles of temples were decorated with sheep and goat horns which were also carved. Today's path was not going to be too bad but the fear of dacoits was great, so we walked close together. The path was completely deserted. Here and there we could discern herds of yaks, sheep and goats. How many mountains we have crossed! Neither does this path seem to end, nor do the mountains. We had no idea of where and how we were being taken. There were no trees or shrubs on the path but we could see fields now and again. The mountain dwellers, however, know this path. We eventually found ourselves walking through an enormous valley with no signs of any pathway anywhere. There were hardly any trees or plants on the mountain sides. Yet it appeared as if someone had decorated the mountains with a variety of colours. The snow-capped peaks enhanced the beauty of the mountains further. While treading this path one felt as if one was going on a limitless, endless journey—perhaps one that would never come to a finish. The guide guessed the distance we had covered and pitched the tents before dark. We then made arrangements to look after our belongings and settle down for a while. Then again we would break our homes (tents) and set off—we had become just like nomads. As father was experiencing some breathing trouble today, Ma decided that he should ride the *dandi* tomorrow, while she would ride a horse. We finished eating as quickly as we could and lay down to rest.

Monday, 8 July

By ten thirty a.m. we finished our meals and set out. Ma rode a horse while father sat in the *dandi*. At one spot Ma's

horse went down to the ground; Ma slipped but was not hurt. By two p.m. we reached a spot called Gauri Pahad. It is the custom to camp wherever there is a good supply of grass and water. Today many of us developed breathing trouble, the cold was also excessive. We managed to spend the night somehow or the other. On the way we saw a star during the day time, but I could not find out whether Jyotish Dada spotted it or not. I have heard that those who do not see that star do live for long in this world.

Tuesday, 9 July

We drank hot tea and set out. We were accompanied by some people. Today after covering a distance of ten miles we are to reach Manasarovar. The guide had warned us about dacoits on this route. As Swamiji was having great difficulty in breathing, Ma rode a horse and made him sit in the *dandi* again. Last night I also found it difficult to breathe. By three a.m. it became very difficult to exhale. It grew worse and the cold was also unbearable in spite of wrapping on innumerable warm clothes. By eight thirty a.m. we set out. Even before this we had encountered dacoits on this route but by Ma's grace nothing untoward had happened. Our men were carrying guns and other arms. Today as we went ahead we met two armed men. They began walking by our side with their right sleeved rolled up—this is supposed to be a sign of their being ready to use their arms. A little further we saw two more men standing in the mountains. The men who were walking beside us signalled to them and they descended and sat by the path we were traversing. Our guide was heavily armed. He broke into a gallop and went right into their midst where he sat conversing with them. After all our horses and *dandi* had crossed the spot where the men were seated, our

guide galloped towards us, smiling, and joined us. Obviously he had managed to talk the dacoits into sparing us.

The *dandi* moved slowly; we waited every now and then for it to catch up with us. The guide was moving very cautiously. A little further, in that extremely desolated spot, two more men were standing and waiting. Not a plant or tree broke the contours of the vast expanse around us—only mountains could be seen as far as our vision stretched, nothing else. We went a little further and found a group of people in a tent. The guide again galloped ahead and went up to them. After we had gone past the group, he joined us gain. We heard that the tent was the den of dacoits who lived there with herds of goats and sheep. Thus did we continue to tread this path with the constant fear of dacoits. But as we sighted the Manasarovar lake, we all totally forgot all our fears. What a marvellous sight—the enormous lake with a multi-coloured sky in the background! The lake looked like a duplicate of the sky spread on the ground.

Gazing at the Manasarovar we walked quite a distance. At some spots we encountered very steep ascents and descents. The rather unusual sight of Ma riding a horse was unbearable to us, but in view of Swamiji's condition Ma refused to travel in the *dandi*. The route was terrible and there seemed to be no end to our troubles. Ma travelled ahead smiling. We had come far ahead leaving the *dandi* way behind. Suddenly, in that desolate spot Ma descended from her horse. Bholanath, Jyotish Dada and I were near Ma. She told us, "You three proceed and halt wherever the tents are pitched. I shall wait here for the *dandi*." Tunu and Dasu Dada had also not reached.

We were loathe to leave Ma along in such a deserted spot but she reiterated gravely, "Listen to what I say, you proceed." Bholanath protested a couple of times but finally

went ahead with Bhaji towards Manasarovar. Similarly, I also went forward for quite a distance till I finally reached the shore of Manasarovar where Parvati Dēvi and the guide were in the process of pitching our tents. Having reached around two p.m. we all alighted. In this manner our group had split into three batches. We sat down on the shores of Manasarovar awaiting the arrival of Ma and the others. . . . Swans of every possible colour were swimming in the waters of the Manasarovar. Finding some time on my hands, I moved away from the shore of the lake to the spot where our tents had been pitched and sat down to write. What a spot this is! It is just as beautiful as it is dangerous! All around stand the magnificent mountain ranges decorated in different colours and at our feet is the vast lake. The wind blew gustily. It was so cold that though the sun had emerged we hardly felt the warmth of sunshine. The guide was saying: "By Ma's grace we have reached here safe and sound. Sometimes the wind blows so strongly here that a person cannot even stand erect." Kailas is now three days away. The peak of the Kailas mountain is radiant with a temple-like structure of ice which glistens like silver. The people with us started calling out, "Kailas! Pati ki jai" on spotting the peak. "Where have we reached... seeing these sights and musing over them we are filled with an indescribable joy. . . . After all other arrangements are made, the cooking will start. For a few days we have not been getting fire wood. But on this mountain are a few thorny bushes. The grooms have gathered the dry dung of yaks with which a fire has been lit for cooking. Nothing else is available as fuel—these plants are not quite dry. Because of the breeze it is not possible to light a stove. All of us are finding it difficult to breathe and we have to inhale camphor to overcome the problem. . . .

At Almora Ma had asked us all to take a pair of woollen trousers each and we had obeyed. Ma had also ordered woollen *kurtas* from Bareilly. Now I realize that if we had depended only on the stock of woollens that we had brought from Calcutta and not brought the extra woollens as per Ma's instructions, we would never have been able to survive the cold here. I also realize how important are all the other items, like camphor, which Ma made us bring with us. It was only after reaching this place that I came to know that inhaling camphor eases the problem of breathlessness. There is no doubt that Ma is completely perfect and all powerful. What can a try to growl about her greatness in connection with these paltry matters? Still, I enjoy writing about them and hence I am doing so even if it means it is a bit out of sync with the tails of the yaks that we have been seeing on the way. . . . The tails of the yaks that we have been seeing on the way are very beautiful. According to a superstition in this part of the world, if you ride a yak you face some misfortune or the other, therefore we came on horseback. All the horses are let free to roam in the forests and their owners fetch them whenever necessary. . . . Sitting in that absolutely quiet spot I was overawed by the scenic setting of Mother Nature. A little later Ma and the others arrived. We all had a dip in the waters of the Manasarovar. Ma touched the water and sprinkled some of it. . . . a few drops fell on my hand. . . . Before, Bhulanath roared, he called Ma aside and spoke to her. Parvati took diksha from Bhulanath. As I returned to the tent, Ma was strolling on the banks of the lake, absorbed in some mood. Then Bhaji joined Ma. When Ma came back to the tent, I was busy cooking. The wind was strong and it was indescribably difficult to cook on a fire lit with raw sticks. With much trouble some sort of a meal was consumed at night. By ten p.m. we had all retired for the night. Later I heard that in

the evening when Ma had gone and sat by the lake it was absolutely still—there was not a single ripple on the surface of the lake.

Near this lake, at the foot of the Kailas mountain, we could see yet another lake which the guide informed us was called 'Rakshas Tal'. It was named after the Rakshasa King Ravana who had performed penance there. I also heard that the King of this land does not award punishment to the dacoits because dacoity is their way of life. It is said that the King had told them, "Whether it is by force or by any other means, look after your needs." Therefore, even though these dacoits commit crimes on travellers they get away unpunished. The grooms also told us that they wear dark glasses so that the dacoits cannot notice the fear on their faces—if they do, the dacoits harass them even more. So they hide their eyes and pretend to walk past the dacoits nonchalantly. They also said, "These dacoits first ask for food; if the travellers don't oblige, the dacoits use their weapons."

We saw many *charavak* birds around the lake as well as other varieties of birds that we had never seen before. Today we travelled about ten miles.

Wednesday, July 10

There was talk of finishing our meal before starting. The wind was comparatively calm in the morning and that would make the trek easier. Yet the cold was intense and walking out would still be difficult. However, we finished cooking quickly, ate a little and set out by twelve noon. I have already mentioned that no one here has any accurate estimate of a mile and we travel between places by roughly gauging the distance and camping at some suitable spot on the way. Today again, around six thirty p.m. we pitched tents at a place called Jugumfa.

We must have walked about eight miles today. We walked a long distance along the bank of Manasarovar, crossed a mountain and entered a valley. We saw a cave with lamas in it and a temple. The cave was quite big and very clean. We saw a statue of Buddha and many other statues which had been installed there. Many scriptures were laid out and they were being preserved with great care. A lamp with ghee was burning. In front of the idols, many small bowls of water had been kept. A new priest is appointed every three years and all the items in the temple are handed over to the new priest. We also saw a number of musical instruments.

Some people perambulate around the Manasarovar, which is a distance of about sixty miles. This takes at least five or six days and we did not have the courage to attempt it. At a particular spot, not far from the lake, is a hot spring. Now we are only two days away from Kailas. One mountain merges into the next and the highest peak is Mount Kailas. It was evening by the time we pitched tents and unpacked our luggage.

It was biting cold. Neither could we procure any wood, nor could we light the stove because of the wind. The lanterns were all spoilt. We just ate some maize-barley flour and went to sleep. Everyone was in such a state of exhaustion that Ma and Bholanath were served wheat flour instead of the maize-barley flour, because no one had the strength to even see which was which. All of us were lagged out, especially Swamiji who was suffering from breathlessness. We all felt that Ma was being put to a lot of trouble riding on horseback but there was no other solution. We just had to put up with everything and anything—we were in such a state!

We reached the peak of the mountain and felt that gardens had been laid out on all sides. Other than the earlier

mentioned thorny bushes there were no other plants but the bushes were laden with tiny, beautiful inflorescences. The bushes were so exquisitely ornamental that it seemed as if some gardener had planted and maintained them. They were so neatly and tidily arranged. We were seeing sights and forms which are beyond my ability to describe. The path has undoubtedly been difficult and hazardous.

Thursday, 11 July

It was drizzling right from morning. Normally it hardly ever rains here. The rain made our progress even more difficult in addition to increasing the severity of the cold which rendered us all numb. The coolies drink alcohol and trek. They were also getting overpowered with the cold and could not move fast even when they were called. Because of this cooking and eating became nearly impossible.

We were supposed to set out this morning but the cold seemed to have paralysed us all. It was decided that we should somehow manage a meal before we set out. By eleven thirty we ate and got ready. The wind was very chilly as we began our trek through an enormous field with utmost difficulty. We could not see any division in the field. By six p.m. we had pitched tents at the foot of the Kailas mountain. The beauty of this mountain has to be seen to be known. It looked like a huge silver temple covered with snow. The surrounding mountains stood like the walls of the temple. Ma remarked, "See that, the mountain has turned around like the Kali Gauri-peetha. The sight was marvellous. The name of the place was Boond and we spent the night there."

Friday, 12 July

We are to trek five miles today and cross Dhankena, which is quite a famous place with some shops and other

facilities. We are to eat and set out. A little distance away on the flat ground some people could be seen with their yaks and sheep. Our perambulation starts today. By twelve noon we had finished eating and set out. We stopped to see Dhankena on the way. The King of Bhutan owns a residence there. This place may be a part of his kingdom.

Around four p.m. we pitched camp in a spot amidst the mountains. We have trekked about six or seven miles. Today everyone is physically exhausted, mainly because of the difficulty in breathing. We felt we might die of cold. No one is in a state to even look at any one else. Even the slightest movement caused us to pant so much that we felt our breathing might stop suddenly. As we could not find firewood we could not light a fire and it seemed impossible to keep out the cold with our clothes. My hand is so numb I can hardly write. It is hard to remember that we are now perambulating the Kailas mountain. Such is the state of the body! The cold is making all of us feel lifeless.

I must mention an incident. A black dog has been following us from Takalkot. When Ma's horse set out, it started trotting alongside. Wherever we rested on the way, the dog sat near Ma. One day Ma stroked its head and fondled it. The dog ran behind Ma's horse. Whose dog was it? We never came to know, but it certainly did not appear to belong to this region.

Today we encountered snowfall three or four times. It has been snowing every now and then. The mountain tribals live in tents with their yaks and sheep. They have huge fierce dogs. Whenever we walked past the tents, the people emerged out and gazed at us in astonishment. Their costumes seemed to be a mixture of Nepali, Tibetan and Bhutani.

I have lost count of the number of mountains and rivers we have crossed. The beauty of the landscape is limitless. We

could not follow a word of the conversation between our helpers and the locals of this place. The manner of worship of these people is also unique. The beggars here raise a thumb to beg for alms. The higher we climb the more difficult the path becomes. Swamiji's breathing trouble has become acute. By Ma's grace we are still managing to advance somehow or the other. Jyotish Dada is extremely fatigued, riding on horseback, but what can be done? We are trekking on and on. Tomorrow again we have to advance further before halting. The day after, we are supposed to reach Gaurikunda which is at a height of twenty two thousand feet. A very steep climb of one or two miles has to be negotiated. I know not how we are going to reach our destination. Our faith rests in Ma alone.

Saturday, 13 July

The name of the place is Sarson. By twelve noon we set out. For the past few days we have been moving through enormous plains with some ups and downs. By four p.m. we camped at another spot. We could see the peaks of the Kailas mountain on three sides. At one place Bholanath indicated a rock which seemed like a pair of statues...he had halted while walking to show us the rock. He showed us whatever he saw in his visionary mood: he also showed us the foot print of Siva—but all this is a question of faith, a matter of one's *bhava*. At many place we saw piles of rocks embedded in the ground with some inscriptions carved on them which we were told were the Omkar and other great mystical sayings.

We could hear a waterfall some distance away from our camp. Here again we could not get firewood and we lit a fire with dried dung. We also managed to light a stove. In between it was snowing. A little further we came across a

cave. Legend has it that Parvati Devi had fetched some incense of Kailas and the ash of sacrificial fire from this cave. After leaving Garbiyan we had not been able to get any milk. Day before yesterday we had got some yak milk and butter. Tomorrow we should reach Gaurikunda.

This route is also supposed to be very bad. Tomorrow we may spend almost the whole day on horseback. The *dandi* cannot be carried any further and so Swamiji will have to travel on horseback. Seeing his condition people suggested that he and I should be left behind. But Bholanath coaxed everyone into agreeing to let us all proceed together. Whatever has to happen will happen. Ma again distributed camphor and dried fruit to overcome breathlessness and also some other items to tide over the difficulties on the way. Tomorrow we may not be able to find any place suitable for cooking and so we cooked something for the next day as well. We felt as if we were preparing for a great war! The wind was strong. We wrapped ourselves in blankets and retired for the night.

Akhandananda Swamiji had a beautiful dream in the night. He saw a group of dark, naked ladies approaching him. He told one of them, "I am in poor health... now I shall not be able to complete the perambulation of the Kailas mountain." The dark lady pointed to a fair lady in front of the group and said, "Tell her." Swamiji saw a radiant, fair lady in front of him. He asked, "Ma, will I not be able to make it?" The fair lady said nothing.

Sunday, 14 July

We had to set out in the morning. It has been decided that Swamiji would accompany us. At that juncture he remembered his dream. As we were going for Gaurikunda darshan, no one ate anything, but we carried hot tea with us. We got

glimpses of sunshine in between bouts of snow. We set out by seven thirty a.m.

As per Ma's instructions, the horses were arranged in a single file. Last night hardly anyone slept because of the cold. We had put on every piece of warm clothing that we had, yet our bodies felt damp and cold. It has been bad enough here and today we shall climb even higher! As we set out for Gaurikunda which is situated at a height of twentytwo thousand feet, Ma showed us, "Look, all around there seems to be a circular line. This is called a *dharmasabha*. In my childhood, the mother of this body had told me that this is an auspicious sign." A few days ago the guide had halted his horse during midday to show us stars and the moon shining in the sky, saying, "It is an auspicious sign to be able to sight the sun, moon and stars simultaneously in the sky!"

We moved ahead—as there was not much wind the trek was not troublesome, yet the cold was so intense that we were freezing numb. Each of us was wearing two or three woollen trousers, sweaters, a coat and an overcoat—woollen socks, shoes, woollen caps, gloves—we lacked neither clothing nor equipment, yet we were shivering with cold; this route is truly terrible. The horses were stumbling at every step against rocks and stones.

Proceeding thus for about three miles we reached Gaurikunda. Whatever rituals have to be performed are done here, there is no temple or idol elsewhere. The religious ceremony at the culmination of this pilgrimage is the perambulation of the Kailas mountain. Today we complete this *pradakshina*. Gaurikunda is an icy pond surrounded by snow-capped peaks. The *kunda* thus seems to be surrounded by icy walls. We have been walking through snow, for though there was not much snow on the path, we were surrounded by

snow covered mountains. It is customary to offer a coloured cloth at a spot just above the *kunda*. All the items had been brought. We alighted at Gaurikunda with great difficulty. The water was frozen hard except for pools of water near the banks with ice floating in it. These pieces of ice had to be pushed aside while dipping in the waters of this *kunda*. Bholanath, Dasu Dada and the Indian *Brahmachari* in our group bathed in the water. The others only sprinkled the holy water on their heads. We spent sometime there. Ma also bathed her head, and drank some of the water. She then had dry fruits offered, incense lit and *arati* performed. A big lock of Bholanath's hair was cut and dropped into Gaurikunda.

A glimpse of sunshine appeared inspite of the continuous snowfall. So there was not much of a wind and this lessened our troubles. But Swamiji continued to suffer from breathlessness. He seemed to be in the condition of *kumbhaka* (the holding of breath during *pranayama*) all the time and he sat thus, behind Ma. Jyotish Dada was also in the same state. From morning he had been feeling uncomfortable in the chest. As he feared that his ailment would prevent everyone else from proceeding further, he kept quiet about it. He told us about this only on the way back. It is only because of Ma's grace and Bholanath's enthusiasm that we have all been able to reach Gaurikunda and perform all the religious rituals. Fruit, *halva* and dried fruit were distributed to everyone. There was no chance of getting any other foodstuff at the spot.

Around twelve thirty p.m. we departed on our return journey from Gaurikunda. Now the descent became as terrible as the ascent. Most of the time, we could hardly keep ourselves on horseback. The path by which we descended on horseback was terrifying even to look at. The descent lasted over a distance of about two miles. Ma was accompanied by

two people. Around two thirty p.m. we reached even ground and found ourselves near a spring. We rested for some time, drank some water and set out again.

We travelled on plain ground for four or five miles more and reached a waterfall by sunset and pitched camp. As we feared that the *dandi* would get left far behind the horses, Swamiji was also made to ride a horse.

During our perambulation of the mountain, we came across two men who were perambulating the mountain by prostrating full length on the ground. When they asked us for something, we gave them some money. We heard that such a perambulation, in which after each prostration the next prostration is begun where the head touch the ground last, takes fifteen days to complete. We were astonished to see such a feat being accomplished in such an inaccessible spot. The men had wrapped thick cloth around their knees and chest. We were stunned to see such devotion.

Meanwhile our guides came and told us that they had themselves declared that they were dacoit gang leaders to deceive the local people. We were again surprised to hear this! In the tent it was decided that Jyotish Dada would travel in the *dandi* in order to rest a bit. Ma puts herself to so much trouble on account of her devotees! At night after some food was cooked, we all ate and slept.

In the course of conversation Ma told us, "I can see five people clothed in saffron coloured robes (in their subtle forms) coming to me and saying, 'We were with you during the perambulation'. There are so many such beings. I did not say anything but another subtle-bodied being asked them, 'Who are you all?' The sadhus replied, 'We are disciples of Kanai, the nephew of Maheshchandra Bhattacharya. We are continuing our work in this manner'." Ma continued, "From this

it appears that Kanai was in an exalted state in his previous birth." Referring to the matter of the subtle-bodied beings Ma explained, "Just as I can see you all, I can see them equally clearly. Just as you touch my feet, they sit next to you and do exactly the same."

Here again we could not procure any wood but Parvati Devi went to a cave and bought some. It was hardly wood—just small thorny twigs. We have been spending days and nights in the extraordinary costumes described earlier. Tomorrow we shall reach Boond where all our luggage has been deposited. We met a great number of beggars here—they were given handfuls of puffed rice which they were very happy to receive; such is their poverty.

Chapter Two

Monday, July 15

Today again we finished eating before we set out. Now we are on the return journey—we completed the *pradakshina* yesterday. Last night we were at Didipo and today we reached Jijipo.

Parvati Devi received *diksha* from Bholanath at Manasarovar and Tunu was initiated at Gaurikunda. Jyotish Dada was now travelling in the *dandi*. We went to Boond, collected our luggage and then descended to Barkha by sunset where we camped for the night.

As the wind was strong the cold became acute. We realized that whenever the sun appeared the weather warmed up slightly; as soon as the sun went behind a cloud or when a strong breeze began blowing, the weather turned very cold. Today was very cold. The grooms who were with us scoured the vessels helped by Keshav Singh. By nine p.m. everyone lay down. The peak of the Kailas mountain looked beautiful from here. It was fully covered with snow. Ma had made me light a lamp with ghee in it, perform *arati* and prostrate. Ma had had some holy water of Manasarovar and Gaurikunda taken along.

Tuesday, July 16

This morning the sun shone brightly. Everyone hastened to dry their clothes and linen in the sunshine. Leeches had got into Tunu's *kurta* and had bitten him blue and black. Today he took off the *kurta* for airing. By twelve noon we finished eating and set out. We had managed to buy yak's milk and butter here as also some goat's milk and butter. People here store butter in little sheep skin containers. We travelled for five miles

and reached a plain where the Rakshasa Talab was situated; we encamped on its banks at four thirty p.m. Ma travelled by *dandi* today. No other incident of importance occurred today.

Wednesday, July 17

We ate in the morning and set out by eleven a.m. We encountered plain ground as well as ascents and descents. Last night it snowed and the temperature fell considerably. Even now we could see the Kailas mountain. We climbed a hill to view the Manasarovar again. While returning we had not come past the Manasarovar but had travelled by another route. The horses had become quite numb. After travelling a distance of nine or ten miles in about six hours we camped on the other bank of the Rakshasa Talab. It will take us two or three more days to reach Takalkot. The weather is rapidly changing from warm to cold.

We had carried five tents with us. Ma, Bholanath, Swamiji, Jyotish Dada, Parvati and I would use one. Dasu Dada, Tunu and Brahmachari camped in another. The third tent in which Keshav Singh lived was used for cooking. The guide and the other men used the remaining two tents. Every morning the household items were packed and every evening they were unpacked again. This routine will go on for some more days. Other than rain with snow which was some times heavy we had no other troubles at present. Yet, this rain had put us to great inconvenience many times as we had to live out in these wide open spaces. Again as we descend from Takalkot we will have to face the difficulties of trekking in a downpour.

Thursday, July 18

We finished our meal and set out by eleven a.m. When we had gone some distance I suddenly experienced a pain in the

left side of my body which seemed to have gone numb. I got down from my horse and lay down. A little later Ma made me get into the *dandi* and she travelled on my horse. We trekked another ten miles and pitched camp before sunset. It was still very cold and a strong breeze was blowing.

We could see the Kailas mountain for quite some distance. We were looking at the Rakshasa Talab as we proceeded. This was also vast. Ma said, "From here it seems as if someone has dug out the pond which is Manasarovar and the mud unearthed and piled have formed the mountains surrounding the pond. See, there is no sign of a waterfall on any side." In the course of conversation people were saying that if the gods made the Manasarovar then Ravana made the Rakshasa Talab close by. So Ravana was not demeaned. Ma said, "What is impossible? The possible is impossible and the impossible is also possible." We had reached the vicinity of the Mandhata mountain. It is said that King Mandhata performed penance here. From here we could no longer see either the Kailas mountain or the Ravana Tal.

Friday, July 19

We ate and set out. We will have to halt after travelling six miles, for now many of us do not have the stamina to proceed much further in one day. After a six-mile trek we found plain ground surrounded by mountains and pitched camp. Today again I travelled in the *dandi* as instructed by Ma. My left hand had become paralysed because of a sudden chill.

Our staple diet consists of *khichdi*, but here we could only get lentils and therefore we could not make *khichdi*. We would cook rice or *roti* and eat it. For quite some time the only vegetable that could be procured was potatoes and when even that became scarce, we roasted the Bengal gram that

we had carried with us, or we just managed with sugar. By the grace of *Kailasapati*, we somehow managed to light a fire by blowing on green plants so that some sort of cooking was possible, else that too would have ceased. The days were passing by in this manner—sometimes we camped near a waterfall. There the incessant roar of the water, like the sound of ocean waves, fell on our ears—that was good to hear.

On our return journey of the perambulation, Swamiji had yet another dream. A man came to invite him for Durga *puja* and began stuffing something into his pocket. Swamiji asked him, "What is this you are giving me?" He replied, "I have given you the blessings of the Durga *puja*." Swamiji joined his palms and remarked, "We also celebrate Durga *puja* every year at home."

Saturday, July 20

We set out by seven a.m. and reached Takalkot after a trek of five or six hours. We had set out without eating anything. At Takalkot we saw some shops and residences of householders. There was also a marketing centre. The uncle of Randra Devi of Almora took Ma to his shop where some things were purchased as many of our supplies had been exhausted. We could not procure potatoes or any other vegetables. We purchased sugar and certain other provisions. Pea fields abound here. The people in our group went into the fields and plucked a lot of greens. We managed to boil these and make some sort of a curry.

It seems the king of this region has forbidden anyone from plucking greens from the fields. The king has to be paid heavy taxes and therefore the people are unhappy.

We saw many Lamas and also spotted many caves. But no one could give us information about a Lama who had attained

realization. It is the tradition for Lamas to remain celibate and they are punished if they happen to get married.

Our tents had been pitched at the foot of the mountains, near the water. We purchased provisions and descended to the camp slowly. By the time we cooked and ate it was five p.m. Randra Devi's brother arrived with some fruit and a beautiful bowl for Ma. We purchased some *chamar*. We have not so far spotted any cattle other than yaks in these parts.

We learnt about a beautiful tradition prevalent here. Some of the grooms in our party had caught some fish in the Manasarovar and had strapped them on to their backs. When we enquired whether they would eat them they replied, "We have not brought these fish to eat. The fish of Manasarovar are invaluable. When a tiger attacks a herd of sheep or goats, the smell of this fish being burnt reminds the tiger of Manasarovar alone. It is then easy for us to dispatch the tiger to Yamaloka." We do not know how far this story is true, yet these people believe in it implicitly.

The cold was much less intense now, also our breathing was nearly normal. Many changed out of trousers and warm coats into ordinary clothing; that was a relief. Yet after awhile we again had to wear trousers and woollen coats but the cold was not as bad as it had been. Many Tibetan women were standing nearby with their children and watching the fun. The whole day through there was a stream of people standing there. Ma began playing a small tambourine and asked them to sing a song. We could not understand a word of their language. When the grooms explained Ma's request to the women, four or five of them held hands and began dancing and singing joyously. These women are very simple hearted without a trace of shyness in them. By Ma's instructions, the *plsta*, raisins and other dry fruit we had with us were

distributed amongst those women. They were very happy to receive the dry fruit. We lay down at nightfall.

Garbiyan is still three or four days away. At dusk, Randra Devi's brother (Nandaram Babu's son) delivered some letters which had arrived at his address in Garbiyan. After many days we received letters from Hiran Didi and Ganesh Dada of Dhaka as well as from Snehalata Basu and Nani of Calcutta. There were also some letters from Nagen Dada and others. All these days we had no postal contact with anybody—we were in a completely different world.

It was decided that we would eat and set out tomorrow.

Sunday, July 21

This morning Parvati Devi proposed that she would take us to the caves of the Lamas. It was decided that I would return and make *rotis* while Dasu would do the rest of the cooking.

Ma, Bholanath, Tunu, Jyotish Dada, Parvati Devi and I began the ascent on horseback for the Lamas' caves were at the peak of the mountain. The house of the Raja's minister was close to the caves. We went to see the caves. The ascent was very steep and so was the descent on our return. But now we did not find the ascents and descents on horseback frightening as we had got used to them. Actually these paths are situated so precariously on the edge of the mountain side, that if the horse were to stumble no one would even come to know where the rider had landed! The paths barely exist. Climbing by the edge of the mountain in this manner, we reached the peak.

The Lamas' cave was painted yellow and the Raja's house was red. We walked around the cave which was enormous. Many people lived in it. We heard that the local people had

handed over little children as *sannyasis* to the Lamas. The Raja looks after the needs of all, that is, he has ordered the people to make donations of all the provisions needed by the Lamas. We saw many boys reading scriptures.

We climbed a dubiously strong wooden ladder to meet the main Lama. He was an elderly person and was seated on a cushion with a dog. The room was decorated with the pictures and statues of Lord Buddha and other saints. As mentioned earlier in the description of other caves, here too we found a vessel filled with water in front of each statue. There were many books. Jyotish Dada spoke up and requested, "Please give us some *shakti*." The Lama could not understand us at all. Finally some of the grooms and Parvati Devi managed to convey the request whence the Lama began distributing a variety of *prasada*—from Tirthapuri, from Khacchamath and from other places.

We had not visited these places as it involved too much time and also because the pathways were not good. The Lama also gave us coloured pieces of cloth. We came to know that these pieces are considered to be extremely auspicious because, as has been described earlier, similar bits of cloth had been strung together and hung in every temple. Also, these pieces decorate the house tops of householders and can be found along the path, hung between rocks. These rocks are engraved with many letters and, surprisingly enough, the letter 'Om' is very similar to the one that we write and the people here use the word very often.

We looked at the caves in detail. At one place we saw the image of Goddess Tara and at another we saw the image of some other goddess. In one room there was an enormous brass statue of Buddha. Some statues of Lamas were also kept as memoirs. One elderly Lama asked us if we would

drink tea, when we entered his room. It seems they offer tea to the idols and then drink it as *prasada*. Drinking tea is compulsory here. We had brought tea, money, dry fruit and sugar candy to give as offerings. These items are traditionally offered.

We saw the rooms that the boys lived in. The rooms were dark and the surroundings were not too clean. But the rooms with idols in them were kept very clean. As soon as we entered we sensed some kind of stench. There was no paucity of yak and sheep horns and bones. At the entrance to the cave we saw the head of a large yak.

We heard that Lamas eat *dal*, rice and *roti*, but some also eat meat. The cave was a kind of palace. In the elderly Lama's room we saw thin, round sheets of paper with something written on them. Jyotish Dada wished to take some but they were not supposed to be carried away from there. It is believed that any mishaps in agriculture can be set right by these sheets. After much discussion we gave eight annas and procured two of the sheets.

It was late in the day by the time we returned. We made *roti* and offered *bhoga*. Many people had come to meet Ma and the hill women were constantly peeking into the tent. They remained crowding round the tent as long as we were there.

By the time we ate and set out it was one p.m. Yesterday Jyotish Dada had travelled in the *dandi*, today Ma sat in it as the rest of us rode our horses. We saw many merchants some grouped in tents, others seated at the foothill of the mountain around a pond cooking. They had released their horses and yaks and the loads carried by the animals were lying here and there. After eating, the animals would be re-loaded and they would set out again.

Takalkot is a trading centre and these merchants were on their way there. This is the main market for sending goods up and down. People gather here and exchange goods.

Today we camped after trekking a distance of about six miles. After another two miles the ascent of Lipu will begin. We did not camp closer to Lipu as the cold would be more intense. The tents were erected near a waterfall—we have been living thus. We saw many varieties of wild flower. Sometimes we camped amidst meadows of yellow flowers, sometimes red, today the fields were full of purple flowers.

We reached well before sunset. We had brought dried peas from Takalkot. There was no other vegetable; the *dal* was also finished. The peas were black—we roasted them on the stove and ate them. Tomorrow we have to cross Lipu. Everyone is afraid of this bit of the journey as I had already mentioned while recounting our forward journey. The height of this mountain is between eighteen and nineteen thousand feet. Many suffer from giddiness; Keshav Singh had fallen after a dizzy spell on the way up. Therefore today Ma had pickles, camphor and other necessary items distributed in advance. Tomorrow we have to leave early; tomorrow's meal time has not been decided as yet. Therefore some edibles have already been prepared. I slept around midnight.

Monday, July 22

We set out early, taking some hot tea along. As the cold tends to upset our health, hot tea is a necessity. We hope to reach Garbiyan tomorrow. We set out at seven thirty a.m. The ice on Lipu was less this time and the ascent across the ice was not so extensive. The descent was long but not over ice. The route above Takalkot consisted of large extents of plain but here the path was highly modulated and rocky. We had

to travel along the mountain edges and the steep slope beyond the edge was a terrifying sight. By Ma's grace the horses trotted across the paths quite effortlessly and by three fifteen p.m. we reached Kalapani and pitched camp.

Everyone was exhausted after the long journey. We had some refreshments on the way and meal was cooked at Kalapani. We had got potatoes on the way. What a happy event that was! The potatoes were dry and rotten—but such was our condition! Before evening we ate and rested. Here too we could hear the deep reverberations of a waterfall. The moon shone and the sky was clear. The camp had been pitched on plain ground on the edge of the mountain. All around were snow capped mountain peaks. We decided to set out early next morning and eat our meal at Garbiyan which is now eight or ten miles away. The route is supposed to be bad.

Tuesday, July 23

This morning we all set out. Yesterday we met Nandaram Babu who was on his way to Takalkot. He is the father of Randra Devi of Almora. At this time of the year many people commute to Takalkot and back as this is the season for buying and selling. Most people trade in wool which is the chief wealth here. All merchandise is made out of wool. Clothes, shirts, caps, even ropes, are woollen. Bags for carrying food and clothing are made of leather. We also see people wearing leather jackets.

We set out at seven thirty a.m. The route is very bad for in addition to the ups and downs the difficult, rocky paths, made our fear of falling off, greater. If the horses missed even one step here or there, we would land right down into the river. Only one horse could traverse the path at a time. Only those

who witness the sight of these horses negotiating this steep climb to the peak and then the equally difficult descent to the river bank can believe the sure-footedness of these animals. The grooms also walk along these paths casually. They have held us and escorted us across very difficult terrain. In some places the path was so terrible that it seemed impossible for even one man to stand there—it seemed to be sheer cliffside without any path whatsoever. Practice makes anything possible—this was a living example. Only those who have experienced it will understand. By Ma's grace and Baba Bholanath's enthusiasm, we arrived safe and sound. Today we felt delighted to see trees and plants on either side of the path (Deodar and Chir trees dominated) and forests. We enjoyed the shade of the trees during the journey. We had not seen such scenery for days and this evening beauty brought us great peace. From yesterday we have been sighting small flowering shrubs—innumerable varieties of flowers are blooming. It looks like a beautifully planned garden.

On the way we had met large groups of merchants travelling from Garbiyan to Takalkot. They travelled with horses, yaks, mules, sheep and goats, loaded with merchandise. The sheep and goats are loaded with equally heavy bags on either side; each animal carries between ten and thirty seers. As there is a shortage of wood in the higher regions, one log of wood was tied to the back of each sheep. It was difficult to wade through the enormous herds of sheep. As it was, the path was so treacherous and these herds of goats and sheep added to our troubles.

Yet in the midst of all these travails, a continuous stream of bliss seemed to flow all the time. Almost all the people accompanying us were from Garbiyan. The men carrying dandis were singing joyfully at the prospect of returning to their

homes. We also felt we were nearing the completion of our journey.

Around two thirty p.m. we reached Garbiyan and camped in the school described earlier. We were uncertain as to when the coolies would arrive from Dharchula. We were considering spending four or five days here in order to arrange for the coolies. After food was cooked Ma and Bholanath sat down to eat. *Khichdi*, rice, *roti* and potato curry had been prepared. Just then a gentleman from Moradabad arrived for Ma's darshan. Later we came to know that a deputy magistrate, a doctor, a judge from Dharchula named Pranvallabh Babu who had made all arrangements for us and also a police inspector, had all arrived.

We had received the news that these people were going to Garbiyan while we were on our way. These people were accompanied by many others including coolies. Because of their importance in these parts, their arrival had caused quite a stir. They arrived for Ma's darshan with our guide Sandel Singh and sat with her for a long time. They put up two tents in the school compound and went to stay in a dak bungalow. They expressed their readiness to make all arrangements for our meals and also for coolies to accompany us, which was a great convenience for us. So we were saved any further worries about getting coolies and other requirements.

We decided to leave by the morrow or the day after. By Ma's grace we did not face any kind of inconvenience. We received many letters from various places; Jyotish Dada fetched the letters from the post office. Thus we got news about many people. We lay down soon after sunset. Ma's arrival was announced in the village by nightfall.

Wednesday, July 24

Today we shall stay here. The Deputy Sahib has made all arrangements. He had also set out for Kailas darshan with a big group. A *sadhu* named Kailas Giri was with him—he was also headed towards Kailas. He has been going to Kailas every year for the last fifteen years. After so many days we started feeling very comfortable as we changed out of our trousers, coats and caps to don *dhotis*. After a meal we relaxed with a feeling of relief. Many people arrived with offerings of rice, *dal*, *ghee* and other items; this kind of offering is made traditionally in these parts.

Thursday, July 25

Today we were to leave after a meal and so all preparations were going on briskly; by ten a.m. we departed. The Deputy Sahib's group left for Kailas. Before they left they gave some fruit and pickles to Ma; in return, we gave them some items which were essential for their journey.

Before lunch many people came for Ma's darshan. They prostrated before Ma and bade us farewell repeatedly before leaving with downcast meins. Those who had accompanied us also took leave with tearful eyes as we climbed into *dandis* and started our descent down the mountainous path.

Again the Kali Ganga flowed beside us roaring as she cascaded down. To those who have never seen this river, I cannot explain how she roars and the manner in which she surges forward. She danced ecstatically and sped away, filled with the bliss of flowing. Whenever she met a big rock she would jump, jostle and flow into the depression in front, as if Bhagirathi had transformed Herself into a flowing form in order to bathe Lord Vishwanath.

On either side were the mountains, their peaks touching the sky and at their feet flowed the Kali Ganga, swiftly, while we proceeded along the treacherous path. The path was truly terrible. At some places, even two individuals could not stand side to side. On one side of the path was the towering mountain side and on the other side was a steep drop, reaching into the nether world! The lower part of the view below was invisible to us and we could barely look down without feeling giddy. Even below that was the roaring river. If we faltered even by a hair's-breadth, it was needless to write what our fate would be!

On such paths we traversed, sometimes in a *dandi*, and at times, when the path was too bad, we walked with the help of the *dandi* bearers. Each *dandi* was manned by six coolies. Four to carry the *dandi* and two to relieve the other by turns. Whenever we had to alight from our *dandi* the bearers would hasten to help us. With great care they held our hands and escorted us across the worst paths. They hardly had room to stand one at a time on the path and yet they effortlessly helped us across. This is the result of practice. At those moments we felt that no persons, other than these, were dearer to us in the world!

We had to sit quietly in the *dandi*, with hands folded, legs held close to the body. Everybody's condition was similar. Our eyes and faces revealed our fears of falling with every step. At places, on this terrible path, rocks jutted out of the mountain-side, hanging precariously overhead, so that it was even more frightening to walk with our heads down. At times we passed through such dreadful spots that some of us shut our eyes and sat like logs of wood, numb with fear. Every moment we feared a fall but these hill folk, with their years of practice negotiated these paths so expertly that they carried a *dandi*

across a path that we feared to even tread over. Today, Tunu, Dasu Dada, Brahmachariji and Keshav Singh walked, as no more *dandis* were available and horses could not walk on these paths.

Around four p.m. we reached Malpa. A lot of people were there. A room which was utterly repulsive (the *dharmasala*) was reserved by a man who said that his twenty odd companions were soon to arrive. Seeing no alternative, we had to enter the room in spite of his remonstrances, and occupy it. We knew that we would get wet despite staying inside the room in case it rained, but there was no other solution. Cooking was done outdoors.

Jyotish Dada developed a slight fever because of which he was feeling very weak. But what could be done? He had to travel in that condition. We decided to leave early the next day because we could procure no food for the coolies; tomorrow's route was expected to be even worse than today's, so we planned to leave as soon as it became light. Rain fell during the night and the roof leaked like a sieve. We spent the night with great difficulty. To start with, the room had been filthy; now it was also wet. We spread leaves and creepers on the floor and somehow managed to roll out our beddings on top of the plants. It had to rain at such an hour! It will not be difficult for anyone to understand our problems but we had grown so used to this sort of a situation that we simply wrapped on our rain coats and slept.

Friday, July 26

We rose very early and prepared for the day's journey. The rain had stopped. Though it took some time to pack our luggage, we could set out before sunrise. Today's path was probably the worst one that we had ever traversed during the

entire trip. We had to walk most of the time. The sun rose, yet our path extended before us almost endlessly.

Jyotish Dada could not walk so one man carried him on his back. In between wherever the path was slightly better (though it was still dangerous) we rode on the *dandi* and rested. But as soon as the path became bad the *dandi* bearers made us alight. Ma and the rest of us were all tired but we had to walk for we could do nothing else. The coolies volunteered to carry us on their backs but Ma and I did not agree to this.

At the time of setting out for Kailas, Naveen Babu's wife, Juthika Devi, had applied oil to Ma's hair and plaited the hair into two braids so that her hair would not get matted. I had also plaited my hair similarly. On the way to Kailas, at Garbiyan, Ma had loosened out her hair as she was not used to wearing braids. So now Ma again had her hair flowing loose. With scattered tresses, a stick in her hand, her face flushed with exhaustion, sandals on her auspicious feet as she walked along the mountain path, her form was marvellously unique, reminding me of Goddess Parvati disguised as an ascetic.

We walked across mountains. Many a waterfall cascaded from the mountainside, roaring deafeningly. Sometimes we had to cross these waterfalls. Though we walked past with umbrellas raised, the spray from the cascades drenched our clothing. Water descending from such heights on to the rocks below raised such a dense spray that it seemed as if the surrounding area was engulfed in mist.

We saw the most wonderful sights as we walked along but none of us was then in a condition to appreciate the beauty thoroughly. Today's path had been particularly trying. On the mountains near Kailas there had been practically no trees or plants as if the white palace of Kailaspati was lying bare. Here,

however, the mountains were covered with dense forests and green foliage. These mountains had taken on a completely different form. As it had been raining the forests were even thicker with greenery.

Somehow, with great difficulty, we reached Dipti by two p.m. We found a tolerably good room at some height. It was past sunset by the time we could eat. Exhausted, we lay down to sleep. Tomorrow's path is steep uphill but not supposed to be very bad.

As soon as Ma reached here, a man, whom we had seen earlier, arrived with some mustard greens, two raw radishes, one raw pumpkin and some milk. These vegetables seemed unique to us. Bholanath began cooking with great enthusiasm. I made a curry in addition to cooking the greens. After so many days we all ate with great relish and contentment. We also sighted a shop in this place!

Saturday, July 27

We decided to set out after eating. We managed to procure potatoes, pumpkin and greens. *Khichdi*, *roti*, greens and curry were all prepared. We also got oil and some milk so henceforth we may not experience much inconvenience.

After the meal we proceeded on our journey. The path was uphill for three miles but we did not have to walk as we were carried in the *dandi*. We sighted many fields with greens. Fields are called "chooya" here.

I shall put down here something that I forgot to write about earlier. Ma's body has thinned down. When we reached Garbiyan we found that all of us had grown darker; this was particularly true of our noses. The horses had become lame due to walking over rocks and stones all the way. Because of this, a young groom jokingly remarked that the *prasada*

from Kailaspati was "Black humans and lame horses." Since Garbiyan our colour is changing again.

Though the days are warmer now we still need blankets at night. It usually rains at night but for the last two or three days the weather has been dry. This was lucky for us for had it rained the path would have been rendered even more terrible.

Bholanath travelled in Tunu's *dandi* and also walked some distance. Tunu travelled a long distance in the *dandi*. As the *dandis* have been breaking on the way their numbers have decreased.

We can no longer hear the roar of the Kali Ganga which has been left far behind. It is believed that this very Kali Ganga is famous as the Sarayu in Ayodhya and by other names in other places. Since yesterday we lost sight of snowy mountains and today they are completely absent from our surroundings. Today we have to travel for ten miles till we reach Sasa.

Three or four miles before our destination, Ruma Devi arrived and bowed down at Ma's feet saying, "Ma, I have been sitting here and awaiting your darshan for the last three or four days without going to my ashram." Before sunset we reached Sasa. Ruma Devi accompanied us. She had arranged for a house in which we could stay at Sasa; there she had already spread mats for us. As soon as we reached she went to the homes of householders and procured flour, *ghee*, potatoes and milk for us.

Service is the motto of her life. We were surprised to see this keen spirit of service in such an elderly *sannyasini*. She told Ma, "Ma, I was counting the days and waiting for you, roaming around here for the last three days. Today I sat on a stone—I was afraid that you would go past and that I would miss you. Many people have come to the ashram and there is much work

to be done. But I did not go for I was waiting for you. It is seven days since I came here from Almora." She plucked flowers from the mountainside, offered them at Ma's feet and did *pranama*. We watched the devotion of this elderly lady, enchanted. She had known Ma only for a few hours. At night we ate the meal prepared by Ruma Devi and rested.

In the evening the house was crammed with householders who arrived to see Ma. Ma was suffering from stomach ache so she ate very little in the afternoon and refused food now. As Jyotish Dada was having fever we were all worried, otherwise we had no other problems. Tomorrow we are to leave for Khela after lunch. Today we had set out at ten a.m. and travelled ten or twelve miles, passing through Sirkha on the way. We also slept quite late.

Sunday, July 28

Jyotish Dada was ill. We set out after eating. Khela is seven miles away. The coolies are to accompany us till we reach Khela; then they will leave.

Ruma Devi went with us. She said that she would stay with Ma and that she would not return to her ashram any more. She declared, "I had decided that the vow of service was the greatest in life. But now that I am old I find that there is no end to the work. I do not like it any more; I wish to live with Ma in peace and do my *sadhana*." So saying she accompanied us.

We found roses and champak flowers blooming all around. Dasu Dada plucked the flowers and offered them at Ma's feet. We saw Indian flowers after so long. Since morning the village folk have been coming for Ma's darshan. Some brought milk from home bred cows, some covered Ma's bedding with flowers. Some ladies brought flowers and sugar candies for Ma; subsequently I distributed these items to all present.

One woman began questioning Ma on religious matters and asked for Ma's advice on how to proceed with *sadhana*. Some people walked beside Ma's *dandi* for quite some distance. Ruma Devi's Sharada Ashram is about one and a half miles from here. Many villagers hold Ruma Devi in great esteem. The Postmaster of Garbiyan had written to the Postmaster of Khela to make arrangements for Ma's stay there.

We reached Khela a little before sunset. It rained on the way. The Postmaster's man was waiting by the roadside to convey information about Ma's arrival. We sat in a shop in Khela where the Patwari, the Postmaster and others came to meet us. Jyotish Dada had no fever. But as he was feeling very weak, we decided to stay here tomorrow. The coolies' homes are here, so they took leave of us. Tomorrow, coolies will be arranged for the trip to Almora. It is still raining. Parvati Devi is with us. She will go to Nainital for her job.

Monday, July 29

We stayed on in Khela today. The Postmaster sahib has arranged coolies who will accompany us to Almora. He offered to Ma, ripe mangoes, bananas and milk from his home bred cow. Jyotish Dada was extremely weak because of low fever. We had no worries other than this. We got all kinds of vegetables here. Little hill tribe boys came selling pumpkins, raw bananas, greens and brinjals. We also purchased lentil *dal*. Now Almora is only eight or nine days journey from here. Ma is not keeping too well. Tomorrow we shall set out for Dharchula.

Tuesday, July 30

We set out in the morning. Two miles before Dharchula we went to the District Board Dispensary in Tapovan. Jyotish

Dada's temperature had gone up and we wanted to have him examined by a doctor. A young doctor lived here with his family. He examined Jyotish Dada whose temperature had risen to one hundred four degrees. We rested here for some time and proceeded to Dharchula after collecting the medicine. The dak bungalow in Dharchula is situated in open surroundings and Jyotish Dada would find it comfortable.

We reached the dak bungalow by two p.m. The watchman there made all the arrangements; the doctor was to visit Jyotish Dada everyday. Today medicine was brought again. We got provisions and good milk from the many householders who live around here. We shall stay here for a few days mainly because we suspect that the travails of the journey are probably the cause of Jyotish Dada's increasing fever.

Some of the householders living around here arrived with mangoes and flowers to see Ma. They also sent milk from their homes. We spent the night here.

We could hear the roar of the Kali Ganga once again and the mountain peaks towered over us all around, their heads held high. Situated in such an uninhabited spot, the dak bungalow was indeed charming. Far off, dotting the sides of the cliffs, were houses, plants and trees adding to the beauty. It seemed as if these had been standing thus for aeons, listening to the ceaseless music of the flowing river. None of them found the constant gushing of the river disturbing—in fact, they seemed to be charmed and delighted. Any one who came into contact with them also experienced the same joy. The jungles all around had become more dense because of the rain.

Last night it rained incessantly and so today the weather was neither too cold nor too warm. Jyotish Dada's fever came down slightly. I slept rather late.

Wednesday, July 31

The doctor dropped in this morning. The fever having dropped to ninety nine degrees, Jyotish Dada appeared to be feeling slightly better. We decided to stay on today. After lunch all lay down to rest. I sat in the open verandah and began to write. I have been getting very little time. I have been writing briefly, barely able to jot down the events in their sequence.

Ruma Devi, Parvati Devi and others are all in our party. In the afternoon we came to know that last night's rain had caused a bridge to break down and therefore we cannot leave tomorrow. The bridge would be repaired tomorrow so that we could leave the day after. There is not much else to pen today. Some missionaries from a mission here came with flowers and fruits to have Ma's darshan.

Thursday, August 1

We had to spend today here and we may leave tomorrow. By nightfall it started raining heavily. The bridge is likely to be repaired soon, but we do not yet know how we are to traverse the path.

Friday, August 2

We could not leave today. The mountain dwellers hold on to a rope and cross the river as the rope is pulled by people from the opposite shore. That is the present arrangement for going to and fro. However, as it was impossible for Jyotish Dada to be taken across that way, we decided against starting today. It was still raining and we seemed to have got caught on our journey back at Dharchula. There seemed to be no other solution. Today was again spent similarly.

Saturday, August 3

We finished our meal early with the intention of setting out, but after some discussion our departure was finally postponed for the next morning. We hope to reach Baluyakot by tomorrow evening. The delay in our journey would be because of having to cross the river by pulling at the ropes which would itself consume two or three hours at least. Jyotish Dada's condition continues to remain the same. Swamiji is also suffering from a cold. By continuing our halt here we will be unable to provide requisite diets for the patients for we do not get many things here. We were all worried. After many detailed discussions we were forced to stay on today. The coolies did not want to wait any longer and they were upset. It was difficult to pacify them—some of them became angry and left. We only hoped we could get other coolies here. The watchman of the dak bungalow assured us that he would get coolies for us.

Sunday, August 4

This morning we decided to travel as far as we could. We had to cross the Kali Ganga after a distance of five miles. The road was good and we reached the banks of the river in a short time. After much rumination we crossed the river using the ropes. This involves sitting on a little rectangular seat made of wood and bamboo, suspended from a very thick rope spanning the river. Men standing on the other shore tugged at the rope and pulled the passengers across the river.

The river was neither very deep nor very broad, but the current was very strong. No one could stand in the swiftly flowing river. Today we crossed the river in this novel fashion. From a distance it had appeared as if the mountain folk were crossing the river by hanging on the rope and this

had made us fear the experience. We had halted so long in Dharchula because of the dread of having to cross the river by ropes. At first we had decided that our forty coolies would line up at a place where the river was not flowing too swiftly and, take us across as we sat in our *dandi*. But when we reached the river bank and took stock of the situation, we decided to cross the river using the ropes. It seems that the water in the river decreases when the rainfall declines.

We reached Baluyakot by evening. We had brought tents from Dharchula and camp was set up at a suitable spot. A fire was lit on the stones and food was cooked. We sat under the skies and ate. Jyotish Dada had no fever since yesterday and he looked a little better today. There is a dense forest on one side here; we can also hear the roar of the Kali Ganga clearly. We thus spent one more night.

Monday, August 5

Today we set out for Askote. Baluyakot is about ten or eleven miles from Dharchula; Askote is another ten or eleven miles from Baluyakot. Coolies normally walk a distance of ten miles in a day.

Jyotish Dada expressed a desire to eat rice. Ma had rice cooked to suit a patient's digestion fed to him before starting this morning. We shall go to Askote and arrange for our meal. We reached Askote by two p.m. and halted in a *dharmashala*. Jyotish Dada was feeling very weak after the journey in the sun and we were all worried about him. In the evening, people from the palace came for Ma's darshan. Our meals also arrived from the palace. The king will come to see Ma tomorrow. After a long day we finished eating late in the night. For some days now Ma has been eating only once in twenty four hours. She would eat semolina *roti* and vegetable one day, rice the next

day, wheat flour *roti* and *dal* for another meal and so on. Ma's diet has been varying in this manner. We spent the night at the *dharmashala*.

Tuesday, August 6

It was ten a.m. by the time we set out and no one was able to eat before that. We had been informed that Ma would be taken to the palace and so we first went there. Ma was offered *bhoga* with a variety of items and then we proceeded on our journey. After we had travelled a little distance, Swamiji's *dandi* broke down. Tunu, Dasu Dada, Parvati, Ruma Devi and others were riding horses. Since the *dandi* broke, Tunu proceeded on foot; Swamiji and Bholanath returned to Askote to get the *dandi* repaired. We went ahead and they caught up with us after some time. It was very difficult to traverse this route with a sick person. After covering seven miles we reached the school at Didihat where a group of students and teachers came running to welcome Ma and escort her to the school.

We decided to stay at the school for our meal and spend the night there. The Forest Range Officer had come from Nainital. He came for Ma's darshan and offered fruits at her feet. He performed *arati* with incense sticks and said, "I have been trying to have Ma's darshan from days. Today I have been blessed. Please show me the way." He spoke at length in this strain. Ma gave him some advice. He sat near Ma for a long time. He requested her to stop at his bungalow for some time on her way.

Tonight it was again late by the time we finished eating. As it was not sunny today, we travelled more comfortably with our patient. The teachers had vacated their rooms for Ma's use. The teachers and students live in the school building.

Wednesday, August 7

In the morning we set out for Thal which is ten miles away. Ranger sahib accompanied us to make all arrangements for Ma's sojourn. Many people came to hear Ma's advice. We set out taking all possible care about Jyotish Dada's comfort. By two p.m. we had spread out in the verandah of a school in Thal with the intention of spending the night there. The patient was in a pitiable condition because of the travails of the journey, but there was nothing else we could do—we just had to continue moving. It rained a little on the way but this did not cause much trouble. When we had finished eating, it rained very heavily. We were all greatly pestered by lice. No one slept last night and tonight was just as bad. All of us had boils all over our body because of being bitten and we were sick of scratching ourselves incessantly. Thus did we spend yet another night.

Thursday, August 8

As we expected rain by evening, we planned to set out early, but as it was getting so late every night by the time we finished eating we decided to eat before we started. It began raining as we set out at eleven a.m. By three p.m. it was raining heavily. We were headed towards Beninag ten miles away. Thal had a shop and a post office but Beninag has a dispensary with a doctor in attendance; there are also a couple of shops where we hope to purchase some essential items.

We reached Beninag at three p.m. and halted at a school. As soon as Ma reached, a holiday was declared and the school premises were vacated for Ma's stay. The headmaster told Ma, "Ma, you can stay here for as long as you like—I can run the school elsewhere." The doctor was sent for. He

examined the patient and arranged for medicines and a suitable diet. The fever was less but Jyotish Dada was suffering because of the strain of the journey. It was still raining. We tried to make a pillow. We heard that pillows here are not made of cottonwool—they pack rags into a pillow case—a similar one was made. We spent the night here.

Friday, August 9

As it was raining in the morning we could not set out. We were supposed to travel twelve miles to a place called Ganai but as the patient was very weak our departure was postponed. We were progressing very slowly so that we were uncertain about the day our journey was going to terminate. Meanwhile it was difficult to make the coolies to halt indefinitely so Dasu Dada, Tunu and some others took some of the luggage and started on their way to Almora; the rest of us stayed on in the school at Beninag. One of Ma's devotees from Dehradun had come here to inspect his land. He found out Ma's whereabouts and came for her darshan. He also arranged for today's lunch. There is not much space to cook; firewood is also scarce, yet he managed to organise the cooking despite these odds. I cooked rice on a stove and everyone ate. Many people came for Ma's darshan.

Saturday, August 10

We set out in the morning. As the *dandis* had been sent with Tunu and Dasu, Bholanath and I rode horses. It rained heavily on the way so that all of us, including Ma and Swamiji who were seated inside *dandis*, were drenched to the skin. Only the patient's *dandi* was carried with great care so that he would not be further harmed by the inclement weather. Around two thirty p.m. we reached the dak bungalow at Ganai.

No one had a chance to even sip water on the way—each one of us was thoroughly bathed. Not only was Swamiji bare chested, even his remaining clothes were wet. As the coolies would arrive with our luggage much later, we had no dry clothes to change into. Swamiji's health was also indifferent, but what else could be done? A shop nearby sold bedsheets; two were purchased and brought for Ma and Swamiji. Swamiji wrapped himself in one sheet but Ma refused to use it and let the wet clothes dry on her body. The rain continued incessantly and grew worse in the night. We completed our meal only at night. The patient continued to remain in the same condition.

Sunday, August 11

In the morning the patient was given some food after which we set out, travelling twelve miles to reach a place called Kenera where we halted in another forest bungalow. Today there were intermittent drizzles which alternated with very strong sunshine. After we had covered quite some distance we sat in the shade of a tree to await the arrival of the *dandi* which had been left far behind.

The Kali Ganga flowed past; I sat on the bank, writing. Ma now eats only once a day and then she does not take anything except water. From the second day of our arrival at Dharchula Ma has maintained this schedule—for the last ten days or so. From the last four or five days she has even stopped changing her clothes and is attired in the same *dhoti* and *kurta* that she had worn so many days ago. On the day we reached Beninag we got drenched and though we requested her to change out of her wet clothes she refused. All of us possessed only two *dhotis* each so we purchased a new *dhoti* for Ma but she refused to relinquish her old one. She also

continued to wear the same *kurta*—she would not change that even after being requested to do so.

Today after we departed from Ganai, Ma made all arrangements for Jyotish Dada and set him off on the journey before getting into her *dandi*, after which she stopped speaking. At that moment I did not take notice of that. After travelling some distance the coolies halted for rest. Ma went to Jyotish Dada's *dandi* and arranged his bedding; Swamiji then noticed that she had stopped speaking. As soon as we came back to our horses Swamiji informed about this. When Ma stops speaking she does not make signs either. Ma's speech had stopped after a very long time and I found it very difficult. The patient's diet and treatment were being carried out according to Ma's instructions and his care was supervised by her. She sat on her small blanket by the head of the patient, day in and day out. In between she would lie down at the same spot.

Ma's countenance had undergone a sudden change, her speech and smile had almost completely vanished. She had been speaking only what was required to be spoken in connection with the patient's care. Now that she stopped speaking I had to think of what to do, what to feed him, all on my own. I felt forlorn as she had stopped speaking. The real matter was that Ma had assumed the natural role of the mother with a sick child. Ma performs every *lila* to perfection. Why should she leave this *lila* incomplete? No job performed by Ma has any shortcoming. As Ma started observing *mauna*, I had to make all arrangement for Jyotish Dada. Only three miles to go for the day. At four p.m. we reached the bungalow; it was again late night by the time we finished eating.

Monday, August 12

We shall go five miles and halt at a dak bungalow in Dhautchina. We set out. Almora is only thirteen miles away. As there was no other suitable place to halt in any further, we stayed here for the night.

BHAIJI ON HIS DEATH BED

Tuesday, August 13

We set out at about eight a.m. The weather was fine and our long journey came to an end after so many days. We reached Almora after travelling thirteen miles and our pilgrimage to Kailas was complete. We went to a newly built house (as yet unoccupied) and stayed there with the patient. There were no regulations against living in a new house. We met Manik and Naresh Babu's wife who had been awaiting Ma's arrival from the past eight days.

Wednesday, August 14

We will have to stay here for a few days as Jyotish Dada is very sick. I have already written that Ma had started observing *mauna* and that she had not changed her clothes for more than eight days. Today Ma relinquished the clothes she had worn for so long and put on fresh clothes. Her *mauna* however continues. But she is supervising Jyotish Dada's treatment through signs. After a very long time she has been doing a few jobs with her own hands, probably because she felt like doing them. The wife of Naresh Babu of Delhi and Tunu are here. Many people who began arriving for Ma's *darshan* felt somewhat saddened when they found Ma observing *mauna*. Ma kept sitting near Jyotish Dada's bedding. It seemed as if the Mother of the Universe had assumed the role of Jyotish Dada's mother.

Thursday, August 15

This morning Jyotish Dada started hiccupping and we were all very worried. Ma placed her hand on Jyotish Dada's

head and for no reason at all she began laughing. As she laughed she wiped the sweat off Jyotish Dada's forehead with a piece of cloth. The doctor was present at that time. All of a sudden, Ma took the same cloth and wiped the forehead and face of the doctor as well. Ma had been eating once in twenty four hours, but today she ate nothing at all. At night she ate a few morsels of food. Late in the night the patient's condition improved slightly.

Friday, August 16

Nothing of interest took place today. The patient's condition continues to remain the same. Ma remained seated or lying down near the patient's bed.

Saturday, August 17

Last night Ma lay down for a long time. After Jyotish Dada's fever started she had perhaps not slept for so long before this. She got up once at midnight. She also sat up towards the end of the night but she lay down from early morning; she again lay down after visiting the toilet at ten a.m.

For the past few days she had been instructing us about Jyotish Dada's diet and other matters through simple signs. But today she had again assumed an impassive pose and her countenance did not display the slightest emotion. We could not discern whether our conversation was even being heard by her. As before she wrapped herself in a sheet and lay motionless lost in her own *bhava*. At five p.m. she sat up.

Today Ma had not paid any attention whatsoever to the patient. She remained totally engrossed in her own self, in her own *bhava*. All these days she had had the patient looked after with the tender care of a mother. She had personally supervised his diet and treatment. The same person who had

tended the patient's every need by devoting so much personal attention, now did not so much as glance in his direction. Whenever the doctor arrived she would sit near the patient; today she remained lying down with her eyes shut, as if she was in the thrall of some overpowering stupor. Then she went and lay down on her cot near Jyotish Dada's bed and lay down lost in *bhava*. But now the patient, not having seen Ma the whole day long, asked how she was. He did not have the strength to turn his head around and look at Ma lying on her cot near the head of his bed. The patient was now asking for the same Ma, who had attended on him all these days with such loving care.

I started describing Jyotish Dada's condition, but I felt that Ma was not listening. Jyotish Dada's state continues to be the same as before. The hard part of his stomach had softened slightly. Hariram arrived from Dehradun to see Jyotish Dada. These people are very fond of him. The day passed thus. Maharatan and others expressed their surprise that Ma, who was so attentive about Jyotish Dada, had suddenly decided to sit back like this. They were now witnessing one of many wonderful incidents disclosing Ma's divine nature. But no one could understand why Ma had decided to act thus. But then, how could anyone understand? Everything about Ma is so wonderful!

Sunday, August 18

This morning Ma's *bhava* continued as before. Around two p.m., after the doctor's visit, Ma was offered *bhoga*. Ma ate very little, then she went and sat near Jyotish Dada's bedding. Though she did not behave as she had earlier, she at least did not seem to be completely indifferent about the patient today.

Monday, August 19

This morning there occurred a further change in Ma's behaviour. She sat near the bedding of the patient and began arranging for his comfort as before, even making a few signs now and then. As earlier, she started doing some jobs herself. The patient's condition had become worse since afternoon. The doctors who arrived in the evening were alarmed to see him. His stomach had swollen and he was breathing with difficulty. He seemed to be dying. Ma sat on a chair near him and began stroking his head. At times she just sat still. Then she went and sat on her cot. The patient asked, "Where is Ma?" I replied, "She is sitting near your head." Immediately Ma came and sat on the chair. She did this at three p.m. and then did not get up the whole night through.

The patient's condition steadily grew worse. Bholanath began weeping; we could not hold back our tears. At that moment Ma began smiling. She laughed lightly and placed her lotus hands on the sick man's body. Till two a.m. the doctors tried every possible treatment and then gave up their efforts, defeated. I said, "Ma, the doctors' efforts have come to an end. Now you do whatever can be done." Ma said nothing but continued to look after the patient's comfort in a steady, uniform way. Once I saw Ma blowing over him. There was no one else in the room at that time, except Ma and me. Even had there been others, no one's attention would have been drawn towards her action, so imperceptibly did she blow.

Tuesday, August 20

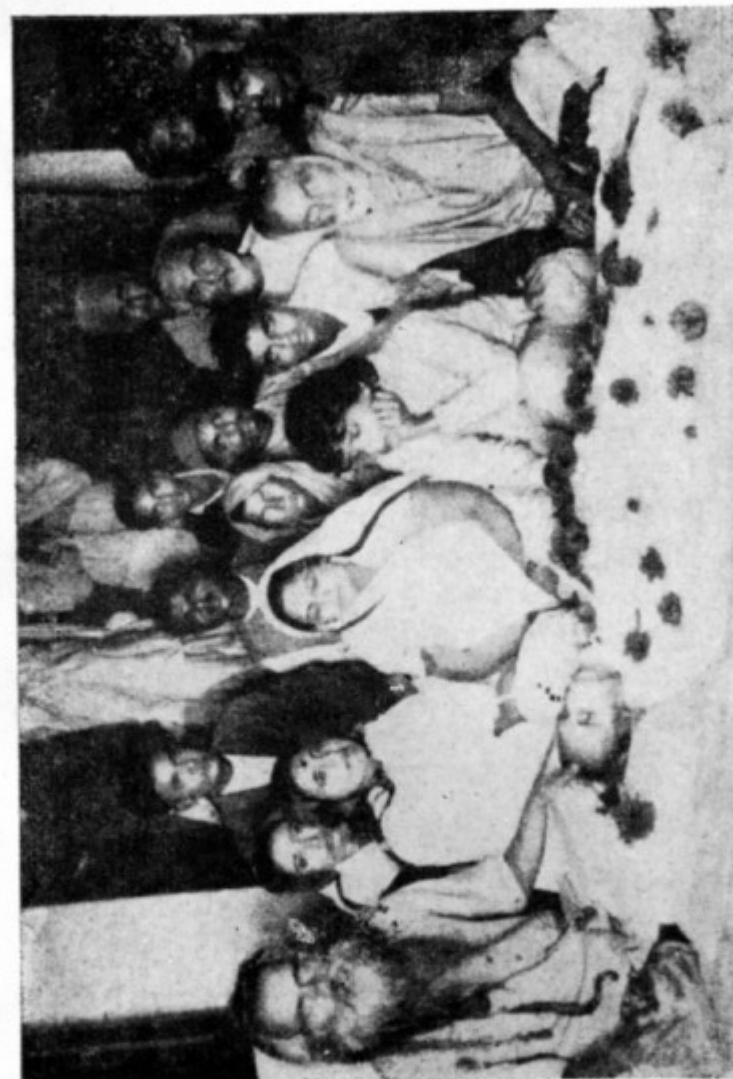
In the morning when Manik arrived, Ma signalled to me to lie down for some time. She also signed to Manik to leave. I said, "I shall lie down. You do whatever you want to." In a little

while Ma shook my head and I sat up. After I had attended to the patient for awhile, I found him looking all around him and asked him, "What are you looking at?" He replied, "You were not here so you did not see. A man came and gave me two injections. I was watching him."

The patient's condition was bad to start with—now we had turned delirious. I replied "That is good—you will recover with those injections."

He was a little better today, but his stomach was swollen with gas. Nothing more could be done. Ma lay down for some time, early in the morning, and then sat up again. She was not eating even twice a day. Whatever it may be, anything that Ma does is always for the good of the world. Today the doctor declared, "Yesterday I had given up hope completely, but today I feel a little more confident." Yet, the patient's condition was serious. The doctor administered an injection of saline; he had given one yesterday also. The patient lay in a daze. When the doctor arrived in the afternoon Ma conveyed to him in signs that the patient had requested her that he should not be given any more saline injections. The doctor protested, "But the patient is being kept alive only because of these saline injections. How can I stop giving them? Alright, if his condition improves by the evening I shall not inject him. But in his prevailing state there is no solution other than administering this injection."

Once, finding me alone with her, Ma asked me by signs whether the injections were essential. I replied, "The doctor has said that if the patient's condition improves he will not give the injection. Have mercy and see that his condition improves, then the injection will not be necessary. He has already suffered enough. Now put an end to his suffering." Ma did not reply.



On the death bed—Bhaiji

At three p.m. the patient's condition again seemed to get worse. Before evening Ma asked that he should be given some *makaradhvaja* and so he was given that. Ma sat near him stroking his head at times, arranging his bedding and supervising his dietary intake at other times. My mother is being complete in every way! After sunset Jyotish Dada's condition worsened further. All were weeping except for Ma who sat still, unshakeable, peaceful. After midnight when the patient's condition was swaying between life and death she rose from his side and sat on her cot. Everyone watched but she did not go near him. However I saw that her feet touched the patient's bed. The doctor administered the final treatment, he wanted to give yet another saline injection to which Ma gave permission. Before the doctors left after making every possible attempt to save the patient's life, Hariram and I spoke to Ma, "Ma, we shall go out. Stay alone with the patient. The doctors can do nothing more. Now you do whatever you want." Hariram and others began weeping. Soon after we came out, Ma called the doctor inside; we also went in. Again the doctors made mention of the saline injection and Ma agreed to let them try. The doctors tried to the very end and then left. We sat with the patient who was almost dead.

He was fully conscious. He asked, "Where is Ma? Call her once." But Ma now lay immovable, stonelike, in *bhava*. He called out twice, but she did not rise. We were afraid, wondering what had happened. Bholanath was worried and sat holding Ma's hand for a long time. Now we were worried about Ma. Bholanath and I discussed this but we could not come to any conclusion. Bholanath asked me to touch Ma's cot and do *japa*. I made Maharatan and Chhabi's mother sit down to do *japa*. They sat and did *japa* with single pointed attention. They could not discern Ma's *bhava* and were afraid



Bhaiji's Samadhi

to hear about it from us. However, sometime later when Ma moved slightly I called out to her and said, "Ma, please sit up. Dada is calling you." Ma replied indistinctly, with her eyes still shut, "Alright, I shall get up." Hope rose afresh in our hearts. But Bholanath and I remained worried. Ma got up with great effort and sat near the patient. She placed her hand on the top of his head. Perhaps he felt more peaceful on obtaining Ma's touch. The night was spent thus. His breathing sounded as if he would give up his life any moment.

Wednesday, August 21

Ma was lying down in the morning. We continued to sit around the sick man. Ma also sat up. Today was Jyotish Dada's last day. The Mahatma was leaving us and going away. On Ma's advice, at ten a.m., the Civil Surgeon had been brought in to see the patient. For the past four or five days Jyotish Dada had been having hiccups. They had become less intense since yesterday. His breathing, however, had become terrible since yesterday and continued the same way today also. He was conscious. He asked, "Has Swamiji eaten?" He asked me, "Have you fed Ma?" Last night he had told me, "Khukuni, finish!" He repeatedly asked if the doctor had come today.

The doctor examined the patient's pulse and again got ready to give a saline injection. Dada objected but the doctor would not listen for he could not give up trying as long as life existed. He administered the injection and tried many other remedies. Finally he gave up and declared, "The pulse remains just as weak. Now Ma is the only hope!" I cried and appealed to Ma. Hariram also wept and prayed, but Ma signed to say, "Nothing is coming." She sat near the patient and wiped the sweat off his forehead. When we understood

Ma's thoughts we also gave up hope. Dada murmured, "Haribol, Haribol" two or three times and then asked, "Where is Ma?" as if he was not being able to see properly. When we indicated Ma to him he looked at her and started repeating continuously "Ma, Ma, Ma." Then he sang, "Ma, Ma, Ma, Ma," somewhat tunelessly. Ma sat calmly wiping his forehead. We were weeping. Ma said, "Khukuni, sing the Name." I wiped my tears and sang the Name of Ma. A little later he said, "How beautiful!" Again he exclaimed, "Khukuni, how beautiful!" A few moments later he raised one finger and said, "All are one; there is nothing other than the one." Hariram wept and cried, "Bhaiji!" Dada replied, "One, all are one. Meditate on this brother. One, all are one." I said, "Dada is lying securely in Ma's lap." He replied, "Ma and I are one; Baba and I are one, all of us are one. There is nothing other than the One." He then began reciting the *sannyasa mantra* very clearly. He was breathing very heavily. He had not been having motions, but now he began passing stools. He said, "Khukuni, clean me up." Again he requested, "Clean my face well." I did accordingly. Gradually he began losing consciousness. Staying within Ma's sight and her grace, this Mahapurusha, at the age of fifty seven left his body. A couple of minutes before he left his body, I placed him on the ground and kept Ma's feet on his head. Ma remained still, in *samadhi*. I told everyone around to sing Ma's Name. As the Name was chanted Jyotish Dada breathed his last.

Peacefully did the Mahapurusha leave. A beautiful death! A few minutes before his death Ma signed to us all to leave the room. A minute later she called us inside again. As we entered the room Jyotish Dada told us, "Ma has given me the signal to sleep. I shall sleep."

After his death, Ma called Babaji, Hariram and me and told us (she spoke indistinctly as she generally does while observing *mauna*). "Prepare for his samadhi for he had already taken *sannyasa*. He is an *avadhuta*." She then started explaining a little. Bholanath was upset and said, "Speak, speak. Alright, after remaining quiet for six years, I am going to speak about it." Immediately Ma stopped him and said, "Silence!" (meaning to say, she stopped him from speaking to prevent him breaking the *mauna*).

Ma said, "When we went to Manasarovar, I sent you, Jyotish and Bholanath ahead and waited for Baba. When I returned I heard that Jyotish had had a dip in the lake. Bholanath told me that after bathing in the lake, Jyotish had cast his clothes into the lake and on seeing Bholanath had caught hold of his feet and pleaded, "Baba, I wish to become an *avadhuta sannyasi* and go away from here." Pointing to one shore of the Manasarovar he had declared, "Give me the permission, I shall cross to that shore." He took off his sacred thread and placed it at Bholanath's feet. Bholanath was taken aback and said, "What is all this? What are you doing? Your mother and others are not here, put on your clothes quickly."

Perhaps Jyotish thought that Ma had not been told anything as yet. So obeying Bholanath he put on his warm clothing and waited near his tent. After Baba (Swami Akhandanandaji) arrived we came to the tent about two hours later and found that Jyotish had already bathed in the Manasarovar. Did we not go to the banks of the lake again after I reached? Whoever wanted to bathe did so, performed the rituals they wanted to, and left.

Jyotish and I were walking beside the lake. He repeated all that he had said to Bholanath. He did *pranama* and said, "Ma,

I feel like spending the last few days of my life in some cave here. Please tell Babaji, I shall leave right now. Let me go now—give me leave." I observed that the spirit of renunciation, *avadhuta bhava* was being manifested in him. I could also see that the *bhava* was very beautiful and intense. Perceiving his elevated state, I replied, "Come with me just now." Hearing this he fell silent.

He walked beside me and then said, "I have a request to make. If you agree I shall observe *mauna* right now." I replied, "No, it will not be alright to observe silence in the middle of the journey." As we walked, I said, "Since today you have acquired this spirit of renunciation and you also desire to observe *mauna*, your name will be Maunananda Parvat.

Looking at the Manasarovar, this body strolled up and down on the banks. Just as *mantras* are recited spontaneously, this body began to utter the *sannyasa mantra* of its own accord; these were recited spontaneously, this body was immersed in *bhava* and moved around thus. Meanwhile I noticed that Jyotish was following close behind. He ran to this body and fell at its feet saying, "Ma, this is the *sannyasa mantra*! I have attained it!" Saying this he remained at the feet in an exalted state. He offered the sacred thread, his beads and everything at the feet of this body and began reciting the *mantra*. He went to the edge of the lake, performed some ritual and offered seven or eight handfuls of water to this body. Since that day he performed *japa* of the *sannyasa mantra* continuously and that *bhava* continued right through his illness."

Ma had then asked him to pick up his beads and sacred thread. In order to obey her instructions he wore them both around his neck like garlands.

Ma continued, "Before the Kailas yatra when Jyotish had gone to Badrinath Dham, a *sannyasi*, of his own accord, had called Jyotish aside and given him a similar *mantra*. Jyotish returned from there and told me, 'I had not asked him for anything. He himself called me and made me sit near him. I did *pranama* and sat near him. Then he revealed these things to me on his own.' Even earlier another such incident had occurred but he had not spoken about it. As he did not want to exhibit any outward manifestation of this, he had not made any external changes in his life style. It so happened that during this journey we had to wear warm clothes all the time, but sometimes he would wrap a *dhoti* around his waist. When, after he had passed motions, you washed him and began straightening the cloth he had exclaimed, 'No, let the cloth remain as it is.' I was listening from afar. In his last moments you people heard him yourselves. Because he had this spirit of *sannyasa*, he should have a *samadhi*. Since he did not desire to reveal these matters to everyone, I did not speak of them earlier. I thought that I would tell you all when the time came; therefore I have now told you about it."

"One other thing—when he had had tuberculosis, the words that emerged from my mouth were, 'Why are you afraid? Nothing will happen right now. Keep on with your work. You will live for some more years.' This body does not think about what it has uttered and when, but Jyotish had tagged on to it firmly in his mind and therefore he seemed to finish all his work as fast as he could. When he mentioned about the utterance during this journey I said, 'Why are you thinking of all that?' Later when he began getting high fever he was worried and asked me, 'Ma, what is the solution? Khukuni is alone, she has to do the cooking and all other jobs on her own; in addition she also has to serve. She is alone,

how will the work be completed?' Seeing this attitude of his I blurted, 'Don't you worry, I shall myself work and make others work as well.' Because I had uttered those words at that time some amount of work, which you all observed, was performed. This body is unable to do any work. The *kheyala* occurred that such a statement had been made. During the journey I made Swamiji write to Bishu, asking him to come and wait in Almora. On receiving that letter Bishu came to Almora. Well, on two days there was no *kheyala* and therefore no attention was paid. Then in order to keep the truth of the utterance, whatever was possible was done. Now these events are being narrated for it is necessary to reveal all this."

Ma gave a brief description of *sannyasa* and Hariram went to get a spot ready for the *samadhi*. We sat around the dead body. Three or four hours later Ma said, "I do not have the desire to speak. When I have the *kheyala* I shall tell you." She told me, "You and your father go to Vindhyachal. Ruma Devi will stay with me. We shall leave for Dehradun tomorrow. What do you say?" Then Baba and I made everyone else leave the room so that we could speak to Ma in private before she again took up *mauna*. Necessary matters were discussed. Ma has declared me to be Jyotish Dada's 'sister' in a couple of instances. When I referred to that she said, "You have already done for him as much as you could as a sister." By the time we finished speaking to Ma it was evening.

A separate place could not be secured, so it was decided to have the *samadhi* in a place called Patala Devi. That spot already contained the *samadhis* of two Bengali *sadhus*. On his way to Dhaka last time, Jyotish Dada had stayed in that very *dharmashala*. Now, his tomb was to be established there. Hariram wished to take some remains of Jyotish Dada's body to another spot to erect a memorial. Ma told Swamiji, "Go

along and recite your *mantra* while the *samadhi* is being erected. This is your first ritual." Many people went along.

Jyotish Dada's corpse was taken to Patala Devi. Salt was placed above and below the body. Then the tombstone was laid. The next day Hariram had a permanent construction erected at that spot. After Dada's body was taken away Ma and I sat silently in the same room. Suddenly Bholanath developed a pain in his stomach and began screaming loudly. Naren Babu's wife and I could not decide what had to be done. Bholanath wished to have Ma taken to the other room but Ma said, "If I get up there may be no *kheyala* to speak. After I get up I shall go and lie down in that room. Tomorrow we leave for Dehradun. It would be well to visit the Nanda Devi temple today." Again she said, "When, in any case, we are leaving tomorrow, where is the point in shifting today? I shall start from here." We also felt that if Ma was shifted from her spot she might stop speaking altogether. She was now speaking only what was essential. We wished to hear her for as long as we could!

Her bedding was spread in the same room. She was made to drink some milk. I began talking about Dada to Ma. Meanwhile, Bholanath was screaming with pain. No man was with us. I found a little boy and sent him to fetch a doctor. Both my body and mind were distraught and now this calamity! I felt dizzy. However, I go on performing my duties. The doctor came and gave a *douche* and an injection. A little later Bholanath calmed down.

By eleven p.m. all those who had gone to lay the *samadhi*, returned. Ma told Hariram, "You all loved Bhaiji. You have kept his body in your own place." Hariram began weeping; Ma's eyes were also filled with tears. We were all weeping. Ma told Hariram, "You can try to complete all the

good work that Jyotish desired to accomplish. The *atma* is never destroyed. Whatever desire he expressed to you will help you along the way."

We spoke only about Jyotish Dada. Ma said, "He was no ordinary man—that was evident from the very beginning. His state was highly elevated." The garland that had been given to Seva in the form of a sacred thread had been returned to Jyotish Dada by Ma to be worn around his neck. Now Ma instructed that the garland be returned to Seva. Once Ma got up there was no knowing whether she would speak or not, so each one began to speak to her in solitude. It was two a.m. by the time Ma entered the kitchen with the others and lay down to sleep. She did not speak after that.

Chapter Four

Thursday, August 22

Ma awoke very late. Everyone was mournful, all felt bereaved. Ma sat up. Khagen took leave tearfully for he had to go to Dhaka. A telegram had been sent to Jyotish Dada's wife and son. Jyotish Dada's wife had not been speaking to him for a long time. When we had considered going to Dhaka, Jyotish Dada had been reluctant to go. Ma had told him, "Come on now; now she will not curse you." And truly enough, during that visit Jyotish Dada's wife behaved cordially towards him; perhaps it happened thus because it was her last meeting with him. She had been against allowing Jyotish Dada to go to Kailas and hearing that Ma had also told him not to go. But Jyotish Dada did not agree to stay back. He said that he would write to his wife and explain to her. She had been greatly alarmed on hearing of his last illness but could not come for she was not keeping too well either; perhaps she had some mental reservations as well. May be she felt that whatever had to happen would happen any way. Jyotish Dada had taken *sannyasa* and therefore he was not supposed to meet his wife and son. He gave up his life while he was fully conscious, in the lap of the Mother, in whom he had taken refuge. Such a death is highly desirable to all. Yet, when we thought of his wife and son now, we all felt pangs of sorrow. This was the end of all pride. Our only prayer is that Ma should grant solace to them.

After Ma awoke I washed her hands and face and made her drink some milk. Many people were seated in silence in the room. I went to cook for Ma. A little later I heard that Ma had taken Swamiji to the next room (where Jyotish Dada had given up his body), shut the door and was speaking to him. She

spoke to him for a long time. Then she went to the toilet. Swamiji poured water on her hands to wash them. They conversed again. Much later when I went there Ma told me, "Shachi's and Naren's and..." She stopped speaking. After a pause she said, "Have their letters been replied to?" I said, "I haven't had a chance to read out all the letters that have arrived during the past few days, so replies have not been sent as yet. I am not going with you so I have given all the letters to Manik. He will read them out to you and send the replies." Ma said, "What more shall I hear? I have finished hearing all that I had to from everyone." She had shut her eyes as she said all this. A little earlier she had asked Swamiji to fetch her bedding here and had laid down in the room. Hearing that, I had entered the room and spoken about giving her lunch. But Ma's body was indifferent and she said, "Now I shall lie down, I shall not be able to eat." I observed that in her prevailing bodily condition she was in no position to eat. She lay down.

Later Hariram came. Another *sadhu* from some Mission also came. As he conversed with Ma he said, "There must be some living place for women. They should have a place to stay in for performing spiritual practices and *bhajan*. Many women have sent letters to this effect." Ma replied, "Jyotish also had a similar desire. Since you have put forth such a proposition, Hariram, Swamiji and others can get together with you to do this work. I did not suggest this to you—have spoken about this yourself." Hariram said, "Nothing will happen without your ordaining it." Ma replied, "I never say anything. It is you all who do everything. If you want to, it can be done. This body doesn't come into the picture at all. Any good work that is done sincerely yields only good fruit. You can get together and decide on what regulations are to be

effected. This body does not have the *kheyala* to get involved in such work. Do not ask this body about such matters. Khukuni and others are here; observing your desires I have said so much. The work has to be done by you all. Whatever good work you perform in this *samsara* is only service to God. You all do all kinds of jobs—you may as well do good work. The effort to attain Truth is the only work worth doing. Those jobs that assist this effort are worth taking up. Those *karmas* that help to develop godly attitudes are worthwhile, the rest are *akarma*, that is worth relinquishing." She spoke on another couple of points, then told me one or two things in private and lay down absolutely still.

We may not leave tomorrow. Ma had only said, "Watch Bholanath's health and then do whatever you have to." Today our departure was halted because of Bholanath's illness. Ma observed *mauna*. At three p.m. though she was again requested to eat, she refused. Last night Hariram had said, "Ma, Pitaji is not well—we will not be able to go tomorrow. I shall install a symbol on Bhaiji's *samadhi* and take you there at three p.m. to see it. The day after we shall leave." On hearing that Ma had told Swamiji, "Tell Hariram, even if this body is unable to accompany him at that time, let him know that I am with him." So it was. At three p.m. Hariram took Maharatan, Naren Babu's wife, Manik and others to see Jyotish Dada's *samadhi* but Ma kept lying down. Night fell, but Ma did not rise. We then started singing *kirtan*, but Ma did not move. Many people stayed overnight. At one a.m. with great difficulty we managed to make Ma sit up for awhile and make her sip some milk. Then she lay down again.

Friday, August 23

The sun was up but Ma showed no signs of getting up. Bholanath was alarmed and called out to her repeatedly, but no

one was able to rouse her. In desperation we started singing *kirtan* again. In the afternoon Ma turned over slightly but her body was motionless, stone-like. Her eyes were tightly shut. At three p.m. her breathing became rapid and we were upset. We were overwrought with anxiety and our bodies felt limp.

The *kirtan* was on. Ma murmured something and I put my ear close to her mouth to catch what she was saying. Ma was saying, "Tell everyone to go out for sometime. You stay here alone." We obeyed immediately. What Ma told me then will be revealed at the right moment, now she has forbidden me to reveal it. Then she spoke nothing more. Bholanath came and tried to make her speak but she said nothing. Worried about her rapid breathing Bholanath instructed us to move her to the next room and that was done. Seeing Ma's state and thinking about what she had just uttered, I was plagued by dreadful thoughts. Then Ma told me some other points, very indistinctly, and again told me not to reveal them at that time.

Everyone stopped eating and drinking and sat around Ma, dejected. Firstly, Jyotish Dada had just died, and now Ma's body was in such a state! It is not possible to describe our condition in words. Ma alone knows what the plight of our minds was. After sunset Ma's head turned back so that it touched her back and her eyes glowed like fire. Her eyes were open now. She asked me to make her sit up and extended her hand slightly towards me. The moment I made her sit up with Hariram's help, she sat in a yogic *asana* posture. Yogic *kriya* now began to manifest in her body. Then her body grew limp and the two of us made her recline again. Hariram concluded, "The residents of Almora used to jeer—therefore Ma has shown them her real form. There is nothing to fear." Whatever that might be, the people began raining flowers—the crowd could not be contained in the house. Some performed *arati*.

Our night, however, was spent in fear and dread, we sang the Name the whole night through. Late in the night almost no outsider remained. We switched on all the lights in the room and sat around Ma. She remained lying as she was.

Saturday, August 24

Today is a full moon day. This morning again Ma remained lying down but there was some change in her *bhava*. Her body was motionless but she seemed to be aware of outward occurrences. We all felt relieved to see that. Bholanath declared, "Now we cannot stay here any longer. We must leave today, in our existing state. She wanted to leave earlier anyway." Last morning we had got ready to leave but as we could not rouse Ma, we could not set out. Bholanath said, "You had spoken of going with me to Dehradun." Ma replied "I always tell you that if this body is well enough you can take it if you can." This made us all afraid and we said, "No, no, if you do not go of your own will no one can take you. You must take your body in its present condition and come with us." Ma did not reply.

Hariram said something to everyone a little harshly and Ma said, "Do not get angry, let go of this *bhava*." Yesterday Ma had spoken similarly in an indistinct voice while in that state therefore Bholanath got ready to take her today. As per his wishes we all got ready. At ten a.m. Ma was made to recline in an easy chair and was carried carefully into a motor-bus in which we left Almora. In her present condition Ma was unable to even move a limb but at least she seemed to be aware of happenings in the outside world. Two or three hours after the motor-bus started, Ma told me in indistinct speech, "Bholanath does not understand, he says it is Maya. Is this the doing of Maya? This is not Maya. Have you people never seen this

state of mine before? From a few days ago the words 'Stop it! Stop it!' were emerging from within me. You people have heard them. During Jyotish's illness I have lain unconscious, then sat up. Once in Ramna when this body remained seated in the *ashram* and could not get up, you had wept and told Jyotish. Then every morning he would come and take me for a walk. At that time this body would sit up. Now it remains lying down. All kinds of states are manifested in this body. Without understanding this Bholanath says, 'It will get worse if we stay on here.' What, am I enmeshed in Maya that such things can happen?"

As soon as Jyotish Dada had been taken away Bholanath's stomach ache had started and he had broken his vow of silence. Bholanath heard Ma speaking now and said, "I said so only to express my opinion. I was very much hurt so I said that. Do I not understand that you are not bound by Maya? Even when your very dear little sister Surabala died I did not see you upset." Ma spoke about other matters to me, sometimes with her eyes shut and sometimes with half open eyes. Then she fell silent for some time. Then again she said, "Tell Hariram that wherever this body may be, the door must be kept closed. Let there be no noise. If any one comes by chance, let them watch for awhile and leave." Hariram said, "It shall be so. I shall take leave and stay near Ma."

I said, "Your body is in such a condition. How can we go to Vindhyaachal? If you say so we will have to obey, but we shall suffer greatly at heart." Ma replied, "So many people are around to serve this body. You have already done so much. Now go to the *ashram* in Dhaka and tell all, there should not be a single mention of worldly topics in the *ashram*. Tell the men folk that by not looking for the faults of women and criticising them, they should try to help the women folk in

their *sadhana*. Unless everyone lives in harmony no work can be accomplished. Everyone has to move with a single aim. That will be good for all. Unless you go and explain these ideas nothing much will be achieved. This is your job. Go to Calcutta and tell them that if they build only one place then let the men and women use the same place at different times (when the men go there the women should not) and let them perform meditation, *japa*, *kirtan* and reading of scriptures. And if anyone (man or woman) wishes to leave the home and live there then the others can, if they want to, arrange for that. That will be for the welfare of all. Telling them all this, you get all the people to do all the work. Know that this is also service. Attempting to progress on the path—that is also service."

As these matters were being discussed, the bus reached its destination. I asked, "What shall I tell the people?" Ma replied, "Tell them to live with one aim and pursue that aim with one-pointed concentration." The bus reached Haldwani. The train would leave at five p.m.—it had already arrived. All arrangements were being made. Devidutt and Munni who had come from Nainital would accompany Ma to Dehradun. Ma expressed a desire to go to the toilet and we felt slightly reassured. Till now we had been unable to feed her anything. With great effort we managed to make her sit up. Her body was absolutely still, she did not pass any urine. We became aware of some other external responses from Ma. She remained lying still. We tried to make her drink some water with a spoon but it just flowed out of her mouth. After many attempts she swallowed a little sip of water and opened her eyes, but her gaze was fixed.

We were to reach Bareilly at nine p.m. where we would have to part company with Ma. And her body was in this state! My mind became agonised but what could be done? I had to

obey Ma. Again Ma told me a couple of things. I repeated, "Ma, how shall I leave you and go? I have to obey you in whatever you ask me to do." Ma said, "When I have said so earlier, you must leave now. Tell Hariram that he should write to you when necessary." I accepted Ma's orders with bent head, but my heart was heavy. Ma spoke softly. Before long we were in Bareilly. Many people were waiting for Ma, but seeing her in that state many of them seemed to have been struck by lightning and remained standing like statues of stone. We placed Ma carefully on a stretcher and lifted her out of the train. The train to Dehradun would arrive in an hour's time. All stood around Ma quietly. We were to leave by the twelve midnight train for Vindhyachal.

We were not being able to feed Ma anything. I told her, "Ma, you have not allowed me to stay with you, but at least eat something." On my pleading repeatedly she said, "Alright." I said, "Keeping all of us in mind, please look after your body." She replied, "The body will have to go someday anyway." Even earlier she had said, "Whether this body lives or not you should all continue doing your work properly." Hearing all this we were extremely anxious about Ma's health. My head felt giddy with the crisis that had developed on all fronts. When the train arrived Ma was made to board it and then I alighted from the train with tears streaming out of my eyes. Maharatan's husband had sent her with Ma to Dehradun. We waited on the platform and at twelve thirty a.m. some of Ma's young devotees helped us board the train to Vindhyachal.

Sunday, August 25

Today we were separated from Ma after a very long time. The particularly frightening state of her health and the absence

of Jyotish Dada made this separation even more agonising—yet the physical strain that we had undergone did not leave us with the energy to worry. I lay limp. The next day at ten a.m. the train reached Allahabad. At two p.m. we took a connecting train to Vindhyachal. Virajmohini Didi and Anang Bhattacharya were there as per Ma's instructions. Yet there seemed to be a vacuum all around. We had had to leave Ma.

Wednesday, August 28

Today suddenly Manik, Bholanath, Shankarananda Swami and Godavari arrived from Kashi. We received the news that on Sunday morning Ma reached Dehradun. On Monday Bholanath, seeing Ma's condition, began saying, "I feel like taking *sannyasa*. Who belongs to whom?" and so on. Ma replied instantly, "Then go to Kashi today. Go to Shankarananda—he can give you the help you need at this moment." Ma sent Manik with Bholanath.

We heard that Ma was now only drinking water and nothing else. She was still speaking a little but lay motionless most of the time. Some one had to turn her over now and then, for her body was practically helpless. She spoke a little whenever the need arose. She had told Ruma Devi and Godavari to start observing the *ashram* regulations. But then she told Godavari to go and stay with me saying, "Stay with your Khukuni Didi. Do *mauna*, *japa* and other practices as per her instructions. Virajmohini is also there. All of you live together in harmony." She told Ruma Devi to live in the Dehradun *ashram*. Nishi Babu and Sushila had gone from Raipur to stay with Ma. The doctors in Dehradun were attending on Ma.

At times Ma told everybody to sing *kirtan*; the rest of the time she instructed them to observe silence. No one could

understand the consequences of the various spiritual practices. Ma had asked Bholanath to again observe *mauna* and so he was silent now. As *sannyasa* can be taken only during Uttarayana, he had to wait till the month of Magh. Bholanath went with Shankarananda and Biren Dada from Agra to stay with Ma. Godavari stayed on with us and we performed our duties as per Ma's orders. We ascertained through telegram from Hariram that Ma was now slightly better. There was talk of organizing a feast in the memory of Jyotish Dada. Ma had told Father, "Jyotish Dada's monastic name was Maunananda and he had had the attitude of a *rishi* even before he took *sannyasa*."

Friday, August 30

While we were in Almora Maharatan had described an incident. On our way to Kailas, in Bareilly, Ma had been taken to make some purchases in the evening and we had gone to a shoe shop. Suddenly Ma had said, "Do not take a price for my shoes." She said this smilingly but nobody paid any attention to her words at that time. After Maharatan had paid for Ma's and my shoes and come into the car, Ma asked, "Did he charge for my shoes as well?" Maharatan replied, "Yes Ma, he did. He did not agree to give it free." Ma declared, "Oh! That was not good. It is not for his welfare. Tell him to set that money apart." The shopkeeper was a Muslim—he did not pay heed to Ma's words. I was upset. I asked, "What are you saying Ma? Why do you predict, 'It will not be for his welfare'?" Ma replied, "What can I do? The words emerged from my mouth spontaneously." Maharatan conveyed Ma's orders to the shopkeeper. In Almora at the time of Jyotish Dada's death, Maharatan brought us the news that the shopkeeper had died within a month of that incident.

Tonight we received a letter from Juthika, wife of Naren Choudhury that on August twenty fourth Ma was made to sit up for a couple of minutes. Ma was speaking properly but was not taking in anything other than water. She had said that when she wanted to eat anything she would herself tell them about it." A letter from Agra informed us that Bholanath had departed from there with Biren Dada.

Sunday, September 1

This morning I received Juthika's letter dated twenty seventh August 1937. It read—Ma's hair was so matted that nobody was able to comb it. Today Ma made Devidutt cut off a lot of her hair. The cut hair will be sent to Shachi Babu's sister. Do not mention this to anybody else. Now Ma is conversing normally. On the second day at Almora, you remember don't you, the anguish that we felt over Ma's condition? Yesterday Ma herself said, "That day the breathing in this body had acquired a different pace. This was identical to the condition that had occurred earlier."

Indeed, that day we had been greatly alarmed by Ma's breathing and had begun to weep and cry.

Tuesday, September 3

Nepal Dada took leave for five days and went to see Ma at Dehradun. He returned today with news of Ma. Since the last three or four days we have been in Kashl on some work. We heard that Ma is still lying on her bedding but she is held and made to sit up for a few minutes once or twice a day—she can only sit with some one's support. The lower part of her body appears to be absolutely lifeless. She only drinks about a quarter seer of water everyday and eats nothing. Yet she speaks normally. In the morning she is almost alone. One

person does whatever work is needed for her. By three p.m. people start arriving despite attempts to restrict entry and she smilingly gives advice to them. Conversations go on till eleven p.m. every night.

Nowadays Ma converses merrily with laughter in between. When asked to eat she says, "I have not made any decision to fast, the body is not making any demands at present, when it does ask for food again, I shall feed it. I am not aware of timeliness and untimeliness. If the body wants food I shall immediately feed it even if it be midnight or one a.m. Why do you all worry?" Her face is washed everyday but after a mouth gargle she is unable to spit out the water, her body is so helpless. In between she asks to be turned over. When anyone holds her gingerly she says, "Why are you afraid? Push the body the way you would shove a stone to turn it over. This body has become like stone anyway." Ma asked Nepal Dada about all of us.

On the thirteenth day after the death of Jyotish Dada, Shankarananda, Bholanath and Manik went to Hardwar to arrange a feast (*bhandara*) for the *sadhus* there. On Janmash-tami day Manmatha Babu and Bholanath performed *yajna* and other rituals as per Ma's instructions. Ma said that every year such rituals should be performed similarly. To avoid useless talk and frivolity Ma has made the rule that everyone in the *ashram* should sit in the *kirtan* hall from seven to nine in the morning doing *japa* and *dhyana*. From seven to eight p.m. again everybody should assemble in the same room for *kirtan*. The routine is being followed. People from all over have arrived with their families to see Ma. Those who could not be accommodated in the *ashram* have hired rooms nearby. Ma's speech is now no longer indistinct. When questioned she

says, "I am perfectly healthy." Her conversation reflects her blissful state but her body continues to remain helpless.

Nepal Dada said, "Ma did not speak much about Jyotish Dada's illness. But once she did mention, 'Jyotish's illness started on the journey. Khukuni served him greatly—she even gave up food and sleep to serve him.' She only made this one statement about his illness and never spoke about it again. But during conversations Jyotish Dada's name was mentioned at times. Biren Dada, Nishi Babu, Sushila Mashima, Devidutt, Juthika Choudhury and others are with Ma." This is the gist of what I heard from Nepal Dada.

We have come to Kashi on Ma's instructions. Swamiji does not go anywhere without Ma's permission. Whenever she tells us to go or stay anywhere we do our best to obey her implicitly. In a couple of days' time we shall return to Vindhyachal.

Nepal Dada told us about another matter. The brother-in-law of Raja of Askote, Rana Sahib, lives in Kashi. He had met Ma twice during the journey to Kailas. When he came down from Askote this time, a friend asked him jovially, "What new sights have you seen? Rana Sahib replied, "I saw a Bengali Mataji named Anandamayi Ma. Brother, I can never forget the look in her eyes. She seems to snatch away everything from within. I have never seen a thing like this before!" The friend who spoke to Rana Sahib is the renowned Dr. Gopal Dasgupta of Kashi. He narrated this conversation to Nepal Dada.

Hearing this I was reminded of something that Ramratan Babu had said. He had written, "In Birla Mandir I would stand far away and look at Ma because the crowds were so large there was no way of getting near her. What a beautiful form! I wasn't satiated with the sight though I gazed with rapt

attention. Many women beautifully dressed and ornamented were seated around Ma but none could compare with Ma's beauty. Ma wore no ornament yet she seemed to possess an entire treasury of beauty. Watching such a wonderful form I was enchanted. My words do not have the power to reveal that." So many others have expressed similar sentiments.

This is about external beauty. From an outwardly point of view Ma does not possess an *apsara*-like beauty but her form which is a combination of *karma* (action), *jñana* (knowledge) and *bhakti* (devotion) is truly incomparable. How can it be described in human language? Therefore many devotees who have tried to express this have ended up observing silence. Tears alone express their feelings to a certain extent. This opinion of mine is not exaggerated—whosoever has seen Ma will vouch for this. Sometimes Ma's eyes are bright, steady and calm, with the effulgence of knowledge while at other times they acquire a half-closed drowsiness, immersed in divine ecstasy. Then again she jokingly remarks, "Many faces!" but this is no joke, our Ma is truly many faced.

I heard more from Nepal Dada—"Ma opens her eyes around nine thirty or ten a.m. and then her face is washed. Therefore after nine every morning some people go into her room start stroking her feet and call out to her softly so that she opens her eyes. One day Ma said, 'When I open my eyes of my own accord should you enter—do not come before that.' The next day this was obeyed and Ma opened her eyes only at ten thirty a.m. and said, "Turn me over." Then all the people entered her room and got ready to wash her face. After drinking some water Ma said, 'Make me sit up.' One person would make her sit up and sit supporting her back. Four or five minutes later she would lie down again and talk to everyone around till twelve noon. Then till four p.m. she

would be left alone to rest in silence. Between four and eleven p.m. many people would come and leave; Ma would converse animatedly with no sign of fatigue.

One day Ma was lying down with her palm turned upward when Nepal Dada's gaze fell upon her palm and he noticed a cross sign on it. He blurted, "Ma, there is the sign of a cross on your palm!" Ma replied softly, "He also has a trident." Then opening her other palm she said, "Look, this hand also bears the bow and arrow." Nepal Dada saw, just as she had mentioned, that the marks of a trident, bow and arrow were all present. He also noticed a flag-like demarcation.

When he had gone to Dhaka, Jyotish Dada had sent a doctor to Hariram in Dehradun for pursuing spiritual practices. The doctor, whose name was Sushil, had passed medicine in Dhaka. He is now in the Dehradun *ashram* and Ma gives special attention to him. He was told to sit in the *mauna* room upstairs for his *sadhana* and to get up for his meal at three p.m. after which he was not to eat again at night. He was obeying all these rules for his *sadhana*. The room reserved for *mauna sadhana* (a *vatsaasana* had been spread there) was kept closed almost all the time. No people other than those who wished to observe *mauna* and perform *sadhana* went there. There they could sit quietly and meditate.

Thursday, September 5

Tomorrow we shall leave for Vindhyachal. Today we went to meet Gopi Babu; Nepal Dada also came with us to tell him about Ma. Gopi Babu listened to the description of Ma's daily activities with affectionate interest. Last Monday Shankar-ananda Swami, Bholanath and Manik went to Haridwar to organise a feast in the memory of Jyotish Dada, but Nepal Dada did not know whether the *bhandara* was given or not for

he left Dehradun on Monday morning. Gopi Babu made a guess similar to what was in our minds saying, "Probably after the *bhandara* Ma will begin to eat food." I told him, "Ma has eaten twice after the death of Jyotish Dada." To which Gopi Babu remarked, "That's alright then! May be we cannot say that Ma will eat after Jyotish Dada's *bhandara*. Nothing can be said about why these people perform certain deeds. We only view them externally and venture to guess that perhaps Ma's present *bhava* is a consequence of Jyotish Dada's death. Surely such an estimate made by us is of no value." I said, "Ma does not agree that her present state is a result of Jyotish Dada's death. In fact when anyone suggests it she refutes them." Gopi Babu agreed, "That is right. Ours is only a guess." I added, "Ma's fasting is not new. I have seen her doing it even earlier. Her remaining lying down lifelessly is also not new. But this *bhava* has not occurred for a long time; our minds are also weak because of Jyotish Dada's death, therefore we feel afraid."

Friday, September 6

Today we returned to Vindhyachal. We found letters from Juthika Devi, Bholanath and Manik awaiting us. There was not much news that we did not already know. Ma is slightly better and turns over of her own accord. She is also able to move her limbs. She still drinks water, eats no food but speaks well. A *bhandara* is to be given in Almora in the memory of Jyotish Dada. Devidutt has been put in charge of that. The *kurta* on Ma's body has been cut and opened and a piece of cloth has been used to wrap her body. She has said, "It is difficult to remove or put on a *kurta* at this time. When I get up I shall wear one—now let this remain." The last of their letters was dated August 31.

Nepal Dada told us that while referring to the Kailas trip Ma had said that father (Swami Akhandananda) has suffered the most from breathlessness. To which Nepal Dada replied, "He has been suffering from a heart problem for a long time." Ma said, "No, Baba never had any heart problem, he only became breathless when he climbed to that height—when we descended his breathlessness gradually diminished. His heart was not affected at all. He has practised breath control for so long—does that not have any effect? That is the reason why even such exertion did not harm his heart. Baba did have a heart problem, but on performing yogic *kriya* according to Ma's instructions he had overcome that problem as has been mentioned earlier. Ma had told him, "I have never before explained breath control in this manner to anyone else. I have told only you and you are practising it regularly. Perhaps you had the *samskara* in you and therefore you were told about it."

Actually Baba had been practising such *kriya* even earlier but as it was being done without proper guidance it was actually causing harm. Ma advises different people in different ways about *kriya*, but in great confidence. Ma says, "What is meant for one is disclosed only to him, there is no need for anyone else to hear it." Therefore all that has been imparted to me about *kriya* and such other matters has not been written down nor will it be written down. Perhaps many others have been instructed in many ways but have been told to keep it confidential. These instructions too may never be revealed.

Monday, September 9

This evening we received a letter from Biren Dada dated September 5, Thursday. He wrote to Swamiji from Dehradun saying, "This morning Ma drank some grape juice. The condition that I found her in when I came here was indeed frighten-

ing. Whatever that may be, her condition is now improving rapidly. She moves her hands first and then her feet. Since day before some strength has returned to her back and she is able to turn over. Today she walked to the bathroom for a face wash. Now I shall give her a little grape juice every two hours. We shall gradually change her diet after observing her condition. We are hoping that Ma will be gracious and that she will soon return to normal. We desire to collect funds for purchasing two maunds of sweets to be distributed amongst the poor. Do not worry any more."

In a letter dated September 6 Bholanath wrote, "I am giving you some good news today. Your mother ate some rice from Biren's hands. Biren had cooked the rice and Chhabi's mother had cooked the vegetables. Today she walked a little and had a face and hand wash. Manik, Shankarananda and I had been to Haridwar. Thirty seven Paramahamsas have been served *bhandara* at Shrimat Mangalagiri's ashram. At another *dharma-shala* we organised *bhandara* for dandis, *brahmacharis* and students. Girdi Maharaj is a very good person..." and so on.

Ma lay down on Shukla Trayodashi Bhadra 3, Thursday (August 22) and on Bhadra 17 (Thursday, September 5) she has risen again.

Thursday, September 10

We learnt from Bholanath's letter that after September 5 Ma has resumed a normal diet—she began eating approximately on the eighteenth day after she had taken to her bed.

Friday, September 13

I am receiving news about Ma regularly from Manik. Ma is keeping well. She only eats a small amount of food. She only

walks to the toilet and remains seated the rest of the time. In the morning she has vegetables and tomato juice. At night she is given some milk with *roti*. Devotees have arrived from Calcutta, Moradabad and other places.

Sunday, September 22

We learnt from Bholanath's and Manik's letters that Ma had told Juthika Devi and Manik to leave Dehradun and that they have left. Ma was suffering from a stomach ache and hence eating very little. This has again caused a set back in her health. Now the only ladies staying with Ma are Sushila Mashima and Ruma Devi. Laxmi Devi has also gone to the *ashram*. She cooks for Ma nowadays. Meanwhile we have received news of the passing away of Kail Prasanna Kushari and Nalini Babu (Baby Didi's husband).

Friday, October 4

Ma is well, we were informed. Many devotees from Calcutta, Kashi and other places have gone to see Ma during the Durga *puja* holidays. Ma keeps sitting most of the time. When asked to walk a little more she says, "I do not feel like walking now. When I feel like it I shall walk." There seems to be a change in Ruma Devi—sometimes while repeating the Name she falls down unconscious.

In connection with this Ma said, "Ruma Devi had told me, 'I have served a lot and performed many jobs in the *ashram* but I have not yet attained peace. Therefore I am going with Ma—now with Ma's permission, I shall live in solitude and do my *sadhana*.' She had come here with this attitude. It is a very good mental condition." And thus with Ma's grace a transformation has taken place in her state very quickly—all are happy to see that.

Thursday, October 17 (Vijaya Dashami)

For some reason we have been in Kashi since the last few days. Bacchu and his mother have gone to Dehradun for Ma's *darshan*. This time Durga *puja* commenced from October 14. On Ashtami day at four a.m. we went to the Vishwanath temple and saw a marvellous sight—from three a.m. the devotees had been circumambulating the temple with the intention of completing one hundred and eight rounds. A railing separated the women from the men. I was greatly impressed by their devotion. We visited some other temples as well, they were not all open but devotees crowded at the doorways. As soon as the door was opened these pilgrims would enter for *darshan* and then move to the next temple.

It was still dark. We decided to return to Vindhyachal after Durga *puja*. Suddenly we received a telegram sent by Shachi Babu from Dehradun addressed to Baba, "Ma is leaving for Haridwar on the night of Navami. Go with Didi to Haridwar and meet Ma." As no convenient train was available today we decided to leave tomorrow.

Chapter Five

Friday, October 18

We left for Haridwar at eleven a.m.

Saturday, October 19

In the morning we reached Nanki Babu's *dharmashala* in Haridwar and found that Ma had already reached there with many others. When we entered her room she was lying down. Seeing us she asked, "Did you get the telegram?" *Matri darshan*, and this line was spoken with her eyes shut. She pulled the sheet on herself and remained lying down.

Baba Bholanath, Bhramar, Shankarananda, Asimananda, Dada Moshai, Didima, Sushila Masima, Nishi Babu, Ruma Devi, Bacchu and his mother, Shachi Babu, Satish Babu, Abani Babu and many Kashmiri devotees had accompanied Ma from Dehradun. Nani's son (Mankeshwar Raina) and his entire family had been with Ma from the past two months. They had also come to Dehradun. Naren Babu, his family and Manik were also present.

We heard that while in Dehradun Ma had gone to the Bengali Hari Sabha on Manmatha Babu's request, on Navami *puja* day to see the worship. From there she went to Anand Chowk to the house of Kashi Babu. As soon as she reached there she declared, "Now that I have come out I shall not return to the *ashram*. All of you get ready to go to Haridwar by the three p.m. train. So many people were with Ma and some of them had not even had lunch! Therefore after much pleading and praying Ma was made to agree to leave by the six p.m. train and the whole group came to Haridwar by the six p.m. train.

The devotees were seated all around Ma. Ma was made to have a face wash and drink some water. In the course of conversation we discerned that Ma would leave Haridwar very soon. Right after drinking water she told Akhandananda Swamiji, "We have not met Mangalananda Giri after returning from Kailas. Come, let us go immediately." Hearing Ma's decision all the devotees got ready to go. The group went in nearly a dozen horse carriages to Giri Maharaj's *ashram* in Kankhal. Giri Maharaj had just finished lunch and was about to lie down. Normally at such a time he does not meet anyone but shuts the doors and lies down. But seeing Ma he spread an *asana* for her and asked all the others to be seated. While conversing with Ma he told her, "Had it been any one other than you I would have laid down and not kept the door open." An hour was spent in joyful din and then Ma returned to the *dharmashala* with everybody.

Hariram and Lachmi from Dehradun and Srinivas from Almora had arrived. A little earlier at eleven a.m. Ma called Asimananda Swami and asked him in front of all of us, "Did you want to take us to Narmada? At what time does the train to Narmada leave?" He replied, "At eleven p.m." Ma said, "Let us go."

It was immediately decided which of the devotees would accompany Ma. All could not go, for schools and colleges had reopened. Many returned to Kashi and Calcutta. About fifteen of us went with Ma to Narmada by the eleven p.m. train. Jnana Chandra Chattopadhyaya of Mymensingh had gone with his family to Dehradun for Ma's *darshan*. Not finding her there they had all come to Haridwar to see her. They accompanied us till Delhi. Pancha Babu and Pankaj Babu with their respective wives came to the Delhi station for Ma's *darshan*.

Sunday, October 20

This morning we reached Delhi at seven a.m. and at two a.m. the following morning we reached Baroda. We motored to a small station four miles away and spent the remaining hours till daybreak. It was a moonlit night, a desolate spot, the station was outside the city. Shachi Dada, Professor Naren Babu and others found the place enchanting. The night was spent in conversation.

Monday, October 21

This morning we boarded the train to Narmada at seven a.m., changed trains again at eight a.m. and finally reached a place called Chandode on the bank of the Narmada river at ten a.m. This place was known to Asimananda Swami. Many people who had heard about Ma from him had greatly wished to meet her.

At the station we saw a toy seller pushing his cart of toys. Ma went and stood near his cart. I asked Ma, "Ma, what would you like to have?" Meanwhile, Naresh Choudhury's wife Juthika Devi came near us, picked up a toy and placed it in Ma's hands. It was a rattle shaped like a mallet. Ma commented, "This mace is here, conch (*shanka*), discus (*chakra*), mace (*gada*), and lotus (*padma*)."

Immediately I picked up a toy shaped like a discus and gave it to Ma—she held on to it. Bholanath gave Ma a cowrie shell. Ma told me quietly, "A cowrie shell instead of a conch." Then I chose a round flower-like toy to represent the lotus. Juthika Devi gave her two tiny buckets and some other toys. Ma took them all happily.

We walked a little distance and halted. Ma asked each one which toy he or she fancied and distributed the toys one by one. The toys could all be made to produce sound; Shachi Babu and Naren Babu played on them and started singing

kirtan. All around people gathered to watch the fun. Ma laughed and said, "I see that you have started collecting crowds!" We followed behind Asimananda Swami after all these activities.

We walked some distance and reached Vishnudas temple where Ma was to stay. Asimananda Swami had stayed there earlier. It was a Vishnu temple. The story goes that a certain person had obtained a tiny idol of Vishnu in his dream and installed it there. Later the present, bigger idol was installed. The temple was spacious. A *mahant* and some temple staff were present. A number of rooms had been built adjacent to the temple. We were given rooms upstairs. The rooms were large but the floors were of mud. We all bathed in the Narmada river and returned to have Vishnu's *prasada* which consisted of excellent rice, vegetable, *puri*, *halva* and pickle. Pilgrims are served *prasada* at no cost in this temple. There is a large estate on whose income the temple is being maintained. No one is allowed to leave without being served *prasada*. Any *sannyasi* or householder is free to live here for as long as he likes. Many students live in the temple as well and they are also given *prasada*.

After the meal we all lay down to rest and so did Ma. Ma's face looked very thin. Till now she had not been walking much but now she had resumed walking. Externally she seemed to be in fine fettle. Entering the temple she said, "Listen, we had not heard that we would be coming to a Vishnu temple, but because I was going to visit a Vishnu temple, the *shankha*, *chakra*, *gada*, *padma* game had started in the station!"

Some conversation that occurred in the train is worth recording, so I am writing about it. Naren Babu had said, "I have read somewhere that God once said, 'I am not hesitant to grant liberation (*mukti*), I hesitate to give devotion (*bhakti*)'

The import being that devotion is the greatest." Ma replied, "Pure Devotion lies within. Perform *sadhana* to attain Her. She will reveal the final decision (*mimamsa*) in your heart. There is none other than the One."

Ma continued, "A Kashmiri lady sang *kirtan* with the Name, 'Ma, Ma'. Someone asked her, 'You are not a worshipper of Shakti. Why then do you sing Ma?' This upset her but she did not have the courage to come and ask me herself and sent Kashi Babu's wife Lakshmi (of Dehradun) to find out. I sent for her and said, 'Look here, if you firmly believe that you have been initiated with a Rama or a Krishna *mantra* and that you should not repeat any other Name but that, then abide by your belief. Everything is contained in that Name. But thinking about it from another angle, some call God as Mother, some as Father or Friend. Whoever fancies a particular relationship is free to call God in that way. From that standpoint taking the Name, 'Ma' is like invoking God, no fault lies therein.' Hearing this, her doubt was cleared."

Shachi Dada had read about an incident in the life of Gambhirnath Babaji, which had occurred long ago. Once Babaji had spread his *asana* on the bank of the Narmada river for some days. A snake visited him daily. Whenever Babaji's eyes met the snake's gaze, Babaji would go into *samadhi*. At the same spot a *sannyasi* had practised *tapasya* (penance) for twelve years and had now gone away for some time. In the absence of the *sannyasi*, Gambhirnath Babaji had established his own *asana* at the same spot. When the *sadhu* returned and heard from Babaji that a snake had been visiting him everyday, the *sadhu* was astonished and exclaimed, "I have been doing *tapasya* for the last twelve years just to attain the *darshan* of this snake, but I never once got to see it. You are indeed very fortunate to have had his *darshan*!" After reading

about this incident Shachi Dada had had a keen desire to have Narmada *darshan*.

This morning in the train Shachi Dada had been sitting very quietly when Ma remarked, "Why, you are sitting very still like Gambhirnath Babaji himself!" Hearing this, Shachi Dada's heart was moved by a strange feeling; coming to the temple he told Ma, "Ma, I was very surprised at your remark. I feel you said that purposely to remind me of Gambhirnath Babaji, for it was mainly because of reading about him that I had the desire to come to Narmada. Today having reached the banks of the Narmada you have reminded me of that incident." Ma smiled slightly.

On the way many such incidents occurred. In connection with the descent of incarnations of God, Ma said, "From one stand-point all people are *avatars* (incarnations). If you ignore that view the question arises as to where the incarnations appeared from. In the answer to this it is said—the manifestation of the *formless* (*nirguna*) and that of one with form (*saguna*). When *saguna* and *nirguna* are manifested simultaneously an *avata* appears. Just like the seedling of a tree—a plant and then a tree emerge from that seedling but in the seedling state the colour and form of the tree are not revealed. When the seed remains in contact with the soil the seedling is formed and gradually the plant, the tree, the flowers and fruits appear. Similarly with the combined manifestation of *saguna* and *nirguna*, the *avata* is born and therefore both these aspects can be observed in the *avata*. Again, see how wavy the surface of the ocean is but in the depths of the ocean there are no waves. The water is calm, steady and unwavering there. Similarly in the *lila* of an incarnation both mobile and immobile facets are perceptible."

I asked, "Sometimes we have seen that by your grace a patient has recovered from an illness. Yet your body has not suffered that illness. If the illness has not been manifested anywhere, where has it gone? The fruit of the actions of the patient has to be borne by someone. By absorbing the sins of Jagai and Madhai, Sri Chaitanya had become black." Ma replied, "See, sometimes you people must have observed that the disease has been absorbed and suffered by this body. Then again, a disease can be transferred from one body to another. It is not necessary to keep it within oneself alone. Sometimes this body has suffered a minor illness; at other times there has not been the slightest sign of it. The reason for this is fire which burns everything to ashes—without leaving the faintest sign. Everything is possible."

In connection with initiation I asked, "About your initiation people ask, 'Why was it like that? Was there any particular advantage of its being that way?' Ma replied, "It was of no use, yet, it passed over the body as everything else that has happened. Therefore during Jhulan Purnima when some such thing had occurred Bholanath had enquired, 'Has *diksha* taken place?' I replied, 'Yes, during childhood, conversations with trees and plants took place. So many kinds of words emerged from this body; later invocations were uttered which you heard. *Diksha* was similar, it was a spontaneous manifestation within and just as everything else had emerged, so did that."

I asked, "Alright, Ma, you often say, 'The body was lying here, I went somewhere else. Perhaps you all desired it and so it was possible for the body to return from elsewhere.' Where do you go? Just as it is necessary for you to return here, there must be some reason for your going there." Ma replied, "See, many possibilities exist. An exit can be made from either

the top half or the lower half of the body. In addition, any of the nine doorways (*navadwara*) can be used to leave this body. Then again, any spot is usable like the toe, the root of a hair or from within a hair or through the *Brahma randhra* (central pore of the palate) it is possible to go out. All are infinite and so is this."

I said, "When you go away somewhere, do beings come from higher planes of consciousness (*lokas*) to take you away? Or do you go by yourself to achieve your purpose. Ma said, "Sometimes I am beckoned and taken away just as you all take me and I go with you. Then again at times, as you must have observed, while I am seated, speaking to you and no one has called me I suddenly get up and go to some other place. Perhaps something had been occurring there which was being hidden from me and my reaching there uncovers the secret. That day my sudden visit to Mangala Giri's *ashram* without his calling me also had its own purpose. Only to achieve some purpose are all deeds performed. But they are only your purposes or the lack of them. Yet for all outward appearances nothing is apparent." Bholanath and Ma have both explained this, 'What is not, has been understood.' Meaning to say that this world of enjoyment that we see is what we think is worth knowing or understanding—we think we know it—but that known world is nothing, that is, it is false.

Tuesday, October 22

Today I shut the door and asked Ma and Bholanath in confidence, "I want to hear the true story about your initiations. These incidents are supremely purifying and very auspicious for the world. Now if I do not hear the true details of events from the two of you, who else will be able to tell me

about it?" Then I heard the following description of the *diksha* from the two of them.

On the appointed day Bholanath had decided that he would not take *diksha* and had gone to office without waiting to drink water or eat anything. Ma sent for him two or three times but Baba did not return. Finally Ma sent word: "Tell him that if he does not come I shall go to the Office myself." The messenger told Bholanath this. Bholanath knew Ma—he knew that she was capable of doing anything, even making an appearance in his office. Nervously Bholanath returned home to find Ma pacing up and down while invocations and *mantras* were being chanted spontaneously. As soon as Bholanath arrived Ma bade him have a bath and gave him dry clothes to wear. When Bholanath had finished bathing they both sat down on *asanas*. At that moment a *bija mantra* was pronounced by Ma. She told Bholanath to do *japa* of that *mantra* and explained whichever *kriya* he needed to perform, as well. From that day Bholanath began repeating that *mantra*. Ma also forbade him from eating meat and other non-vegetarian foods unnecessarily and told him to live a pure and clean life. He has been following these instructions implicitly. This was the manner in which Bholanath was initiated.

The narration of the events leading to Bholanath's *diksha* had never been so clearly and unreservedly revealed till today. Fortunately, having heard it from both of them today I felt blessed and extremely grateful. The topic of Ma's *diksha* came up between them now. I shall write whatever I heard about that from Ma's divine lips.

"At first, one's father and mother are one's *gurus*. One day father said—"It is good to take the Name of Hari". After many days I began taking the name of Hari as a consequence of the *guru's* orders. As a result *kriyas* occurred in this body

during *kirtan*—which you have witnessed and heard about. Then came marriage. The mother of this body said, 'The husband is the Supreme *guru*.' Whenever this body has played the game of seating anyone in the place of the *guru*, there has been complete submission of his hands—there was no play of one's independent desires after that. Whatever the *guru* commanded was executed by this body with no further thought. Then such *kriyas* occurred within this body on hearing the Name of Hari. Bholanath once said, 'Look, we are not Vaishnavas. It is not right for you to experience such *bhava* during the chanting of Hari's Name. We are Shaivas and therefore it is not proper for you to behave this way.' " Ma asked him with the innocence of a child, "Then what should I do? Should I repeat, 'Jaya Shiva Shankara, Bom Bom Hara Hara'?" Bholanath replied a little forcefully, "Yes, yes, do just that!" Ma replied instantly, "Alright, then I shall do so." At that time there was no external method by which the *bija* could be ascertained so Ma began repeating that Name. In that condition, Ma asked Bholanath one day, "Shall I sit on the floor and repeat the Name?" (During the night Ma would remain seated on her bedding, immersed in *bhava*). Bholanath never disturbed her. From then onwards she began sitting down on the ground to do *japa*. Ma would say, "Hari and Hara are One, so the *kriyas* that were being manifested in this body earlier were only enhanced by taking the Name of Hara." In this manner, probably at midnight on Jhulan Purnima day in the month of Shravana, in the Bengali year of 1329, Ma's *diksha* occurred spontaneously.

Ma said, "This is the reason why I tell everyone right in the beginning—"Take the Name that you like. Follow the *guru's* advice without hindrance. Submit yourself to the *guru's* will completely. Let no desire of yours raise its head.

Watch—this will open the doorway of your heart. In Kaliyuga the simple and straightforward repetition of the Name is the best method to reach the goal. This can achieve anything, so it has been said. Do not think that if you have not been initiated with a Sanskrit word, you cannot call out to God and that no *sadhana* can be performed. You are seeing this body alright! And listening to this viewpoint. Is there only this viewpoint? Whenever necessary everything will open up spontaneously. I have already told you—'To enter into a registry record, a good name is required.' Take whichever Name you like at first. Whenever necessary everything else will follow. The meaning of the word '*bija*' is—a special introduction. For instance consider the case where your Name is known and nothing else is known. But just beckoning by using the Name serves to bring Him closer and then all the necessary introduction can be made."

She continued, "That is the reason why I once told Jyotish, 'Before you sing *kirtan* in your *ashram*, sing the Name Jaya Shiva Shankara Bom Bom Hara Hara'. Since then Jyotish had those Names sung before *kirtan*. Even to this day that Name is sung during *arati* in the Annapurna temple. I did not reveal to Jyotish at that time the true reason for having instructed him in that fashion."

Ma explained, "The *bija* exist within the Name. Therefore as the Name is repeated the seed flowers. The Name exists within the *bija* as well. Everything exists within everything else. Its manifestation is desirable whatever be the *bhava* and whoever may be the cause. Whatever may happen go on with one practice, do not waste your time and breath uselessly. Whatever you do will bear fruit. The same form will blossom."

Ma said, "Hari and Hara are one and yet different." Again, regarding the Name "Ma"—the word 'Ma' first emanates

from Ma's own lips. Therefore we observe that there is not the slightest trace of sectarianism in Ma. All these matters had not been revealed till now. Today, listening to Ma and Bholanath in solitude, I was entranced. The extraordinariness of both their lives opened out before me.

In this conversation another important fact was revealed. The incident occurred as follows. In this world every *avatara* and *mahapurusha* has been accompanied by a group of people opposed to him so we have heard. Ma also has a similar group and she says, "They are the ornaments of this body." Such a group of people once wrote a derogatory letter about Ma, addressed to Bholanath. At that time Ma and Bholanath were in Dehradun. Bholanath had replied to them, "I married her (Ma) when she was twelve years and ten months old. I know very well that to this day she is a *purna brahmacharini* (completely celibate). Not once has there been even the slightest trace of wavering in her behaviour therefore I have allowed her to appear before the entire world without any reservations." On receiving such a sharp edged reply from Bholanath, many amongst the opposing group were quietened. The doubts assailing the minds of many of them were removed. We are all indebted to Bholanath whose transparent straightforwardness has allowed us all to become acquainted with Ma's extraordinary *lila*. Today again, coming to know this about Ma, we have realised yet another aspect of Ma's extraordinary nature. From some ordinary happenings a great character stands revealed—there is no doubt that everyone will try to appreciate that.

Therefore Ma says, "Whatever is necessary happens within this body. I do not need anything, may be you people needed it and so a phase of *sadhana* was completed within this body. The yogic *kriya* that has been performed by this

body is exactly like child's play to me. I see no difference between the two." Hearing all this from Ma I felt numbed. Who can say all this in such a manner? We have only been playing all along in the company of such a great Power! And she has also mingled with us in the same way and has played endless games.

It was one p.m. when I opened the door. This morning right after Ma woke up and drank water she began teasing Bholanath about his trunk. Bholanath's nature is childlike in its simplicity. Watching this kind of divine *lila* between them both, all were enchanted. Who can estimate how many kinds of attitudes Ma assumes as she sports thus!

By three p.m. all had finished eating the *prasada* from the Vishnu temple. Today was Kojagar Lakshmi *purnima* day—some regulations are observed here as well. There is a special *puja* in the temple. We are unable to understand Gujarati that is spoken here. Some of Asimanandaji's disciples, who live here, had come for Ma's *darshan*. They said they would take Ma to Ahmedabad where the Narmada flows and also to some other places. Ma's uniform response was, "Nothing is certain where I am concerned—whatever happens will happen."

At five p.m. we went in a boat on the Narmada river. Swami Asimananda related the history of the temple on the bank. We heard that many *sadhus* live on the river banks in huts close by. About forty miles above in a temple of Shulapaneshwari Shiva *lingas* are found in the waters of the Chakra *tirtha* there. On the banks of the Narmada is a *dharmashala* belonging to the Baroda kingdom, a Shiva temple and also a Narmadeshwari temple. We visited one of the Shiva temple and went to the *ashram* of a *sadhu*, leaving our boat at the *ghat* of the *ashram*.

The present mahanta of this *ashram* is called Kailasananda. His *guru* was Keshavananda the disciple of Brahmananda. This Brahmananda was also the *guru* of Balananda Brahmachari of Deoghar. Balananda Brahmachari had spent fifty years of his life as a celibate in this place. Two pictures, one of Brahmananda and one of Keshavananda, were hanging on the wall of the *ashram*. A Shiva temple and a guest house were also part of the *ashram*. The residents took Ma to the Mahant's room, we also went along. The room was decorated with royal splendour—even the houses of rich people rarely sport such decor. Ma spoke to the Mahanta for some time. He requested us all to partake of *prasada*; when we refused he had milk served to us. Satyanarayana and Chandra *puja* were in progress as it was a Kojagar *purnima* day. Fresh rice was cooked, offered as *bhoga* and a little *prasada* was served to each one present. We observed the similarities between some customs amongst Gujaratis and Bengalis. The *ashrams* here are called *kutira*. The Mahant pressingy requested that we have *prasada* in his *kutira* some day.

We returned at eight p.m. in the boat. A beautiful atmosphere prevailed on the Narmada at that hour. Ma sang while we were sailing back, "Hari Namer Tori Bandho Bhai", meaning, "Build a boat out of Hari's Name, brother." We listened to her enchanted. The time, place and context were all lovely. We returned to the Vishnudas *dharmashala* at ten p.m. Ma sat in the verandah for a very long time. The temple idol was brought outside and decorated elaborately. *Kirtan* was sung and *arati* performed. At ten thirty p.m. everyone received *prasada*. Tomorrow we are to visit Vyas, Anasuya and other places by boat. Here travelling by boat mainly at night as the boats are not covered and travelling in the hot sun is uncomfortable. It was late when Ma and the rest of us slept.

Wednesday, October 23

Ma woke up late. The Mahanta of this temple indulges in no luxuries and lives a very simple life. The inmates of this *math* have been very hospitable and we are not experiencing any inconvenience at all. We heard that people of all religions are welcomed here.

At four p.m. we left by boat for the trip to Vyas. We reached Vyas before sunset—it was quite a desolate spot. Many temples and ashramas were situated on the island. Vyas lies near one bank of the Narmada while Shuka Devi is situated near the other bank. At Vyas we went to the Lakshmi Narayana temple. A Gujarati *agnihotri* brahmin lives there with his family. All of us liked the place very much. Bholanath walked around and reached the hut of the *agnihotri*. No provisions are available here, yet the temple priestess cooked some *khichdi* and served the guests. The place looked beautiful in the moonlit night. Custard apple trees grew abundantly all around. We spent the night there. Ma developed a pain in her throat, her body was not feeling too well.

Thursday, October 24

Having bathed in the Narmada and had *darshan* of the spot where Vyasa had performed penance we went to see the place named after Vyasa's wife, Anasuya Devi. We reached at one p.m. That place also had many temples. It is believed that the mud from this spot, when smeared on the body, can cure leprosy. A leprosy hospital is also situated here. A Bengali gentleman had installed a very beautiful image of Kali here; the image has been preserved even after his death. A temple of Anasuya Devi and a big banyan tree were two of the many things we saw here. We left at eleven a.m. and reached Chandode by seven p.m. No one had had any food. After

bhoga was offered in the temple we received *prasada* at nine p.m. We are all spending our days enjoying great bliss in Ma's company. Shachi Dada and others were saying, "Today we did not feel hungry at all. Which power is this which gives us the strength to overcome the force of habits so well formed?"

Friday, October 25

At four p.m. we left for Ahmedabad with Ma. Three or four people had come from there to escort Ma. We spent the night in the Baroda station. Baroda is a very well laid out city. We shall leave for Ahmedabad by the seven a.m. train tomorrow.

Saturday, October 26

We travelled by the seven a.m. train and reached Ahmedabad by one thirty p.m. Here, many devoted disciples of Swami Asimananda, who had heard about Ma from him, had been worshipping Ma's picture. Hearing that Ma was arriving today, many people had come to the station. Ma was garlanded profusely. We were accommodated in a *dharma-shala* close to the station. Many people came for Ma's *darshan*. As we do not understand Gujarati, it was very difficult to converse with them and we had to depend on their marginal understanding of Hindi to make ourselves understood. Asimananda Swami has managed to learn some amount of Gujarati.

The people here are very simple and devout in their beliefs. One lady had been having dreams for two months in which she had had Ma's *darshan* and also heard Ma speaking. That seemed extremely remarkable. She said she had seen Ma and many of us in her dreams and could recognise us when she actually saw us now. She also said that she had become aware of the throat pain that Ma had developed in Chan-

dode, she had even foretold the date of Ma's arrival. Now having met Ma the lady did not want to let go of Ma and sat near her throughout the day.

In the evening Asimananda Swami took Ma and the rest of us across the Saraswati river to the house of his devotee, near Gandhi Ashram. On the way back we saw an *ashram* where a large number of *sannyasis* live. It had three or four large courtyards. We returned to the *dharmashala* after these visits. A doctor from here had gone to Chandode to fetch Ma. Many people stayed on till ten p.m. Only after Ma said that they should go and rest did they leave. A couple of people stayed on in the *dharmashala*.

Sunday, October 27

Ma woke up early. Shachi Dada was to leave for Calcutta. Before leaving, he spoke to Ma in private for some time. In the evening Haridas Sadhu of Dhaka and another *sadhu* arrived. They sang *kirtan*. We all slept around midnight.

Monday, October 28

In the evening some Gujaratis come to seek Ma's advice. At first *kirtan* was sung. Bholanath, feeling inspired, danced out of sheer joy. After *kirtan* everyone settled down to hear Ma speak. Ma had a severe pain in her throat. Yet, paying no attention to the pain, Ma spoke to the people for about an hour much to their delight.

The people here have arranged to get Ma's sayings printed in Gujarati. Ma's simple and straightforward advice has charmed their hearts. In the evening the ladies of Shri Ammalal's household came and escorted Ma to their house where they seated us all in their garden and arranged for refreshments. Their enormous guest houses and cattle shel-

ters are worth looking at. They repeatedly requested Ma to stay in their guest house but Ma said, "We are not certain about how long we shall stay here. If we stay on we shall see what happens." The ladies who were spiritually inclined wanted to ask Ma some questions and they decided to take Ma again to their house tomorrow morning. Ma and the rest of us slept around one thirty a.m.

Tuesday, October 29

In the morning the Gujarati ladies arrived and took Ma and me to their place. We drove far away in a car. The car was parked at some spot and the ladies began conversing with Ma. When Ma was asked whether a *Guru* was necessary or not she said, "You accept *gurus* from the time you are born. *Mother, father, teacher, in fact, whoever has taught you anything, is a guru. A cause is necessary for any action. Similarly, to attain any knowledge a guru is necessary.*" Again in the course of conversation she said, "*Nothing can be achieved without action. Action has to be performed. In order to cut off impure bondages, pure bondages have to be cultivated. Just as when a knot in the cloth has to be removed, you have to attentively open it out with your fingers. All work is like that*" and so on.

After conversing we returned to the *dharmashala* at eight a.m. Two Parsee ladies who are teachers by profession, had come to see Ma. We heard that they had asked Dr. Mahendra Sarkar of Calcutta, "Have you seen any genuine Mahatma?" He had replied, "I have seen many Mahatmas, but after seeing Anandamayi Ma of Dhaka I felt very happy. I am convinced that she is established in complete bliss."

Hearing his words these two ladies had developed a great desire to see Ma; having had Ma's *darshan* they felt extremely

happy. Ma spoke to them. One of them said, "Mataji, I do not like any form of symbolic worship. What is the means of steadying the mind?" Ma replied instantly, "Very well, you sit quietly and concentrate on your breath - there is no need to do anything else. Inhalation and exhalation are your symbols." The lady was extremely pleased with this reply. After some more conversation they took Ma in their car for an outing.

Many people have got together to offer *bhoga* to Ma. They who do not even understand the language that Ma speaks in, or perhaps understand a little Hindi, are now unreservedly accepting Ma as a Goddess, seeing her form. They all say, "We are blessed to have had Ma's *darshan*." By noon Ma saw Gandhiji's *ashram* and some other places and returned. *Bhoga* was offered. On the way Ma had said we would leave Ahmedabad today. Everyone requested Ma to stay on. Today many highly placed people came for Ma's *darshan*, having just got the news of her arrival. They all felt very sorry when they heard that she was planning to leave today itself. Dr. Ambashankar and others had been unstintingly extending their hospitality to Ma and her companions. Seeing that she would leave so soon they began expressing their regrets.

Shri Kantilal and Shri Ratilal are two wealthy brothers who are famous here. They pleaded with Ma to allow them to host her here. The Parsee ladies came in the evening and pressingly entreated Ma to stay on. But Ma, with folded palms, smiled and explained to everyone that she had to leave; we all got ready to depart by the nine p.m. train. We too tried to explain to the people around by saying, "If Ma has the *kheyala* not even a hundred obstacles can stop her from keeping to her word!" We also told them, "Nothing is certain as regards Ma's next move." Say someone comes to visit Ma in a car. Ma would immediately ask him if there was a train leaving and

would say, 'Baba, take me in your car to the station.' In this manner she leaves suddenly. To a casual observer all this does not make any sense. Ma has been here for two or three days and ignoring the pressing entreaties of the people here she is setting out for Baroda where we do not even know where she is going to stay. All requested, "Ma, if you do not leave tonight and wait till tomorrow morning everyone will be so happy." Ma, however laughed and replied, "If anything has to happen it will happen, otherwise we will spend the night in the station. Once the words have been uttered, I must leave today." Even countless barriers and mishaps cannot stop Ma's *kheyala*. Many began to weep. Innumerable garlands, cloth pieces and other offerings began pouring in at Ma's feet. Some of the Gujarati people sang invocations to Ma. Sailen Babu had arrived with his family.

It was time for the train but the tongas did not arrive. The eyes of all those sitting in the room were intently focused on Ma's form. Ma stood up and the people also got up to follow her. Ma came out. Sailen Babu took Ma, Bholanath and some of us to the station in his car. All the people followed Ma to the station. On the day that Ma reached this place all these people were unknown to us. During the last couple of days Ma had attracted so many of them and was now on the point of leaving the place. Groups of people thronged around Ma near the train. Innumerable people were waiting eagerly to see her face and hear her voice. They had practically buried her in flower garlands. We began taking off the garland and putting them round the necks of the devotees. Asimananda Swami stayed back. In this way Ma, the personification of divine sport, completed her *lila* in Ahmedabad and set out for Baroda. Devotees repeatedly begged Ma to visit Ahmedabad again. This is a strange place to us where we do not understand the

local language at all, yet by Ma's grace the kind of love and hospitality that we received here will remain in our memory for long. After having heard some piece of advice from Ma, these people consider themselves blessed. Some have said that they would follow her to Baroda if she decides to stay there for a few days.

At nine p.m. we set out for Baroda. We had no inkling of where we would stay. Last time we had found that the *dharmashala* was not suitable to live in. Baroda is a three or four hours journey from here. The doctor's son Baldev had accompanied us. We reached Baroda around midnight. Surprisingly a gentleman had already booked accommodation for us in a good *dharmashala*. There we found a big room reserved for *sadhus*. The name of this building is Chimanlal Maniklal *Dharmashala*. It was one a.m. by the time we settled down. Didima and Dadamoshai are with us.

Wednesday, October 30

Last night we heard a story about Ma's childhood. Ma was then about four or five years old. She heard poetry being sung in the village. After the recitation was over she came back to her garden, sat calmly under a tree and began singing. But she could not even pronounce the words properly at that age. People asked her, 'Why are there tears in your eyes?' On being asked this repeatedly, Ma laughed and made them forget about the matter. Ma's Dadamoshai had told many, 'The wonderful *bhava* that I saw in her that day still remains etched in my heart.' On our request Ma then narrated other incidents from her past—how she did all her work with utmost purity—or rather, how such work got done on its own. When she started offering *bhoga*, she would fetch water, grind the spices and do all the other work herself. To the extent

possible, *bhoga* used to be offered in great purity. In Shahbagh also she used to offer *bhoga*. In that context, she reminisced, "One day I sat down to eat and found that no food was being taken in. The body was firmly established in an *asana*. Then *japa* was performed on each item." I asked, "Which *japa* was recited?" Ma replied, "The *mantra* that was being repeated within was used to offer *bhoga* as well."

"Later in Bajitpur another interesting phase started. Before every meal five morsels were kept aside. The meal was then begun by putting a little food into the mouth five times. Do you know when that happened? After six days of fasting and one night of sitting up." I asked, "Kriyas involving the cupped palm (*gandusha*) must have occurred as well. While such *kriyas* were performed, were *mantras* also repeated alongside?" Ma replied, "Yes, *mantras* were also uttered simultaneously. For some days this went on and offerings were also made but after that *bhoga* could no longer be offered, the body would just drop down. When Bholanath was requested, he would offer *bhoga*. Rice used to be cleaned out grain by grain for the *bhoga*. During a special *puja* even the wood was purified by sprinkling water mixed with cowdung over it. To the extent possible, *puja* and all other rituals were performed with purity."

Thursday, October 31

In the evening we went to the city with Ma and went round the Gaekwad palace compound. While setting out we saw a car parked outside a house opposite the *dharmashala*. Ma laughed and said, "Shall I go and ask the owner of the car to take me for a ride? He will surely take me for a ride if I ask him." We had absolutely no idea as to whose house and whose car they were. Hearing Ma's statement I laughed and

replied, "You alone can do such a thing. Nothing is beyond you." Later in the evening a boy came to meet Ma and we came to know that he lived in the house opposite the *dharma-shala*. The house belonged to the owner of the *dharma-shala* and the boy was his nephew. Ma told me laughingly, "Khukuni, this evening I had spoken about this boy's car and now he has come here himself."

Today a couple of people came to see Ma. A woman had been employed to wash the vessels. She looked at Ma and asked me, "Who is that lady?" I replied, "Mataji." She remarked, "That is obvious from the glow on her face." She spoke a mixture of Gujarati and Hindi. The point of writing about this is only to illustrate that the extraordinariness of Ma's countenance attracts the attention of even the common individual.

Friday, November 1

In the morning the owner of the *dharma-shala* arrived along with his family and told the manager to look after us with special care. As per regulations, a three day stay in the *dharma-shala* is allowed. We could not figure out whether Ma would stay on or leave after three days but of course we would have to quit these premises. However today the owner of this *dharma-shala* came for Ma's *darshan* at the opportune moment and said, "No regulations are imposed on the stay of *sadhus* and *mahatmas*. Ma can stay for as long as she likes." Ma laughed and said, "See, God Himself makes all the necessary arrangements. Who called the owner to come and organise our accommodation at the right moment?"

Rukmini Bai, who had met Ma during Ma's previous visit to Baroda, came today to see her, accompanied by a couple of Gujarati ladies.

One person asked Ma, "Do previous birth exist or not?" Ma replied, "They do. *But only those who have the samskaras for previous and coming births have repeated births. Those who have no samskaras do not experience the cycle of repeated births.* Each one's attitude depends on the stage at which he is poised, he speaks accordingly."

The person remarked, "Then it is better to be a Muslim or a Christian for they have no *samskaras* to be carried over from birth to birth—and therefore they do not experience the cycle of births, whereas we Hindus do not have any idea of the number of times we have come and gone." Ma replied, "Then will your mere desire to adopt such an attitude be sufficient to release you from your *samskaras*? You possess *samskaras* from the time of your birth. Look at it in another way, merely by being a Hindu or a Muslim does not help achieve anything, so many Muslims have Hindu *samskaras*; and again, so many Hindus have Muslim *samskaras*."

In the course of conversation the same person asked, "Is *darshan* possible or not? And if such a phenomenon does exist, is it beneficial to have it?" Ma replied, "Surely it does exist—the experience is exactly like my seeing you now." The person asked, "The scriptures declare that Brahman is beyond knowledge (*ajneya*), unmanifest (*avyakta*). If that is so then how can it be known?" Ma replied, "You have seen a flower. I ask you, Baba, how was the flower?" You reply, 'Very beautiful. The flower was like this, like that and so on.' But the actual nature of the flower is not revealed by your description. You have not been able to express precisely your mind's actual impression of that flower. You cannot acquaint another person about the exact nature of your experience using words. You can only express a shadow of the reality because speech halts at a point and then returns, unable to proceed further.

Every wordly object is both manifest and unmanifest. In the same way Brahman is also that which can be known and simultaneously that which cannot be known. All possibilities are within Him." So saying she laughed. The man also happily agreed, "You have spoken correctly, Ma."

The next question raised was, "Are there yogis in Kaliyuga or not?" Ma replied, "There are." He said, "People say that Kaliyuga is so sinful that *sadhus* cannot survive." Ma explained, "The three *gunas* are present in all people in different proportions. In each person, the difference lies only in the dominance of a certain *guna*. Similarly in Kaliyuga there is still a shadow of the Satyayuga which will come next." This explanation made the man feel very happy and he accepted it. He is highly educated. By midnight we all slept. Ma and some of us slept in the verandah. Ma's health was not good but she was conversing in a radiant mood.

Saturday, November 2

Ma awoke at eight a.m. and Didima made her drink water. Then Naresh Babu spoke to Ma in private. As I mentioned earlier, Baldev, the son of the doctor in Ahmedabad, was with us. He has many good *samskaras*. This morning the owner of the *dharmashala* came again and said he would take Ma out at four p.m. At one p.m. *bhoga* was offered and then we rested for sometime.

In the evening Ma sang *kirtan*—"Raghupati Raghava Raja Rama, Patita Pavana Sita Rama. Jayati Shiva Shiva Janaki Rama, Jaya Raghunandana Jaya Siya Rama." Her sweet voice enchanted everyone and they sang along with her. Even little children in the *dharmashala* joined in the *kirtan*. Naresh Dada began dancing with joy. He always dances while singing *kirtan* and we tell him, "Seeing your crazy

behaviour none would believe that you are a professor." Shachi Babu was in a similar state. He would reply, "When we are engrossed in our work in Calcutta we do not behave in this manner. Here, in Ma's company some sort of a madness takes hold of us." And truly his behaviour showed that he was immersed in some sort of a drunken ecstasy. The irregularity in diet and routine did pose a threat to their health while they were with Ma, but they kept well. A *satvik* (pure) glow lit up their faces and a purifying change seemed to make them bloom.

At eight p.m. we went by Sethji's car to the Rokamath (Maruti) temple and listened to *kirtan* before returning at ten p.m. We all sat down to eat with Ma and Bholanath and enjoyed a meal of fried beaten rice, banana and other snacks; we retired to bed around midnight.

Sunday, November 3

Ma woke at seven thirty a.m. A Bengali gentleman who holds a high post in the Railways, came for Ma's *darshan* along with his family. Ma sat up and conversed with them. Today Srimati Rukmini Bai sent all the provisions for lunch. *Bhoga* was offered at one p.m. after which Ma lay down to rest. Today a Babaji of Navadwip came with Sethji. He said he would return in the evening to sing *kirtan*. He came at nine p.m. Dadamoshai is an expert singer and as soon as he started singing Babaji handed his *sitar* to him. Dadamoshai sang many songs and then Babaji also sang two or three songs. At midnight we retired to bed.

Monday, November 4

Ma awoke at seven a.m. I washed her face and made her eat fruit. Last night the doctor from Ahmedabad arrived again

and this morning he sat near Ma and conversed at length. At twelve noon *bhoga* was offered. Mrs Chatterjee (the wife of the railway official who had come yesterday) arrived in the morning and sat near Ma. Her husband does not believe in *sadhus* and religious matters but she was pining for Ma's *darshan*. In her anxiety to finish her household chores and rush to Ma, she had misplaced her necklace. This only goes to show how Ma can attract the minds of people within such a short span of time. At four p.m. Ma was photographed. Reduction in Ma's walking has caused such a condition that even a short walk makes her legs stagger. She just does not have the mood to walk. Today she was taken to the ground floor for the photograph. After the photograph was taken I said, "Now that you have come downstairs, let us go for a little stroll." Ma said, "Let us go." As we stepped out we met Dikshit with the lawyer. He was coming for Ma's *darshan* and had come yesterday as well. Seeing Ma going out they also joined us.

We walked some distance and reached a Parsee temple where the sacred fire is preserved. Ma said, "Come let us enter." A beautiful garden had been laid out all around. As we neared the temple we caught a lovely fragrance which filled the air. We met many Parsees. They told us that people belonging to other faiths are not allowed to enter their fire temple, to the extent that they are not allowed to even look at the temple from outside. Oblations are poured into the fire twice a day. However we walked all around and came out.

Today is Krishna Chaturdashi (fourteenth day of the dark fortnight); tomorrow is Deepavali and Kali *puja*. Diwali is celebrated on a grand scale here. We saw the doorways and the stairs of the temple decorated with designs made out of rice paste. The fire temple was no exception. I was

reminded of the Bengali *alpana* (painting with rice paste). In Bengal, every home is marked with the footprints of Goddess Lakshmi during the day of the *puja*. Similar auspicious markings are done here also. *Alpana* is traditionally used for many auspicious occasions in Bengal. Finding a similar tradition in this place, so far away from Bengal, we felt very happy.

Today lamps have been lit in every home. The clanging sound of various instruments is deafening. On the way back we visited the Chatterjee home and then returned to the *dhar-mashala*. Ma said, "My legs stagger as soon as I start walking—there is no mood to walk." We were worried to hear this. Her face looks pale and thin.

During conversation this evening I told Ma, "I have seen you live without eating food for many days. You haven't even drunk water some days and yet your body was keeping well. Now with even the slightest exertion your body seems to behave strangely." Ma said, "At that time the condition was different. The kind of *bhava* that existed during childhood is prevailing again now. At that time Ma would call me and feed me, I had no mood to eat at any time. You people have witnessed the *bhava* that existed in between. The reason why the body kept healthy even without food was that at that time enlightenment and the true nature, the stream of experiences of a *karma* yogi, a *bhakti* yogi and a *jnana* yogi were being manifested within this body. *Hatha* yoga, *Raja* yoga and such other practices were all manifested within this body. But now the *bhava* that prevails is that of a child. In those days the body was served and now again it is being served. In those days the body was gradually growing in size and now it is going the other way." I said, "After the illness at Siddheshwar! your health has been deteriorating. After that illness even

painstaking service has not been able to set your health right." Ma said, "I do not stop anyone. But this is innate nature. On finding opposition to its *bhava* such a form appeared." Such conversation continued for some time. At ten p.m. we lay down.

Tuesday, November 5

No special incident occurred today. Tomorrow some devotees will return to Delhi and Calcutta. Mashima and Nishi Babu will stay in Haridwar till the Kumbha Mela. They were sent to Haridwar. Tomorrow they will all leave by the nine a.m. train. Ma said, "Look, you will go to Dakor won't you? See at what time the train leaves." Dakor has a big Dwarakanath temple as well as some other temples. We found out that a train leaves at seven a.m. for Dakor from here, reaching by ten a.m. We decided to leave by that train. Annakoot will be performed in the Dwarakanath temple tomorrow.

Wednesday, November 6

We set out for Dakor by the seven a.m. train. Rukmini Bai and her daughter Vijaya also accompanied us. They have taken *diksha* from Bholanath. At the station we found that Seth Punjilal was also heading for Dakor. He was very happy to see Ma. We reached Dakor at ten a.m. and checked into a *dharmashala* called, 'Vallabh Bhavan'. We set out at once to see the Vishnu mandir (Ranachhoda Raji's temple). There we bathed in the Gomati (a very large lake) and had *darshan* of Ranachhoda Raji before returning to the *dharmashala*.

Today is the festival of Annakoot. So on this *pratipada tithi* many people have gathered here from different places. As soon as we returned to the *dharmashala* Ranachhoda Raji's child-*bhoga* of vegetable, milk and other items was brought

and we all received *prasada*. At two p.m. Annakoot (here it is called Annaloot) was started. Though we were in a strange place we faced no inconvenience thanks to the presence of Rukmini Bai and Sethji. By Ma's grace all places are rendered comfortable. At two p.m. we went to the temple to witness the Annakoot ceremony but a huge crowd had gathered and the door was shut. After the door opened a little later we entered. All the people reverently made room for Ma.

Bhoga had been placed for the Lord in a very big room. After *bhoga* was offered the curtain was raised. As soon as the door was opened the crowd rushed in and looted the *prasada*—that was a terrible melee. In a few minutes all the *prasada* had disappeared. It was frightening to see the terrible form of each person. We witnessed the whole scene and returned. Many people, attracted by Ma's countenance, touched her feet.

In the evening Sethji took us to see the *arati*. In the morning, on everybody's request Ma had swiftly gone through the crowd, had *darshan* of the idol and come out immediately. Now again, when all requested her, she made her way through the crowd, had a glimpse of the idol, came to an open space outside and sat down. A lady who had met Ma for a short time in Ahmedabad, draped a *sari* around Ma inside the temple. People believe that Dwarakanath actually reside here and that the idol that now stands in Dwaraka was made much later. The original, ancient idol is this one and his name is Ranachhoda Raji.

Later in the evening we returned to the *dharmashala*. Sethji had got a brahmin to cook lunch. Now a three rupee plate of *prasada* was brought. It was brimming with many kinds of vegetable preparations and sweetmeats. All ate *prasada* joyfully. I had cooked my own meal. This is Ma's

beautiful and orderly arrangement. At night we all slept around Ma in the verandah.

Thursday, November 7

Today some people went to touch the deity in the temple as soon as they rose. Ma was still lying down and I stayed back with her. After eating a meal we left at twelve noon to catch the one p.m. train to Baroda. At Baroda station we found Sri Hariram Joshi waiting—he had taken a month's leave to stay with Ma. We returned from Dakor with *sadhu* Balaji. He decided to take Ma to the Sri Krishna temple in Baroda. We got into a bus and came to the *dharmashala*, deposited our luggage there and then went to the Sri Krishna temple. There Annakoot had been celebrated with a large variety of *bhoga*. The decorations were still intact. At the station we met Sri Vidyananda Swami who is an exponent of the Gita—he is famous in these parts. Ma was made to sit in the Sri Krishna temple. Narasimha Swami is the priest at this temple—we met him. Balaji told Ma, "Ma, seeing your face we felt that you are totally contented. However, if you accept a little *prasada* in our company, we shall feel blessed." Ma replied in her characteristic manner, "Baba, I had your *darshan*, I heard words of truth from you, that is *prasada* in itself." He said, "I asked you this as a formality." We returned to the *dharmashala*—they gave us some *prasada* to take with us. Ma said, "Come, let us go to the banks of the Narmada. We shall go to Karnali or Vyas." In Vyas there is a big *dharmashala*. Near Badhka village there is a place for *sadhus* to stay in as well as different places for householders to stay in, we heard. Karnali has a temple. The lawyer Dikshit had given us a letter of introduction for securing accommodation there. To stay in Karnali, all provisions have to be brought from Chandode. The

same is true of Vyas where provisions have to be taken either from Chandode or from Badhka. Ma said, "We should manage with whatever is available in any place. It is not as if we shall always live in cities where all facilities are available." It was decided that we would travel four miles to Gaya Gate station tonight and leave by the seven a.m. train to Chandode tomorrow. From Chandode we would have to go by boat to Karnali. A resident of Ahmedabad pleaded with Ma to allow him to offer *bhoga* to Ma the next day, so it was decided that we would leave after lunch at eleven a.m.

We received two special news items from Hariram today. There was a Muslim gentleman in Dehradun who used to meet Ma everyday—he even wanted to accompany her to Haridwar. He had written to Ma that during *roza* he wanted to stay with her for forty days and that whenever he sits down to repeat the Name of Allah, he experiences the vision of Ma wearing a crown, holding a trident in one hand and a drum (*damaru*) in the other, looking at him steadily. As he takes the Name of Allah he gazes at Ma's form intently. He also said, "With my eyes open, when I am completely conscious, I can see Ma seated before me as I recite the *namaz*. I do not see her when she is moving about but I do see her when she is seated in one place" and so on.

The other incident is about a French lady whom we had met in Almora at the house of a German painter. In the day that Jyotish Dada gave up his body and Ma was in a state of *samadhi*, the lady had come and sat down near Ma for a long time, with her eyes shut. At that time we had thought that she was Spanish, now we came to know that she is French and that she is married to an Englishman. She had brought him to India but he returned to England as he was unable to stay here. She stayed on and spends her time meeting *sadhus*

and saints. She has met Sri Aurobindo as also Sri Ramana Maharshi of South India.

When this lady went to Dehradun to meet Ma she met Hariram. Ma had already left Dehradun by then. The lady's name is Pentarose. The gist of what she told Hariram is this: "I have seen many *sadhus* but the completeness that I have seen in Ma is something that I have not seen elsewhere. In Almora when I sat near Ma who was immersed in *samadhi*, I felt that Ma's body had acquired an enormous size. Thinking that I was mistaken in my vision I opened my eyes and yet Ma's enormous form continued to fill my sight. After some time a glow as brilliant as the rays of the Sun emerged from Ma's body; after paling down, the glow entered my body. I began trembling—Ma looked at me and I gazed back at her; then I became quieter. There was a large crowd of people. After this there occurred a change in my condition. I believe that Ma is 'Paravidya'. I have seen the forms of Durga, Kali and Tara within myself and I worship Tara. I feel that Ma is Tara herself. I shall obey whatever instructions Ma gives me."

Hariram had allowed her to sit in the *mauna* room in Dehradun. She had a beautiful experience there. She said, "I saw Ma there again—in a large form with arms spread out, calling out to all, as if she were saying, 'Why are you all roaming outside? Come within me. Come into the Kingdom within.'"

When she heard from Hariram that Kamala Nehru used to visit Ma whom she held in great reverence she said, "A French friend of mine who knew Kamala Nehru told me that Kamala Nehru had once told him that she could always see a Mataji in front of her eyes. She had told that friend a great deal about Mataji which he had recounted to me. At that time I wondered who this Mataji was and felt that if I could get her *darshan* once

I would feel blessed. Now I realize that Mataji is none other than Anandamayī Ma. I shall write to my French friend about this."

In a letter that this lady has written to Ma, which Hariram brought with him, her beautiful devotion and attitude are revealed. She wants to live with Ma for a few days to perform *sedhana* and is willing to live according to Ma's instructions. She has written that she would make arrangements to follow Ma regardless of where Ma lives—on top of a mountain or by the seashore.

There is another incident that I would like to recount—today as soon as we returned to the Sri Krishna temple Ma looked towards the road and said, "Chatterjee Baba is going out for a walk. Tell him to inform my Ma (that is, his wife) that we have come." This gentleman does not visit Ma often but his wife has become extremely attached to Ma though she has known Ma for just two or three days. So we now began discussing how we should call Chatterjee *moshai*; meanwhile, Ma stood on the second floor and called out to him herself, "Baba, please tell my Ma that we have come!" He replied, "She may visit you just now."

Their home was close by and in a little while Mrs Chatterjee had arrived. Hearing that Ma would leave the very next day she began weeping like a child. Finally she said, "I could not understand Ma—my mind was assailed by doubts and then the doubts would all flow past. I cannot understand Ma properly. On the day before you went to Dakor I prayed fervently that I should have a vision of Ma in the form of Sri Krishna. I had spoken to Ma at length. The next day she left for Dakor. I felt so sad that I was surprised at the intensity of my own feelings!

Actually I never bow down before anybody. Whatever I do not like I never say I do only because someone tells me to say so. Whatever that may be, that day I was in such a state

that I repeatedly committed mistakes while cooking—I poured oil into the vegetable instead of water and washed my hands with oil—these sorts of blunders. My heart was in agony because of being separated from Ma. Seeing my state my husband tried to talk me out of it in many ways—but of what help was that? I made an excuse of a headache and lay down in a room.

I kept repeating the name of God when suddenly I saw—Sri Krishna had placed one foot on Ma's head and seemed to wonder on whom he was to place his other foot. Seeing this form I was reminded of Ma and I realized that this was all Ma's doing. A moment later that form had vanished. I prayed, 'Ma, show me that form just once more!' But then I could see it no more and a keen desire to see that form again remained in my mind. I repeated, 'Ma, show me the form once more.' But I could not see it again. What was all this?

I asked, "Did you see all this in your dream?" She replied, "If I had seen it in my dream I would not have come to this *dharmashala*. It was a real experience."

As she did not have her husband's permission she had not taken *diksha*. She had known Ma only for a short time. She had only been conversing with Ma placidly every time she came, but today she wept like a child for a long time. She has no children. Ma told her, "I am your child. Therefore you weep for me."

Friday, November 8

Today we finished eating and set out from the *dharmashala* by ten a.m. At Gaya Gate station, four miles from Baroda, we boarded a train at eleven a.m. We changed trains to reach Chandode by three p.m. We reached the banks of the Narmada and went by boat to Karnali. We reached before

sunset and visited the Manohar Muralidhar temple there. The priest of the temple, Sri Gopalrao Balakrishnaji, had been given a letter from Dikshit. This place is situated at a distance of two miles from Chandode on the banks of the Narmada. The spot was beautiful with a *dharmashala* surrounding the Muralidhar temple. Nothing much is available here; all necessary items had to be brought from Chandode. *Khichdi* was cooked at night. Ma ate some boiled vegetables. We slept by midnight.

Saturday, November 9

Yesterday we learnt that it is the tradition here to stay at this place for three or four days. The priest extended accommodation to us with great courtesy. He told Ma, "Stay here. I shall very soon make all necessary arrangements." We occupied two or three rooms spread on the ground floor and the first floor. The people accompanying Ma were Bholanath, Akhandananda Swami, Hariram, Dadamoshai, Didima, Ruma Devi, Naresh Babu and I.

Sunday, November 10

This place is very quiet. The temple stands on the banks of the Narmada. Another *dharmashala* is also situated close by. Some householders stay nearby. Vessels and other necessary items can be borrowed from the temple or the *dharmashala*. On payment, servants are also made available; we do not experience any particular inconvenience. One shop sells provisions like rice and *dal*, but vegetables and other items have to be transported from Chandode. The *brahmacharis* of Vishnudas temple came from Chandode to see Ma. They asked why she had not visited their temple. The Mahant of the temple had regretted it and had sent word. Ma's body is very weak and yet she keeps moving about. At night while con-

versing Ma suddenly laughed and wept as suddenly. Seeing this we were all worried.

Monday, November 11

At nine a.m. Ma awoke. She was very grave and the surroundings were also looking utterly peaceful. At eleven a.m., after a meal, Ma lay down to rest. Last night Ma suffered a stomach upset and she sat quietly for a long time—then she slept for the rest of the night. At two p.m. a *brahmachari* from Ahmedabad came to meet Ma. He offered flowers and fruit at her feet and then offered *pranama*. On enquiring we found that he had been living in an *ashram* on the banks of the Narmada for the past thirty years. His name is Ramanlal. He pressingy requested Ma to visit his *ashram*. As soon as he saw Ma he remarked, "Oh! I am seeing Narmada Herself. I am receiving your *darshan* as the result of many meritorious deeds. Even places of pilgrimage long for the sight of *sadhus* and *mahatmas*. Therefore I pray that you stroll along the banks of the Narmada and bequeath your gracious gaze all along. My *ashram* is close by." At six p.m. Ma got up and sat on a terrace next door. She conversed with devotees who were present. Before sunset I fed Ma some boiled vegetables.

Tuesday, November 12

At ten a.m. I woke Ma and washed her face. I then fed her *roti* and vegetables. Ma sat up and talked to Naresh Babu.

Around four p.m. when all were conversing with Ma the topic of Ramna Ashram came up. In Bajitpur Bholanath had once said, "I wish to build a house." Ma had immediately responded, "You have a house of your own. The house belonging to so and so in Dhaka is yours." She then mentioned the name of the owner of a house in Dhaka. Later when the Ramna Ashram was built an examination of the title deeds of

the owner showed that a man having the same name had once owned that spot.

In one corner of Ma's little room, to the South, a coconut tree sapling had been planted to provide for the pot during *Kali puja*. This had been done according to Ma's instructions. In connection with that Ma now said, "Some incidents occurred related to that which are known to Bhupati Babu. You can ask him about them." When the temple was being constructed many *samadhis* were uncovered as the spot was being dug to lay the foundation. Three *samadhis* were found under the temple and one in a corner outside the temple. Below the idol of Shiva was a *samadhi* in the sitting position. Swami Akhandananda had picked up a bone from the spot and told Ma, "Ma, may I keep this with Ma?" Ma had replied, "It may not be taken into the home of a householder, therefore it would not be right to take it." In connection with that incident Ma now said, "Many others were present—but it was Baba who went and picked up that bone—again it was he who installed Shiva at that spot." So saying she laughed. Who knows the implication of this statement?

Once Ma was lying on a blanket in a small room in Ramna Ashram while Bholanath was comfortably asleep on a cot, with a mosquito net. This was at a time when Ma had just recovered from an illness and Bholanath was unwell and they had just gone to Ramna Ashram. Suddenly in the middle of the night Ma sat up and told Bholanath, "Get up and sleep on my bedding while I sleep on yours." Bholanath obeyed with the effect that Ma slept with head pointing northward and Bholanath slept with his head pointing southward. Ever since, Ma has always slept in that direction. Now Ma's photograph has been placed at that spot. Ma slept on that bedding for three days. Then she had it removed and lay down on a blanket

spread on the ground. From then onward, both Ma and Bholanath slept on a blanket each. Later when Ma sat there she saw the skeletal form of a person and also saw his *samadhi* in the northern direction. It was later revealed that that was a body possessed by Jyotish Dada in a previous birth. The *samadhi* of Jyotish Dada's previous birth was found exactly at the spot where Ma's bedding was spread.

At three p.m. today the *brahmachari* whom we met today, Ramanlalji, came to take Ma to his *ashram*. A lady came with him. She is his disciple. She has constructed the *ashram* for her *guru*. Her parents also live in the *ashram* with her *guru*. The name of the *ashram* is Ramanikashram. She hails from Bombay. She left her husband seven or eight days after her wedding and turned to this life. Therefore Ramanlalji says she is an incarnation of Mira Bai.

They took Ma and all of us to their *ashram*. The *ashram* was very beautiful, right on the banks of the Narmada. All the residents lived on the ground floor. The first floor had two rooms and a terrace which were reserved for *sadhus* to live in. A Gita Mandir belonging to Swami Vidyananda (who propounds the Gita) is right next to this *ashram*. The temple that we are living in is surrounded by *dharmashalas* occupied by many people. Whosoever wishes to live on the banks of the Narmada has to give a monthly rental of one rupee and can live here for the whole lifetime. In Chandode there is plenty of accommodation in Takamji's temple and Vishnudasji temple (where we are put up). We heard that along this length of the river, the greatness of Narmada and Ranachhoda Raiji are particularly tangible. We spent some time in the Ramanikashram and then left. The *brahmachari* took us all around, showing us the place where he sits for *sadhana*. He felt very happy about Ma's visit.

Ma returned and sat on the small terrace, conversing with those present. After four p.m., in the course of conversation, the subject of Jyotish Dada's *sannyas* in Manasarovar came up. Ma said to me, "You know about my necklace which was given to Sharada in Dehradun. Later when I went to Dehradun for a day from Solan, the topic of Jyotish's health came up and I told him, 'You may put the necklace around your neck.' I had told him, 'You may put on the necklace' not 'Keep it on, do not take it off'. On hearing me say that he put that necklace around his neck."

"Before I reached Manasarovar he had taken off his clothes, bathed and then spoken to Bholanath without wearing any clothes. On Bholanath's instructions, he had put on warm clothing. As soon as I reached he went with me to Manasarovar and after telling me all that he wanted to, he placed the necklace and his sacred thread at my feet. He did not recollect then that I had asked him to keep the necklace on. See what a coincidence it was! He forgot everything at that moment. I remembered that but kept absolutely quiet about it for whatever has to happen will happen for sure. Therefore, perhaps, the casual statement, 'You may wear it' had emerged from my lips."

"Whatever that was, Jyotish then began telling me, 'I am feeling thus'. I saw that an intense feeling of renunciation had enveloped his entire being. He fell at my feet saying, 'Tell Baba, I want to go away. Give me leave to go'. I observed an *avadhuta bhava*, a feeling of disinterest in worldly things manifested in him. I also heard that after bathing he stood naked and repeated the *sannyasa mantra* that he chose on his own from his knowledge of scriptural texts and the words of saints. I knew that he was aware of all these. In many places, observing his spirit of renunciation many *sannyasis* wished

to give him the *sannyasa diksha*. I also observed that his effulgence was very intense and beautiful. Yet seeing this *bhava* I said, 'At this moment you just come with me.' Hearing this he fell silent."

"Following me, Jyotish said, 'I have a request to make. If you allow me, I shall observe *mauna* from right now.' I replied, 'No it will not be alright to start observing *mauna* in the middle of the journey.' As we walked along I told him, 'Today, since you have taken *sannyasa* in this manner and have expressed a desire to start *mauna* in the midst of these mountains (*parvat*) your name henceforth is Maunananda Parvat.' "

"This body was strolling up and down the shore of the Manasarovar looking at it. Just as invocations and *mantras* emerge from this body, so did the *sannyasa mantra* now emerge continuously and so did other incantations. It was all spontaneous. This body walked to and fro, absorbed in its own *bhava*. Meanwhile it was observed that Jyotish was following close behind. He ran and fell at my feet declaring, 'I have obtained it! My fortune is great!' and he accepted the *sannyasa mantra* on his own. He said, 'What has been uttered by you is the *sannyasa mantra* itself.' After this we went to the tent. When I told Bholanath about what had happened he said, 'When I went there and looked for Jyotish I could not find him and you all had not reached either. When I went to the Manasarovar in search of him I found that Jyotish had bathed, discarded all his clothes in the waters of the lake and was standing stark naked. Seeing me he fell at my feet. He had even taken off his sacred thread. Renouncing everything he said, 'Give me leave, I shall go away.' Then I told him, 'Your mother and Swamiji have not reached as yet. What is this you are doing? Put on your clothes and come with me.' Then he followed me to the tent and we met you on the way."

After this, on the way to Rakshasa Tal Ma had told Jyotish Dada, "You did not even hint earlier about this deed that you have accomplished, nor did you ask me about it." In reply Jyotish Dada had said, with tear filled eyes, "*Have you left me with any independent desire of my own? And the very aim of all of us who have taken refuge in your feet is to attain the state of self realization. If any body is able to go in that direction it should please you. So what shall I ask in this connection? That we do not understand it, is regretful. I know for sure that whatever I do is what you make me do. Therefore what is the use of questioning? Other than this, my mind was swept by such a swift current of bhava that I could not contain myself.*"

Ma said, "I saw that he spoke truly, he was in a state of complete renunciation. The *bhava* was that of *vidwat sannyasa*. *Avadhuta bhava* was being manifested. That is real *sannyasa*—he did not need any outward initiation. Therefore after his death, the idea of constructing a *samadhi* for him emerged from this body. Yet at that moment I asked for the advice of the two *sadhus* of the Ramakrishna Mission who were present, 'See, these are the incidents that have occurred. You perform the rites that would be traditionally correct. I am not learned and so I shall not say anything.' One of them who heard all the facts said, 'His *sannyasa* was taken in all propriety. Therefore he should be given a *samadhi*.'"

"On the return journey Jyotish had asked, 'How should I do *japa* of what I had accepted on my own as well as what I obtained from lips? I realize that they are both the same, yet I ask.' By coincidence, *sannyasis* were present at that moment. I replied, 'You must keep what you have taken on your own, and you must also constantly remember what you have got from us.' Because of this, perhaps, he uttered those words and conveyed that he remembered them."

I have preserved that necklace as Ma's memento.

Wednesday, November 13

Ma awoke at nine a.m. When I asked her to wash her face she said, "Later." She sat quietly for a long time. Around ten a.m. I washed her face and hands and made her eat some food. Ma is hardly able to digest any food nowadays. She suffers from stomach ache and eats very little. Even that is not properly digested. I have also noted carefully that the rate of Ma's breathing keeps changing all the time. We do not pay attention to that, do not feed her at the right time and therefore cause upsets in her digestion.

Today Ma did not lie down for a long time after her meal. Sitting up she conversed on various topics. Referring to the image of Kali in Ramna Ashram she said, "Some people have been assailed by the doubt as to what should be done if some limb of an image of Kali were to break. The solution to that is, 'The human body has certain parts without which life is impossible. If any such part of an image breaks, the doors are shut, the walls are removed and the worship discontinued. Otherwise worship should go on as before.' When burglars stole the jewelry adorning the Kali image and broke the hand of the idol, Jyotish Dada had written to the pandits in Kashi asking for their advice as to whether that image of Kali could be worshipped or not. He had written all the details to the pandits in Kashi.

"Mahamahopadhyaya Anandacharan Tarkachoodaman of Kashi had written, 'The normal practice is to immerse a broken idol into water, but this idol has been installed by a Mahapurusha. Scriptural texts injunct that in such a case it is best to do whatever the Mahapurusha desires.' " Ma reiterated, "If your mother or father were to lose a limb would you immerse her or him into water?" In obedience to Ma's

instructions the broken hand of the Kali idol was fixed by brahmins. In connection with this matter Ma made yet another comment, "The responsibility of opening the door of that Kali temple is with Yogesh Babu. Many have wondered who would open the door in his absence. In response to that it has been stated that Yogesh Babu or any of his relatives could do the job. His sons or Suren Babu's sons or any other relatives could do this work."

Around eleven p.m. Ma lay down. Hariram, Naresh Babu and two or three of us were still conversing. Suddenly, Ma's stomach ache worsened. Naresh Dada said, "Ma, why does this happen to you? Please remove the pain." Ma laughed and said, "Do I remove any of you that I should be removing this? Just as you are here so is this pain also here." Naresh Dada asked, "Can that be so? What is this pain like that you compare it with us?" Ma replied, "I speak the truth, these are also a part of my being. How do I remove them. The pain lasted for a long time and then abated. Ma could not lie still for a long time.

Thursday, November 14

Today again Ma rose at nine a.m. Even after *bhoga* was offered, she remained seated. Two widows had come to see Ma. A Gujarati Mataji by name Svayam Jyoti lived here in her ashram and these two are her disciples. These two women, another woman and other women disciples of this Mataji live in the ashram. One of the two, named Shiva Jyoti, is now installed as a successor to their Guru Mata. They spoke to Ma for some time and at the time of leaving they requested Ma to visit their ashram. They said that they would come at five p.m. to take Ma. These people have been living in an ashram on the banks of the Narmada for the past nineteen or twenty

years. While leaving they told us, "Please send word to us if you need anything at anytime. The aim of our lives is to serve *sadhus* and *mahatmas*. Everything in our *ashram* belongs to you," and so on. They requested Ma, "Please take the three of us with you. We shall live with you and serve you."

Gangacharan Babu has taken up a job in Baroda state after retiring from service in Calcutta. Yesterday Hariram Babu had gone there. Those people are longing for Ma's *darshan* but at the moment she does not have the inclination to go anywhere.

Some children came around four p.m. and took Ma to Svayam Jyoti *ashram*. It was very beautiful. Ma sat in the verandah for a long time. We returned by sunset. Ma sat on the small terrace. Moonlight was spreading and the Narmada was visible. Here, other than temples and *ashrams* there are no places of habitation including homes of householders. With large trees all around the spot is most enchanting. The residents of this *ashram* had not yet been to see Ma. Now gradually they all began arriving for her *darshan*. As we were returning from Svayam Jyoti *ashram* they surrounded Ma and began doing *pranama*; on their lips were the same comments, "This Mataji who has come to stay at the Manohar Muralidhar temple is a person worth seeing. Such a form is not normally seen." People arrived and chanted, 'Ma Maheshwari', 'Ma Narmade' and offered their *pranama*.

Friday, November 15

Today Rukmini Bai of Baroda arrived for Ma's *darshan*. She could spend only three or four hours as she was compelled to return to Baroda due to some important work. Though she did not have enough time on hand she had come running to have Ma's *darshan*. Ma's stomach ache persisted

but was intermittent. She did not lie down for long in the afternoon. Sometimes when she is in the mood to lie down she remains stretched on her bedding most of the day; at other times, she has practically no inclination to lie down and on such days she remains seated all the time. At those times, even if she lies down, 'the body does not feel alright' and so she gets up. By Ma's grace Ruma Devi is experiencing different *bhavas* and having visions of many forms.

I have noted one point—when someone comes to Ma and talks about his or her religious experiences saying, "Ma, I experience such inspirations and see such forms", Ma listens attentively, does not in any way damage their existing *bhava*; instead, she actually encourages them. After some days she gradually starts explaining that even higher states exist and that our own desires sometimes appear to be divine inspiration. The accompanying state of inertness appears to be *samadhi*. Ma explains all this slowly and calmly. Today such a topic came up for discussion. Ma said, "One should muse over one's condition carefully and find out if it is possible for divine inspiration to appear in that condition. Is this really divine inspiration or merely a figment of one's imagination? These matters have to be thought over carefully. Again, if different kinds of supernatural powers appear and block the path of progress, it is best to remove them with a detached outlook. That would clear the path to further progress."

Before sunset Ma was taken to the terrace. She spends almost the whole day seated on her bedding. She had already been made to eat food suitable for an ailing person. Late in the night she lay down on her bedding. She sang a song about Sri Ramachandra. Then the topic of Sri Krishna came up. Naresh Dada was speaking about *madhura* (sweet) *bhava*. Ma remarked instantly, "*Madhura bhava* is only revealed of its

own accord—that is a special experience. Does one have the right to understand it unless a high level of *samadhi* is attained? The final stage or result of completion of the peaceful (*shanta*), serving (*dasya*), friendly (*sakhyā*) parental affection (*vatsalya*) and other *bhavas* in this *madhura bhava*. In *samadhi* the sense organs (*indriyas*) are offered as oblations. Therefore it is natural for the *madhura bhava* to be manifested in the *sadhaka* at that stage for it is beyond the senses (*atindriya*). Hence Radha-Krishna engage in the divine sport of love. That is something which occurs at their level. Worldly people have cast their own perceptions across this *bhava* and turned it into something totally different. We hear some people saying that they do not approve of the Radha-Krishna *bhava*. It is said that *rishis* took on the role of the *gopis* (cowherdresses). Naresh Dada, on hearing this, said, "Ma, I have read that when Rama went to the forest sixteen thousand *rishis* wanted to meet Rama in the form of their husband (*pati bhava*). Objecting to that Rama said, 'How can that be? I am monogamous. Sita alone is my wife.' The *rishis* then replied, 'We have been waiting for your arrival. We want to perform *madhura bhava lila* with you.' Then Ramachandra said, 'Please wait a little longer. In the Dwaparayuga at the time of Krishna *avatara* (Incarnation) your desire shall be fulfilled. You can then take birth as *gopis* and taste *madhura rasa*.'"

Then in connection with Sankhya and Vedanta, the subject of Maya in Vedanta was raised. Naresh Dada said, "In Vedanta Maya is not explained. Maya is described as beginningless and endless and left at that." Ma kept quiet at that moment. Suddenly she laughed and murmured to herself, "Many means 'Mai Aya'. That means that so long as the 'Mai' (I) exist, Many exists. Only when the 'Mai' (I) is

relinquished is *advaita* (nonduality) experienced. At that moment Maya ceases to exist."* This conversation went on till one a.m. after which we all slept.

Ma is being fed with a little rice or *roti* with boiled tomatoes and vegetables. In the night she is given sago cooked in milk. She is being fed as if she were a baby.

Saturday, November 16

Ma got up at eight thirty a.m. and sat quietly and steadily for a long time. So much so that I did not have the courage to ask her, while she was in that state, whether I could wash her face. After observing a slight change in her expression at the end of half an hour, I said, "Ma, come to wash your face." Ma replied, "A little later." After some time, around ten a.m. Ma's face was washed and she was made to eat rice with vegetable gravy. Ma is unable to eat any spiced curry. The quantity she eats is very little. After eating she sat on her bedding. We went one by one and ate *prasada*.

Ma spoke to Naresh Dada in the afternoon. After completing my work I went and sat with them. Naresh Dada was saying, "Chaitanya Dev's *bhava* of mine and thine which was beyond thought, is the best *bhava* for enjoying the taste of *rasa*. It is the ultimate in man's domain of thought. It does not seem as if many has attained any *bhava* more beautiful than this. The explanation of Shankaracharya's *advaita* philosophy does not satiate one's heart! Ma was lying quietly with her face turned the other way and Naresh Dada had been addressing these remarks to me. As soon as she heard this argument against Shankaracharya's philosophy,

* *Atankara grahanmuktaha svarupamupapadyate*

Chandravat vimalaha purnaha sahanandahe svayamprabhaha

— Vivekachoodamani (Shankaracharya)

Ma turned over and said, "How will anyone understand something about which he knows nothing?" Observing Ma's manner of speaking Naresh Dada jumped at the opportunity and spoke delightedly, "Ma, why did you react in this manner at the mention of Shankaracharya? This means that you are definitely partial to Shankaracharya's views. Your comment has made me come to a particular conclusion which I will not reveal right now." Hearing this Ma laughed in her characteristically sweet manner. I said, "Why now, when Sri Krishna was being discussed yesterday Ma lay quietly. Then she turned around suddenly and explained the real essence of Krishna, that means Ma's partiality towards Krishna is not any less either." Naresh Dada enthused even further, "Oh! I understand some more now. A particular point in connection with Ma, has now been sorted out in my mind. I shall reveal that at the appropriate moment."

At four p.m. I made Ma drink fruit juice. As soon as the sun went down a little, I took her to the small terrace. Conversations took place. Before sunset I made her eat sago cooked in milk. She did not want to eat at all. Her stomach aches now and then—at times it even appears that she pays no attention to the pain. Thus it goes on. Bholanath also came and sat on the terrace. Akhandananda Swami, Naresh Dada, Dada moshai and I were around Ma, some seated, some standing. Now and then some topic was discussed, in between we remained silent.

The conversation turned to the eccentric Harakumar of Bajitpur. Ma said, "I never spoke to him. I would pull on my veil. But he was always attentive about everything that I required. He took special care to see that I was not inconvenienced in any way. Neighbours did not approve of his conduct perhaps, but he did not care about them. He would

do his utmost to remedy any worldly discomforts that I experienced. He would speak to me but I would not speak to him and he often expressed his grief about that. Finally when Bholanath asked me to speak to him I did speak." Turning to Naresh Dada she said, "Your face resembles Harakumar's."

Some time later Bholanath got up to go for his meal. Food was cooked downstairs. Bholanath, Akhandananda Swami and Dada moshai lived in one room. Ma was staying in a room upstairs. Didima, Naresh Dada and I slept near Ma. Everyone went downstairs to eat while I sat near Ma fanning her. Naresh Dada finished eating and came upstairs with Didima. It was about nine p.m. and Ma was still seated on the terrace. It was a moonlit night and very quiet all around. This temple was situated on the banks of the Narmada. We could see the river as we chatted with Ma. Many topics were discussed.

Naresh Dada is near Ma all the time. He hardly gets up unless it is very necessary. He tells Ma many things. His attitude is beautiful—such an attitude is rarely found in this world. Ma also praises him greatly. He is a disciple of Sharadeshwari Mata and is a native of Mymensingh. He is a professor in Calcutta. Conversations went on late into the night. Ma got up and we also came indoors. Ma lay down.

Sunday, November 17

Last night Ma did not lie down quietly but began singing a song where she lay, 'Build a boat of Hari's Name, brother, Look at the sky, there is no time to be lost.' (*Hari namer tori bandho bhai, dekho gagane aar bela nai*). Even after that she did not sleep steadily. All conversation ceased and we fell asleep. Suddenly I woke up to find that Ma had gone to the terrace. All of us woke up and on seeing us Ma came and lay down again,

but she spent the whole night in that mood. She just could not lie down quietly. Sometimes she is like this and at other times we have observed that she remains lying down wrapped in a sheet, through the night and day. At times her condition is diametrically opposite to this. She says, "The body refuses to quieten down. A steady mood just does not exist." Ma lay as she was until late into the morning and got up only at nine thirty a.m. Then her face and hands were washed and she had *bhoga*. This afternoon also she showed no signs of resting and spoke to Naresh Dada. I joined them after some time. Many times I suggested, "Ma, lie down for awhile." Ma replied, "I do not feel like sleeping." The afternoon was spent thus.

The topic of investing women with the sacred thread came up in some context. Ma told Naresh Dada, "Khukuni was bathing me with soap in Kushari Babu's house in Calcutta when she took off my thin necklace, cleaned it with soap and put it back. But it slipped on and hung like a sacred thread. I had the *kheyala* to measure the necklace and said, 'Khukuni, have you noticed? This is exactly the same length as the sacred thread.' It seemed to measure exactly the same as the sacred thread prescribed in the Sama Veda—neither longer nor shorter. As I said I had the *kheyala* that it was indeed a sacred thread and I kept it worn in the fashion of a sacred thread over my shoulder. In the afternoon I was standing on the terrace when Kashi Babu arrived bare chested. I noticed that he wore no sacred thread. I asked him, 'What is this, why is there no sacred thread around your neck?' Slightly ashamed, he said, 'It broke some days ago. I asked so many people but no one makes me a new one.' I said, 'Just because no one is willing to make one for you, how can you go round without a sacred thread around your neck? Then the boys you have invested with sacred threads will

follow your example and cast off their sacred threads as well. For from you they will learn the lesson that a brahmin may very well live without his sacred thread. If that is so then what is the use of needlessly spending money on a sacred thread ceremony?' Hearing this he immediately took the three stranded thread from Bholanath's neck and put it around his own."

"This happened in the afternoon. After sunset the topic of the sacred thread came up again. My *kheyala* about the sacred thread at the time of my bath was being discussed. Late in the evening when all were seated together I told Kushari Babu's wife, 'Sister-in-law, here, take this sacred thread. Put this on for me.' So saying I placed my necklace in her hand. She put it around my neck. I said, 'Alright, I am now a *brahma-charini*. Now give me *vrata bhiksha* (alms)!' She tied money, precious stones and other things in the end of my *sari*. I told her, 'Now call the boys. Let me hear them recite the Gayatri. Whether I read or not, they will say it for me.' I then called the boys one by one. Not one of the boys who came had a sacred thread on. They were very ashamed. Everyone started saying that I had made such a scene only because I knew they were not wearing sacred threads. Later, however, Akhandananda Swami and some others repeated the Gayatri for me. The next day I said, 'Such deeds are performed in my case for only a short time. Till then I shall not see the face of a *shudra*.' I did that. Afterwards, all those who were present were given sacred threads. Thus did the *kheyala* about the sacred thread arise for the first time."

Conversing further Ma said, "See at one stage my right eye remained shut for three days and then opened." Once Ma's right arm had lost its ability to move. On being reminded of that Ma said, "Yes, it was paralysed for four months for a particular reason." On being pressed to tell us why, she

explained, "We were then on our way to Kashi from Tangail. Nandu had become one of us. His nature was childlike. He had said he would go with us but at the last moment he refrained. I asked him, 'You had said you would come with us, then why do you not come?' But he would not join us at any cost. Finally when my body behaved strangely he was afraid and stroking my right arm he said, 'Ma, I shall accompany you.' Then when my body returned to normal and we set out for Kashi, Nandu again refused to go. Ultimately, he really did not go. I had the *kheyala* that Nandu had held my right hand and given his word that he would go with us and then he did not, this was very inauspicious for him. But he did not realize that, nor did he possess the power to understand it. My right hand turned numb right then. To cut off the inauspiciousness, this *bhava* occurred. For four months the hand was paralysed."

Ma then told me, "Once in your house, Rayani (Manasi) *pūja* was performed for the welfare of Baba. At the time of the sacrifice, the goat's ear got lopped off. The priest was asked, 'What should be done when such a thing happens?' The priest could not reply with surety. This body said, 'If the goat's ear is cut when the sacrifice is performed is it not a defective offering?' You had taken this body to your house for three or four days during the *pūja*. While returning, when I was descending from the second floor of your house, I hurt my foot and broke some bones. The reason for that was, it was not known whether the ear of the goat got slit after its neck was fully cut or before, therefore there was a chance that the sacrificial offering was defective and this could lead to inauspicious occurrences. Therefore the error was borne by this body. I do nothing by my own will but whenever anyone does anything depending on this body and if there is a chance of ill fate for that person, it is borne by and manifested

within this body." These incidents reveal a special feature of Ma's character.

In the evening we sat on the terrace and talked. Again tonight, Ma, Naresh Dada, Didima and I were on the terrace till late in the night. Then Ma went and lay down on her bed but she could not sleep. Naresh Dada said, "Alright Ma, we people, in our ignorance, perform bad actions and useless actions and suffer. Do you not get pained by this? See this, when we see a small child eating mud, we immediately stop him and explain to him that it is not good to eat mud. If he tries to put his hand into fire we run to him and remove him from the spot. And here, you are the Mother and you either do not look at us or sit quietly even after watching us; why is this?" Ma laughed and replied, "But look again, haven't you all seen that when a small child goes to touch a burning lantern, the mother holds his hand and touches it lightly to the lantern so that he feels its heat. This teaches the child such a lesson that he never goes near the fire again. By giving him a little pain the mother saves him from much greater pain. Perhaps his ignorance would have made him burn his fingers in the flame. So the mother just heated his fingers and saved him from a more serious accident."

Tonight again Ma was not in the mood to sleep indoors. At midnight she lay down for some time but she could not lay still for long.

Monday, November 18

As soon as Ma awoke, the Mahant of the Tikamji temple in Chandode arrived and did *pranama*. He requested Ma to visit the Tikamji temple. We had stayed in this Mahant's temple in Chandode. Ma said, "I had the *kheyala* to come to the banks of the Narmada and stay for a few days. That is why I am here.

Whenever the daughter desires, she will go to her father's house." Mahant Maharaj said, "Ma, you are Devi Narmada Herself. Then why do you need to have Narmada *darshan*? If you stay in Chandode I can look after you all the time. That is not possible if you stay here because this place is about a mile away. There you will suffer no inconveniences whatsoever." But Ma expressed her resolution to stay on here. Finally he requested, "Whenever you feel like it, please do come to Chandode," and left.

Yesterday two men came and told us that a *panda* in Chandode owns a house in Karnali and that he has requested that Ma should stay in it. To ensure that Ma is comfortable he wants to leave the whole house at Ma's disposal. He considers it his good fortune if Ma were to stay with all her companions in that house. This *panda* had come for Ma's *darshan* once. We were not surprised to hear about his pressing invitations for we have witnessed many such doings by Ma. Within a day's acquaintance people become eager to serve Ma. The men were told that Ma does not live in the homes of householders.

Maharashtrian and Gujarati people have been coming for Ma's *darshan*. They cannot follow much conversation. They only have *darshan*, offer fruits and sweets and do *pranama* repeatedly saying, "Ma Narmade!", "Ma Maheshwari!", Bhagavath *path* went on for seven days in the Gita temple here. At that time a big crowd gathered to bathe at the confluence of the rivers Narmada and Aud. Naresh Dada said, "Ma, you fold your palms and tell each one, 'You are my father, I am your little child'. This sweet talk decreases their inflated egos. Many *sadhus* and *sannyasins* display inflated egos. They feel you may also have such pride and therefore they begin speaking to you haughtily. But finally when they hear you

say, 'I am a child, I know nothing', and observe your humble attitude, they melt completely." Hearing this Ma laughed.

This afternoon Bholanath told me, "Your Ma has a 'Barber's stain' in her paternal lineage. He said this jokingly and began laughing. Later Dadamoshai and Didima related the anecdote to me. One of Dadamoshai's ancestors was a pandit called Kalikant Visharad. He was a great scholar but worshipped a little girl belonging to the barber's caste. He saw his favourite deity in that girl and took her with him wherever he went. This roused all kinds of gossip about Kalikant Visharad who was said to carry a barber's girl on his shoulders wherever he went. But he did not care for such gossip.

Once a meeting of pandits took place in a house in Vidyakut where pandits from Kashi had gathered as invitees. Kalikant Visharad, who was also invited, arrived with the barber's girl. Visharad never answered a single question without first consulting the girl. A pandit from Kashi asked Visharad a question. When Visharad asked the girl before answering, she said, "Tell him that his mouth is unclean. How can his questions be answered?" This made everyone curious.

To test the truth of the statement water and a spittoon were brought. The pandit from Kashi gargled his mouth and spat into the spittoon—the water did contain a grain of rice. All were amazed, and they regarded the girl with some degree of respect. Yet, people are ruled by the edicts of society. When Kalikant Visharad once invited some people to his house, not one agreed to go there as he worshipped a barber girl. Finally after much persuasion they agreed to eat there and the brahmins sat down in a row to be served. At one stage the barber girl arrived to serve the curds. Some objected aloud, some left half way through their meals but many observed the

radiance of Goddess Kali in the girl. After that day all people revered and respected that girl.

This afternoon Dadamoshai began singing a song. Ma sat near him and sang with him. The song went like this—

Radha mama prana Radha mama jnana Radha mama
dhyana Radha mama sara.

Premamayi Radha Radha andha adha Radha nama
sadha badha nahi tar.

Ami divasa rajani Radha nama dhvani Kari matra
jani Radha muladhar.

Radha adya shakti Radha bhakti mukti Radha
anurakti bhakta Shri Radhar.

Shri Radhika yantri diksha Radha mantre Kari
banshi yatne naya randhre phutkar.

Shey tantra sa re ga ma pa dha ni saptama
Alap samyame baje sahsrar.

The song means—Radha is my life, Radha is my knowledge, Radha is my meditation, Radha is everything to me. Radha is the embodiment of love, Radha is blinded with love, there is nothing to stop me from taking the name of Radha. I repeat the name of Radha day in and day out because Radha is the basic foundation of everything. Radha is primordial energy, the devotee of Radha attains liberation through love of Radha. In the Instrument of Sri Radha, I take initiation with the *mantra* of Radha and blow into the nine holes of the flute. In that *tantra*, with discipline, the seven notes sa, re, ga, ma, pa, dha, ni are played in a tune in the *sahasrara*.

Conversation was started after this song. Naresh Dada had us all impressed with his variety of topics for conversation. He is simple and pure at heart. Ma also appreciates him greatly and says, "For some reason, though he has such an aptitude for spiritual life, he is still living in *samsara*." As on

other days Ma was made to eat sago cooked in milk and then taken to the terrace. Ma hardly walks at all, except to the toilet. Today she had gone downstairs and sat in front of the temple. Till nine p.m. she sat on the terrace and then went indoors to lie down. Then she began conversing with Naresh Dada. Tonight again she was in no mood to sleep.

Tuesday, November 19

Ma awoke in the morning. The priest's wife made Ma drink some milk. Then I washed Ma's face and hands. After *bhoga* Ma talked to those present right through the afternoon. Naresh Dada and I spent all our time near Ma, speaking to her. In between, Swami Akhandananda, Bholanath and Dadamosai would also join in. Today Ma sang the following two songs with Dadamosai—

Ami ki tar sang chhada hai—Ye jana katar prane
dake amay Ma kai, Ma kai?

Haridaye jagaye tare, name prana makha thake, Aar kichho
na dekhe chokhe, eyi brahmande ama bai.

Anya katha kaya na mukhe, Vyathita haya se vyathitha dekhe.
Saman thake sukhe dukhe, loker ninda shune kai?

Shishu jeman make dake Ma dake tar ankhi jhare.

Pari ke aar thakte dure, emni eshe kole lai.

Manamohaner mana durachar, shishur mato svabhav kai tar.

Ma daker aar nal parabar Ma amar (thik) ami Mar kai.

Meaning—Do I ever have his company? That person who cries pitifully, 'Where is Ma? Where is Ma?', who keeps Her awake in his heart, whose life is steeped in Her Name, who with his eyes sees nothing in this universe except Ma, who speaks about none else with his lips, who sorrows at the sorrow of another, who remains unperturbed by joy and sorrow, who

On our request she got up from the *asana*. Naresh Dada was surprised to see this *bhava* and he told Ma, "Ma, the more I see you the more amazed I feel, no one else can tie you down to any norm. Living with you I am learning this lesson."

Today again we sat on the terrace till late into the moonlit night. Naresh Dada put his head on Ma's feet and repeated all sorts of prayers as if he were in a trance. Some Maharashtrian ladies had come for Ma's *darshan* during the day. One of them had circumambulated the Narmada river. It had taken her four years. The circumambulation is done by traversing a route which is dotted with villages where free accommodation is available.

Wednesday, November 20

Ma arose around eleven a.m. I washed her hands and face. After some conversation *bhoga* was offered and this was again followed by conversation with Naresh Dada. At night Ma sat on her bedding with Naresh Dada seated near her and Didima lying close by. As many topics were discussed, a change was apparent in Ma's *bhava*. Suddenly Naresh Dada put his head on Ma's lap and then lowered it to rest on her feet. He seemed worked up. After a long time he sat up and said that he had behaved thus because he had seen a white radiance like Shiva emerging from Ma's face and he could see the light vividly even now, therefore he was sitting steadily.

For a few moments he sat in that manner and I also sat quietly. Ma stopped speaking and sat with her eyes shut. A little later I said, "Naresh Dada, it is not right to sit for long in this way. Ma's *bhava* could change significantly." We both called out to Ma but she did not reply and remained seated in that position. After some time Ma seemed to stretch open her

eyelids and spoke in an indistinct voice, "I am quite alright, I am just sitting this way; I could hear you calling but no sound would emerge from my mouth." I said, "Ma, now lie down for awhile." Ma said, "Alright" and lay down.

Thursday, November 21

Today again Ma awoke very late. When I asked whether I should wash her face, she answered "Not yet. This body cannot function according to your organised daily schedule. At times it does not function at all, you must have observed. This body cannot eat, sit or lie down at regular intervals day after day. What can I do, tell me?" She remained seated after saying this. In the course of conversation mention was made of the history of Ramna ashram and Siddheshwari. Ma began narrating and we listened to her enchanted. Around one p.m. Ma bathed. Yesterday when Naresh Dada and I had talked of Ma's having a bath she had said, "Let us see tomorrow." Ma was then given a bath and then *bhoga* at two p.m. After two p.m. her body began to behave strangely. I rubbed her back and stroked her body. Her eyes were shut. After some time when people arrived for *darshan* Ma opened her eyes but she remained lying down. Suddenly she said, "I have seen a terrible storm. As if I were in front of a lake. After some time the storm abated." I asked, "Ma, from which direction did the storm arise?" Ma laughed and said, "You can make your own estimate." Then she said, "Look, when Father had first told me, 'Take Hari's name, Hari is everything', I began repeating the name of Hari. Father was a Shakta (believer in Shakti) but because the name of Hari was uppermost in his mind he advised me thus. Later when I came to Bholanath he being a Shaiva and a Shakta instructed me accordingly and then such *kriyas* manifested themselves in this body. The fun of

It was that by a coincidence of events your Dadamoshai had advised the name of Hari and his Narayan chakra also came and resided in this *ashram*."

A police officer came and requested Ma to stay in a *math* on the banks of the Narmada. He was extremely keen to take Ma to Chandode. All of a sudden Ma declared, "Come, let us go to Chandode!" Around four p.m. we went with the police officer to Chandode and reached the *math* where the Dandi Swami began requesting Ma pressing to stay there. Ma replied, "If the daughter has the *kheyala* she will come to her father." The police officer wished to inform the *mahant* Ramratan of Tikamiji temple about Ma's arrival but Ma forbade that. The officer said, "If I do not tell him he will be cross with me for Mataji would have come and he would not have been informed." Then Ma said, "I shall go myself, you need not send word."

As we left the *math* I said, "Come, let us go to the Tikamiji temple." Ma said, "Let us go." As we neared the temple we received the information that the *mahant* had gone with the dewan of Rajpipla to Karnali for Ma's *darshan*. We came to the *ghat* and boarded the boat. Bhavani Shankar Panda, the police officer and some others came aboard with Ma. They were all very eager to make Ma comfortable but the marvel of it was that most of them had had Ma's *darshan* only once—that was the duration of their acquaintance! As we got on to the boat we saw the dewan returning. He came closer, boarded the boat on which Ma was seated, did *pranama* and said, "I went to Karnali for your *darshan*. I hear that the *mahant maharaj* has returned to Chandode by foot with a *brahmachari*. People began saying, 'Ma has gone and returned'. Hearing that the *mahant maharaj* will not be able to sleep tonight, Ma rejoined, "There we shall have an even better

meeting." Dewan sahib told Ma, "Fourteen miles from Rajpipla, on the banks of the Narmada, an idol of Ranachhodji was found buried underground. It was as tall as an adult human. That idol has been installed. If you wish to see that idol I shall make all arrangements as soon as you tell me when you would like to come." Ma replied, "We spoke of visiting the banks of the Narmada and our visit has come to pass as has our stay for some days. Later whatever happens is alright." All the people returned after leaving their boat at one spot and we also returned to Karnali.

At night we all sat down to eat. Bholanath's elder brother, Revati Babu, was mentioned and Ma narrated many anecdotes. At night Naresh Dada told Ma, "Ma, I am amazed when I think that your innermost *bhava* has always been steady, calm and peaceful. Yet, outwardly you perform so many *lilas*. Such a character is not visible anywhere else. I feel that you view everything as a witness like the *Purusha* in *Sankhya*. When you narrate incidents I watch you in amazement and think, 'Is it possible for two such contrary conditions to exist simultaneously in one and the same individual?' The more I watch, the more mystifying does it become." Saying this he kept his head on Ma's feet and did *pranama*. Tonight again conversation went on till late hour.

Friday, November 22

Naresh Dada, Dadamoshai and Didima were to leave by the three p.m. train for Calcutta. Last night Ma spoke about her *diksha*, "Look, if you were to view things externally, in those days leave aside hearing about *sadhus* and *mahatmas*, I had not even seen the picture of one. I had also seen very few pictures of gods and goddesses. I had only witnessed *puja* and observance of vows (*vrata*) with rituals at my father's

home. In Bholanath's house all that was not observed. So I had not seen many pictures of gods and goddesses nor had I witnessed many *pujas*. On the day of the *diksha* I was seated as usual. It was not that I heard the name in my ear. Just as speech emerges from the lips of a babe, so did the *mantra* blossom spontaneously within me. Other than this there was no *kriya* as a result of my will power. I observed that *japa* was being performed with the fingers of my hand. Many astonishing phenomena occurred spontaneously. That was a marvellous phase. *Asanas* were performed in a similar manner. Like the legs straightening out in rhythm with the inhalation and exhalation of breath. Then gradually many kinds of *asanas* were performed. The body remained seated steadily but *asanas* occurred one after the other. This was the kind of entertainment that went on." So saying Ma laughed.

Naresh Dada said, "Ma, I have read the biographies of many *mahapurushas* and seen many others, yet never have I heard one like this. We do not have the power to understand what you are. Declaring you as a god or goddess is belittling you."

With reference to the Ramna Siddheshwari *ashram* Ma said, "Bholanath's desire has been fulfilled. These places have been visited. He is being made to go places with the view of a seeker (*sadhaka*). With the same intention he was first made to spend twenty four hours in Ramna *ashram* in Dhaka and left behind there while we returned. Bholanath is not an ordinary person you know." Again in some other context she said, "Look, again perhaps when speaking to someone about his *samskaras* it is said you are like this and so on. He starts believing that about himself. But actually he is not that way at all. Do you know why that happens so often? Observing someone's behaviour perhaps he has been told, 'You have

such and such *samskaras* in you'. Then there is yet another likelihood. When a person worships a particular god the devotee is bound to imbibe some qualities of the god he worships. This body does not speak your kind of language, does it? Without understanding the meaning of my statements he assumes that he had been such and such earlier. He does not stop to think that had he been that way earlier his nature should have been similar now. In this fashion, in certain areas, you people grasp the wrong meaning of many a statement."

Today at nine a.m. Ma removed the cloth covering her face and sat up. Around eleven a.m. *bhoga* was offered after which Ma sat on her bedding. Naresh Dada and Bholanath came and sat beside her. She turned to me and asked, "Have you had lunch?" I replied, "Not yet." Ma said nothing. A little later I returned after eating lunch. I found that Naresh Dada had been sent downstairs so that Ma could speak to Bholanath alone. A few minutes later Bholanath came down and told me, "Your Ma has sent for you." When I went up Ma burst into laughter and said, "Let me first finish laughing and then I'll speak to you." I felt strangely disturbed and asked, "Are you sending me away with them as well?" Ma replied, "You go to Siddheshwari and spend some time there. Akhandananda will stay on with me." "So is that the arrangement?" I said and sat down where I was. Ma replied, "If I had told you earlier you would have got upset and perhaps not eaten, therefore I delayed telling you."

What could I do? At the appointed hour we all wiped away our tears and took leave. Ma said, "Why do you all weep? Should you cry for someone who laughs. Do you not see that I am laughing?" I wish to remain at Ma's feet, but Ma removes me from them. Seeing that I was feeling extremely distressed. Ma spoke to me, "You are being jolted hard from within and from without. What can you do? Now you have to

go on in this way. I desire your spiritual progress alone. Leave in peace." I did *pranama* and took leave of Ma. I reasoned that if Ma was really as hard-hearted as her outward acts appear to make her, we would not have wept for her, we would not even have gone to her. What appears to us as unjust and hard-hearted may have so many reasons behind it that are beyond our understanding and so we become unhappy with Ma's behaviour. But Compassionate Ma realises that, and yet she continues to do her duty for the welfare of the child. Ma came downstairs with us. She touched the feet of her father and mother and did *pranama*. Ma remained standing in the temple. We walked away slowly gazing back at her form again and again. Swamiji came with us till the boat, helped us to board it and returned. We went to Chandode by boat. We were to catch the five p.m. train to Baroda from where I would go to Dhaka via Kashi. Naresh Dada, Dadamoshai and Didima would go to Calcutta.

We reached Baroda and went to Manikchand's *dharma-shala* where we had stayed with Ma earlier. The memory of that stay was roused. Thinking of those days, Naresh Dada became aggrieved and said, "The incomparable wealth that I have brought from Ma can never be surpassed. We do not have the power to comprehend what Ma is. Ma has solved so many of my doubts, how can I ever explain them?" Tears flowed continuously from his eyes, he had many kinds of experiences. He is a highly educated, foreign returned individual who is himself very competent. But after coming to Ma, some very serious changes seem to have taken place in him both within and without. He had himself said, "Ma, I cannot live like this in Calcutta. There my temperament is westernised; my house and its decor also conform to that. But having come here I do not know what has happened to me." He express-

ed to us his experiences during his first meeting with Ma—"I had found exactly what I had been looking for till then." A highly spiritual attitude had blossomed in him since childhood.

Saturday, November 23

We left for Delhi at six a.m.

Sunday, November 24

We reached Delhi in the morning. Many of Ma's devotees had come to the station to see Dadamoshai and Didima.

By eleven p.m. we reached Kashi. Naresh Dada and the others proceeded to Calcutta.

Wednesday, November 27

Obeying Ma's orders I left Karnali and reached Kashi. Ma is training me to leave and proceed alone. I had been to Vindhyachal for a day. When I returned today I found a telegram from Akhandananda Swami saying that Ma had asked me to stay in Kashi. I could not understand why. It will take four or five days for Ma's letter to arrive. Till then I shall just have to stay on in Kashi.

I also received a letter from Swamiji in which he wrote that after I had left, they had gone to the *dharma-shala* of the Gita *mandir* belonging to Vidyananda Swami. As there was not enough space, separate cooking was not possible and *prasada* was being sent from the temple. But the people in charge had said they would make arrangements very soon. Swamiji had written, "Do not worry about me for my needs are few and so I am not inconvenienced at all. If I can serve Ma in any way I shall consider myself blessed." Truly, even in his advanced age, he did not require much. Not one of the habits of his earlier life could be seen in his present way of life. He has been silently spending his life of *sannyasa* thus. I awaited Ma's next instruction in Kashi.

Sunday, December 1

Swamiji's letter yesterday informed me that Ma had suddenly told him, "Send a telegram to Khukuni and ask her to stay on in Kashi". So he had despatched the telegram. He had also written that he was eating at the Gita *mandir* and only Bholanath was cooking something for Ma everyday. They are to go elsewhere soon but their destination was yet undecided.

Today I went with Gopi Babu to see a boy who was in a wonderful state. He could leave his gross body and go to higher realms (*lokas*) where he met many gods, goddesses, *rishis* and *munis*. They gave him many kinds of lessons through their gaze. The boy named Kedarnath Das is thirteen years old and has a widowed mother. Seeing his condition we understood that whenever he has the inspiration to go to Vishnuloka, Shivaloka, Indraloka and other such higher realms, he lies down. After fifteen or twenty minutes he gets up and answers even extremely difficult questions that are put to him. On asking him we found that the gods had told him, "Now you are being educated. On attaining twenty years of age you will bring about the welfare of the world." He claims to have met Narada, Vasistha, Brahma and Vishnu. Once he had suddenly got into a fright and ever since he has been in this state. Gods take the boy's subtle body to the higher realms. Gopi Babu remarked, "His condition seems to be good, gradually he is progressing. The gods are teaching the boy many kinds of invocations. He slips out from the tip of his thumb and after visiting many places he returns to his body. It is a very good state."

Friday, December 6

Today I received a letter from Akhandananda Swamiji from Kalyani. He wrote on November 24th—"We had gone by boat

to Tilak Vadi. It was a four or five hour ride. On the way back we had gone to Rajpipla. Today we returned to Karnali. The two Parsee ladies from Ahmedabad (whom Ma had named Kalyanapriya and Suddhapriya) have been with Ma for the past four days and will return tomorrow. Ma's body has become very weak—she hardly drinks even milk. She eats some rice in the day and drinks very little milk at night. Bholanath feeds her. We have procured two pucca rooms. Ma lives alone in one and we share the other. We may go to Tarapeeth but nothing has been decided as yet."

Tuesday, December 10

Today again I received a letter from Swami Akhandananda ji—"We are in Baroda in Chimanlal Manikala's *dhar-mashala* where we had stayed earlier. Nothing is certain about how long we will stay here. Ganga Charan Babu's wife comes every morning and stays with Ma till evening."

Wednesday, December 11

In the morning Shankarananda Swamiji brought a telegram from Baba and told me that Ma was coming to Mogalsarai by the nine p.m. train tonight and he would take me to the station so that I could meet Ma.

In the evening we went to Mogalsarai. At nine p.m. Ma's train reached Mogalsarai. Many people had come from Kashi for Ma's *darshan*. Bacchu's mother had brought many varieties of eatables for Ma with the desire of feeding her. No one seems to be satisfied with lavishing affection on Ma.

Ma, Bholanath, Rumadevi and Akhandananda Swami are going to Tarapeeth; they are taking me along.