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The meeting

Many years ago (in 1959) when I first arrived in Los Angeles from Washington, DC, I regularly went to the Self-Realization Fellowship Temple on Sunset Boulevard in Hollywood. It was my spiritual home, for there I felt the Light who not only built it, but left his vibrations for devotees to come and be

inspired by.

There soon came a time when I developed an attitude of wanting to know more. It was not enough for me to know about the Master only, I wanted to know him directly, and I did not know how to resolve this problem.

I obviously did not go deep enough in my meditations and although I knew techniques, I did not know God and Guru on an intimate basis.

There was a lovely painted picture of Master on the stage then (which was later removed and hung in the little side chapel) and I always went and stood before it, praying to him.

This particular afternoon I went to the Temple with a decided purpose. I was going to ask Master to teach me himself.

The little temple was empty when I entered and I respectfully went up to the picture and prostrated before it, beginning to pray for a solution to my problem.

'Guruji', I began immediately. 'This is my problem and I don't know how to resolve it. When is doing my will my will and when is it your will? Please tell me. I have asked others and

they cannot clearly instruct me. Please give me someone or you yourself teach me in visions,' remembering how he asked for a guru and how Divine Mother told him that his master was coming that very day. (Ch.10, The Autobiography of a Yogi, by Paramahansa Yogananda.)

As I stood there praying, I heard a motion in the pews behind me and I turned around, and there was a nun of the SRF-YSS order, (she was not a sanyasini then and did not wear an orange robe) and I approached her. 'Do you work here?' I asked.

'Yes,' she answered kindly, and then I said, 'Then perhaps you can tell me when my will is my will or when it is God's will.'

'I don't know,' she said with humility, 'but I do know someone who can answer your questions. Just wait a while. I will go and call her.'

When she returned a moment later she told me that she got permission to give me the telephone number of Sri Durga Mata*, who was a disciple of Master's for a very long time, and is willing to see me.

Gratefully I went to the telephone and called Ma Durga, as she was generally known, and I saw her the very next day.

Master Yogananda had answered my prayer just as quickly as the Divine Mother answered his prayer for a living Guru.

The next afternoon I went up to Mt. Washington, and had my first interview with this tiny lady (compared to my 6ft 2 inches) of just a little over 5 feet. She fairly dazzled me with her silver grey hair, beautiful and bewitching smile, and those penetrating dark eyes that saw right into my soul.

Even to this day the one feature that stands out above all others is those luminous and penetrating eyes that seemed to read the very hidden pages of my life's mysteries.

From then on I saw Ma regularly, like once or even twice a week. She was so generous with her time and answered all my questions (and some of them were foolish) graciously. She said in reply to my foolish questions when I named them so:

'There are no foolish questions if you sincerely seek the answer. If you learn from the answers they were wise indeed.'

I was very privileged to not only see her regularly but I could call her any time on the telephone and learn things that my heart thirsted to know.

There was one specific time that I remember with utmost

(* Her autobiography is: "A Paramahansa Yogananda Trilogy of Divine Love, by Sri Durga Mata, published by Joan Night Publications, P.O. Box 17582, Beverly Hills, CA. 90209.)

clarity and gratitude. We were sitting in her apartment in the Mother Center at Mt. Washington. She had gone into her private room and brought out a box which contained hair of the Guru.

Ma Durga used to comb his hair and saved every one that fell out, and she had a large amount of them. She was sitting down and opened the box on her lap, and showed them to me. Then I asked her if I could put my hands over them and touch them.

She permitted me to do it and as my hands very gently and most respectfully touched the hair, both Ma and I felt the awesome presence of Paramahansa Yogananda as though he was there in the flesh.

It was a time of electrified silence. What was there to say? He was present as tangibly as we were to each other. That is when I first began to get a personal reality of the Master. This was direct and not indirect knowledge.

That same time she gave me a strand of hair and a piece of cloth from the habit that he used to wear, which I am guarding with my Kriya rose petals unto this day.

I never did lose my respect for Ma and I did grow close to her without this leading to any kind of familiarity. She had a will of iron, such as I have never known in any person, man or woman, and would not tolerate foolish intimacies and familiarities.

She certainly had a power of will that virtually aved me. She was joyful, but never foolish. But she laughed a lot at me and my foolishness, or that of the human race. She was a very happy person and said to me once: 'The saints laugh a lot at the foolishness of people who suffer so much so needlessly.'

What amazed me most about her (even unto this day after having known her for over 34 years) is that I never heard her brag about herself, or gloat over her closeness with the Guru. She was humble and very self-effacing, but she also knew the truth about herself and those around her. She attributed all that she did as being an empty vessel or an empty shell for she never thought of herself as the doer, but constantly referred everything to the Guru. He was the doer and she the empty shell.

Even on those occasions when I asked her to bless something, she would hold the object up against a picture of the Guru, press it between his eyebrows, closed her eyes, prayed and

then handed it back to me. She was an instrument for the Master to use as he wished. She was totally surrendered to him and referred all to him. I never saw or heard her otherwise. The ego was slain a long time ago and there was nothing left but the Indwelling Lord.

Ma was the most unegoistical person I have ever met, and the truth is that I have met many - including people who were truly humble, but Ma stood out like a beacon for all to see.

To me she had the quality I most needed at that or any time in my life. She had true wisdom. And the second most important quality through which she taught me as much as through her words was her self-control.

Ma Durga had perfect control of what came out of her mouth. And she knew how to use it to uproot some of my very unpleasant habits. She could be fierce. She used to say to me when I complained, 'One needs a thorn to remove a thorn.'

'But you used a butcher's knife,' I retorted bitterly, after having been castigated fiercely about my vanity.

'You've got a big ego,' she would have the final word. And, of course, she was always right about my behavior.

She never ceased to chop me up, but I never left her feeling down or blue. She made sure that I knew that she was not getting a sadistic delight in deflating my ego. She was uprooting my bad habits and qualities and they were legion.

Ma had the most incredible insight I had ever seen in any person. She could be in the presence of people and see right through them in a second and she would bring it to their attentions in such a kind way that nobody ever resented it.

There was a specific case that I remember very well. I knew a Catholic nun who was bright, beautiful, vivacious and a seeker after the inner truths. We went to visit Ma, and in five minutes she cried before Ma, because Ma saw that her wit and effervescence was just a mask behind which the nun was hiding.

On so many occasions I took people to see her (and quite a few who remained afterwards to be counselled by Ma) and she was not once wrong. In fact, I got insights as I sat there about my friends, as Ma counselled them.

With my own eyes I saw how a Master Psychologist counselled people - and she never went past her 8th grade education.

Ma was not educated in the academic ways which the world

so heartedly endorses, but she was educated in the wisdom of God and Guru, and, oh!, did it show. Her wisdom superceded that of any of the so-called well educated Ph.D's that I knew.

I learned not only from watching her, from hearing how she went directly into the soul to speak about what matters, but most of all by her example!

One day we were talking, and I could not understand what she was talking about and if I remember correctly it was about psychology, of which I had some knowledge, but Ma denied the truth of that particular theory.

Without meaning to I started to argue with Ma to prove her wrong, and she just closed her mouth, gently looked at me (I was going to say looked down at me, whereas it was the other way around) and smiled. (Ma looked spiritually down at me, not negatively, but positively. She was exalted above my intelligence though my body towered over hers.)

She wasn't scolding me, not making me feel any less for that, just that she controlled her tongue and would not argue. And, of course, she was right - as usual. I learned one of life's most important lessons that day. Zip your lips, my boy.

At that time I was still a crude 'sinner', and when I sinned I felt loath to visit Ma because I felt too ashamed of my

sexual exploits, but she would call me when I was absent for too long. When I told her that I had fallen she would say, 'You need a doctor when you are ill, not when you are well,' and with a great, and patience persistence she guided her boy into being a celibate.

She would not let me get away. Like a true shepherd she went looking for that lost sheep until she found him. God, how grateful I am to her that she did it. Without her and in living that degrading lifestyle, I would have been dead by now.

Yet with knowing all the facts about her, she remained a teasing mystery until this very day. To know her inner reality was another matter altogether.

But I did know that she was extraordinary - and I mean that word down to the t. She was out of the ordinary, but appeared to be so normal that one would never guess that she was a Self-realized being.

I once asked her why the saints appeared so normal and never showed their real nature, and she replied, saying, 'They hide behind their naturalness. They appear so human that nobody would ever guess that they are saints, avatars, or incarnations.'

However, soon I was to know some spiritual facts which I would like to share about her.

Who is Sri Durga Mata? What is her real nature? Is she just another human being who followed an Avatar, or is she one of those Hidden Ones who are so hard to explain to ourselves or to others? Did he bring her 'down' with him to do his work?

The bearing of other's KARMA

One summer I returned from being on the road and I was very much in need of a lot of rest, having almost burnt myself out. I felt emotionally low and as usual, when I overdid my exercises, I habitually pulled the hamstring in my right calf and it was very painful. Walking was most agonizing and I felt cheated and immobilized because I intuitively knew I need to exercise more than anything else in my life.

The first thing I always did when I came from the road was to rush to Mt. Washington to see my Ma and for the first time I had to take the elevator up to her apartment.

After a while as we sat there she advised me to go for a long walk in Griffith Park in Hollywood, near where I lived.

I explained to her that I had pulled the hamstring muscle in my right calf and couldn't obey her since it was extremely painful, but she quietly and very patiently told me to do it.

'Just go, Johann. Master will take care of you for I really think you need to exercise more than anything,' she insisted, and when she insisted I always listened, for I knew that Ma was doing this for my own good and not for her gratification.

So when I returned to Hollywood I went to the park. I dreaded it for I knew I couldn't even begin to walk up that hill, but the moment I put my foot on the path which wound up to the Observatory, I found to my surprise that I not only could do it, but that my calf was totally healed.

The next day I also had an appointment with Ma to drive her somewhere which was often my glorious privilege. Ma wore dresses that were long, but this afternoon as she reached over the chair to retrieve something, I saw her calf and exactly on the spot where my calf had hurt was a large, dark and ugly bruise.

I immediately and audaciously asked her about it. 'You are carrying my karma,' I remonstrated with her. 'I don't want you to do it.'

She looked at me with a stern expression on her face. 'Don't you tell me how to react to what God wants me to do for him, my boy. If he tells me to carry another's pain or sickness, then it is my privilege and none of your business,' which, of course, is the truth.

Then she explained to me that there are two reasons for having karmic incidents. One, you pay for your own karma and the slate is 'wiped clean' and you should thank God for it, and, two, God has you bear another's burden, and you should thank God for that as well since it is a great privilege to be called to do it.

I looked at her in awe for the tone in her voice was that of total authority and power.

At another time I had prostrate problems and felt most unwell and I, as usual, complained to her about it.

'Really, Ma, I am living a celibate life and am going all over talking about God and here I've got prostrate problems and I really resent it.'

'Oh, you do, do you! Well, my boy, if you resent paying then you don't pay and have to go through it again!! Freely did ye sow and freely must ye reap! If you resent you must go through it until you pay without resentment.'

That scared me so that to this day I resent nothing that happens to me. The sooner all is paid the sooner I will be free.

It was in that same conversation that Ma told me that she did at times carry the karma of another, when Master willed that she should do so, and that she always felt it as a great honor, which to me meant that she had already paid all her own karma before she was even born into this life.

As we were talking about paying karma and being born in this life as a jivanmukti (ever free soul) she told me that even as a little child she would say to her mother, 'Mother, I don't breathe', for she was in the breathless state even while moving about and her mother said, 'Don't be silly, Child. Every body breathes,' but Ma, who kept her silence, knew better.

Then she also told me that she had had a back ache all of her life and that Master told her that she was carrying others karma, which in Catholic parlance meant she was a victim soul, expiating for the sins of others.

I then asked her when my problem would disappear. She again got that distant look of peering into another world and smiled as she told me, 'It will just leave of itself and you will later remember that you don't suffer from it any longer.'

It was months later when I remembered that it happened just as Ma said it would. After this meeting Ma got problems with her kidneys. Nobody could convince me that she had not come to my assistance by bailing me out so that I could go on the road

again. But I dared say nothing about it unless I was willing to receive a severe scolding for my interference in her life.

The self-realized being

I never had the audacity to challenge Ma and ask her outright if she was self-realized. Knowing Ma, she would not have answered that question just to satisfy my curiosity. Saints are not there for spiritual show or glamor.

But at a later time she told me in an indirect way that Master had told her that 'after my death, Duj, just make a little effort and you will be there', there meaning self-realized.

'And did you make the effort, Ma?' I asked with love.

Those huge penetrating eyes smiled mischievously, 'Believe me, Johann, I went to it with great fervor.' And then she smiled that most enchanting of enchanting smiles that emanated that inner satisfaction and contentment that comes only from those who have severed their union with pain', to quote the Gita. [Ch.6 v. 23]. "And it is said: He is united, i.e. one with Brahman. [Ch.6 v.18.]

Ma did become more open with me as the years went on and about seven or so years after I first met her, something happened that completely changed my life. It was just as Sri Ramakrishna said in his Gospel as recorded by Master Mahasaya:

It is one thing to have the vision of God, but quite another to coax him into your living room.

We were as usual, sitting in her living room and we were talking, and for some reason or another (avidya, no doubt) I was in a rebellious mood because I felt cheated that I had not even seen Master in any manner even though I was alive in South Africa and England while he was on earth. I could have met him.

Of course, I know that I did not have the karma to meet him in the flesh in this life. I had as yet not earned that privilege. I was divinely envious of those who had and knew him personally, and who had totally surrendered to him.

'It is easy for you to talk, Ma,' I complained sincerely. 'You have seen him, touched him when you combed his hair, washed his clothes, cooked his meals, touched his feet as is usual in the custom of Guru-chela relationship in India. I have never had that great honor.'

My heart was in my words. I complained, but not as rebelliously as I thought before. It was a form of lamenting.

I also wanted to share in that glorious honor! - or right?

The truth is that when I read The Autobiography of a Yogi I was completely attracted to Lahiri Mahasaya, of whom Master spoke with such a glowing admiration, and of whom I had some mighty spiritual experiences.

But Ma used to say to me, 'You belong to Master!' with such certainty and conviction that I eventually accepted it as my truth. But before that my heart was enchanted (as it still is) with the glorious Lahiri Mahasaya.

To return to my telling Ma how privileged she was, she looked at me with a smile that I came to know which spelled something divine was about to be divulged. Those dark eyes looked at me, through me, past me, into a realm that was darkness to my eyes.

She said to me enigmatically, 'You will see him.' Of course I did not understand what she was saying, although afterwards it was very clear. At that moment it sounded just like any talk to me.

Two nights later I had been working late on writing my songs and was pleasantly in need of rest emotionally. [By the way, Ma always told me: Don't say 'I am tired', but that my body is in

need of rest'.)

I fell into a deep sleep only to be awakened by a loud and persistent knocking at the front door of my apartment. Slowly I got up and walked down the long passage to the front door.

As I opened the door there stood Paramahansa Yogananda! Without being able to give it a thought I fell flat on my face before his feet. It was a reaction over which I had no control and would never have thought possible.

He bent down and gently helped me up. I looked into those beautiful dark eyes and he smiled at me as he put his arm around my shoulders and walked with me into the living room.

'I receive every letter that you have ever written to me,' he told me and I intuitively knew that he meant that he heard my every prayer.

And he continued talking to me with such affection that I stood in complete ease with him. What stunned me most in hindsight was that he did not look at my holes (for I was like a piece of Swiss cheese with lots of holes) but at my cheese. I was totally comfortable and natural with him.

Frankly I have never in all my life until then, felt so me and so complete! I was totally myself, no shame, no guilt, no remorse in spite of a life that had many immoral moments. He accepted me as I am, and it was a wonderful feeling.

The Guru had come, not as my judge, but as my friend and liberator.

When I woke up later it was as though the dream was real and the waking moment unreal. Master was the reality and the world, my world of pursuing name and fame, etc., was the unreality. My heart was overflowing with love and gratitude when I got to speak to Ma the following day.

I did not speak to her about it on the phone. It was too precious. I wanted to share it with her in person. But I did say to myself: 'Who is this Durga who can intercede for me and get the Master to come and visit me? Surely only those on most intimate terms with him could bring this about? How powerful she must be for him to acquiesce to her petition.'

I was thinking of the above quoted statement of Sri Ramakrishna that it was quite another thing to 'coax God into one's living room' or like Master Mahasaya to intercede with the Divine Mother to visit Paramahansa Yogananda in a vision. (See The Autobiography of a Yogi, chapter 9.)

Again there was that quiet smile that always touched me so. Ma had a certain smile and a certain look. It was a smile of inner knowing and when I saw it, I knew I was in the presence of a most extraordinary person.

The look was something else. She got very still and looked at one and through one as though into the spiritual realms where she could read the past, present and future akashic records, for when she spoke in that mood, one intuitively knew that it was with words of wisdom and sacred truth.

There was no doubt also that she was pleased that I had had the privilege of meeting with the Guru on the astral - for that is from whence our superconscious dreams come.

A few nights later in my dreams, there was the face of Master looming over my head, looking down at me and into me. He was smiling, like that incredibly beautiful last smile. It was in full color and he was just smiling and looking into my eyes - and I was naturally bewitched by him just looking back into his eyes that saw everything and rejected nothing.

How long the superconscious vision went on, I can't tell, but I awoke with his face still looking into my eyes, and my heart was again sweet with bliss.

At another time (the two happened within a couple of weeks from each other) I was in this dream coming into Ma's apartment in Mt. Washington. Ma was in reality not feeling very well and I had visited her that afternoon, sitting at her feet and looking at her with much love and admiration. Ma always extracted a lot of respect and reverence from me. I knew that I was a privileged person to be on such good terms with her.

[A close spiritual friend from another religious path once told me after I took her to see Ma that she had never seen me so reverent with anybody in all her experience with me.]

In reality Ma seemed so like a little child. Innocence vibrated from her. No complaints came from her lips. She was, just looking at me like a child who had to stay in bed, and obediently did so.

In this particular dream she was lying in the same manner on her bed, (which looked like a sofa). I stood at her feet and looked down at her and marvelling at the childlike innocence that she radiated. She was like a five year old child.

Then something extraordinary happened: As I looked at her face, suddenly there seemed to be something happening to her features, and indeed there was. Master Yogananda's face was coming out of Ma's face until it totally replaced Ma's.

"It is Master!" I ejaculated in surprise, looking down at the black eyes and hair that had supplanted Ma's.

As I looked at Master with delight, again there was a motion in his face, and out of his face came Ma's face, replacing his face with hers, and while I stood marvelling at this I cried out, 'No, it is Ma Durga!' and as I saw her face there, again the face of Paramahansa Yogananda came out of Sri Durga's features, and this happened many times over and over again.

'It's Master!' I would cry. 'No, it's Ma,' over and over until I couldn't tell which was which. Was it Master or was it Ma(ster)?

Finally I cried out exasperated with myself for not being able to tell the difference. 'It makes no difference. They are one and the same anyway.'

And it is with that thought that I woke up. As usual there was this sweetness in my chest which stayed with me for a long, long time.

Ma was delighted to hear this. Nothing could please Ma more than to be told that she is one with her Beloved. I could tell she was pleased and that pleased me.

Who IS this Durga Mata that the Master takes over her body and personality to do his work?

Master Yogananda was telling me that I should treat her as though it were himself that I was dealing with. Naturally I did for not only did the dreams convince me, but the facts that all these things took place after her intercession for me.

Then there was another time. I can't remember the time period between this one and the previous dreams, but it wasn't very long. It seemed that Master wanted me to know whom I was privileged to have as my counselor, someone whom presented him to me. She was his ambassador, his channel, his instrument, his audible voice to me.

One Saturday night Ma lead a meditation in the SRF Temple in Hollywood, because they were working on the Mt. Washington chapel after the 1971 earthquake.

It was a cold night and Ma wore a hat made of fur over her ears, like the headwear of the Russians. She said as she saw me look at the fur, 'It is not real, Johann. It is artificial fur.' She was so innocent that we laughed at her explanation.

I was standing with my friend George Mirko who was even taller than I am, and who was also a counsilee of Ma's, and we

looked down at this delightful person before us, both of us enjoying this privilege immensely.

That night I was with Ma in an undetermined place. I was again looking down at her, except this time her face truly surprised me. Every part of her countenance was made of light. Pure light, but the interesting thing was I could see the features as though normal but everything was made of light.

Her eyebrows were made of light, the eye lashes, the dark eyes, the lips, cheeks, chin, neck, ears, hair on her head - all were various forms of light, not streaking out in long rays, but inner contained light that glowed. In my dream I couldn't get enough of looking at her and marvelling at this most curious phenomenon. To my eyes she seemed made of light, while at the same time she looked normal to me, i.e. as she usually did. But I saw her as light, and the normal was not real.

The next day when I told her about it, she smiled and said: 'Ah, you've detected my real nature.'

And so it was. Master Yogananda himself said that one who is one with God is God. One who is one with Light is Light.

Yet my most unusual experience with Ma Durga was yet to come.

It might have been years later, I cannot say for sure, but one day I took a lady friend with me to see Ma. This lady was a missionary in Africa, very devout, knew all about yoga and loved it, and yearned to be initiated into Kriya Yoga. I spoke to Ma about her and Ma agreed to see her.

So we went up to Mt. Washington. I sat on the floor near Ma and my friend was sitting on a chair in front of Ma. They talked for a while and Ma wanted to know why she wanted Kriya, and the obligations thereof, and so forth.

Then Ma proceeded to tell her how the soul was incarnated into the womb, creating first the brain and then the spine and so descending down into the coccyx, and that it had to make the return journey through the spine into the brain.

The power to bring this about swiftly so one could do it in one incarnation rather than in many, was the job of Kriya yoga. When one practiced kriya one speeded up one's evolution dramatically. (See The Autobiography of a Yogi, Ch. 26.)

While Ma was talking I saw her face, for I was always fascinated with what she had to say. Then another wondrous thing happened.

As I listened to Ma talk and watched her face, suddenly, to my utter surprise Ma grew a grey moustache like mine, and next I could see her features change and out of her face came the face of the beloved Lahiri Mahasaya. It was his face I was looking at, and her voice I was listening to.

This must have gone on for at least fifteen minutes to an half an hour while Ma explained to my friend the ins and outs of kriya yoga and actually initiated her into the sacred technique! It was Lahiri Mahasaya who was present there, for I felt his bliss and saw him with my own eyes. He was using her body and voice to bring about this initiation. My lucky friend was initiated by Lahiri Mahasaya himself!

Unfortunately I never had another vision like this one, but it was sufficient. I knew that she was truly an empty shell as she always told me, and at the same time also that Lahiri Mahasaya was indeed more real than before.

Ma, the teacher

Ma taught more through her actions than through her words, although her words had the power to sting, cut, operate, cleanse and heal.

She had infinite patience, but at times she could be

stern and to the point and often shook her finger at my stupidity. But slowly over the years she worked my mind over, and when I could not understand what she was saying, I went home and the next morning I did.

One thing I noticed in my life is that I often woke with the idea that I had learned in my sleep. I knew things the next morning that I did not know before. And I was sure of this and it proved that it was indeed so for in conversations I would find myself uttering things that I had never read, and that I knew with an inner conviction. Somewhere in the psalms it says that 'He teaches His beloved in sleep.'

Ma often told me that Master comes at night to visit the sleeping devotees and to heal or change their vasanas. That was how he taught, and I often wondered if that was how she was teaching me in my sleep.

After all, Master did show me that he and Ma Durga was one and the same Spirit. As Sri Krishna said to someone in the Srimad Bhagavatam that he and Uddheva were one soul in two bodies. Perhaps Master and Sri Durga Ma were like that?

It is such a pity that there is nobody to truly confirm my suspicions or to clarify them for me.

Ma the singer

Ma had a very penetrating and beautiful voice. It went right into the marrow of the bone, in the marrow of the soul. She lead the chanting at her Saturday night meditations in Mt. Washington and had such a rhythm and fire that people loved chanting with her.

Often as I came to see her she would gently waltz, her dark eyes like fire burning with delight and sing 'I am free, Johann, I am freeee,' and her smile would bewitch me to the core.

She was free and it showed and she taught me through such little acts. Another was 'I am neutral'.

I would say to her 'I am also free, Ma,' and she would reply, 'That's because you've been faithful in doing your Kriyas.' It is true that Kriya Yoga set me free.

She was always interested in my songs and singing and would encourage me to keep on doing it, especially when I felt worn out and in desperate need of rest. She also told me that it was her ability to chant that took her right into the great freedom. She sings her way into heaven and with her songs, and she certainly wrote a few beauties, with which she created heaven on earth.

But what I missed most when Ma was getting frailer in her eighties were those Saturday night meditations, with her reading unpublished writings of Master, like the Patanjali series, the chanting that swung us right into heaven, and the silent meditations in her company.

All this was heaven on earth for me. Now as I look back I see that Ma was also hiding behind her naturalness. Very few of us really knew who Ma really was.

She told me that Master used to say that his devotees who were with him, would only realize who he was after his mahasamadi. I can say in retrospect, and as I am typing these words, that there is a greater dawning and understanding in my mind as to how great this hidden saint was.

I can hear her right now saying to me as she was disciplining me: 'Talk to yourself, Johann. You talked yourself into your negative behavior and now you must talk yourself out of it. Tell yourself that if you (the lower self or I) do not behave you will withhold something it likes, like eating a special dish.

'You must discipline yourself.... correct yourself for nobody else can do it for you. This is a very sound technique for changing yourself.' Then she'd look at me and say very tenderly: 'You'll only have yourself to blame if you don't.' I've

become quite an expert in talking to myself, but I usually do it in Afrikaans, just in case mortals are listening.

Often when I speak of her to others, I can virtually hear her voice in my head. It has become such a part of my life that should someone be able to cut out her influence of my life I would collapse into an unstable heap.

There are volumes of stories about Ma that I could tell, but I do not think that she would like me to divulge too much. She was a private person and hid behind her naturalness. Besides she made me promise not to confide certain wonderful happenings and confidences to others.

The years went by and I gleaned a harvest of great spiritual consolation, insight and joy because of her counselling and finally she got so sick that I couldn't go and see her any more - to my grief and regret.

Before she passed on I came to live in Tucson, Arizona, because I had retired. But I could see her no longer, nor talk to her on the telephone. She too retired from counselling.

After she passed away, one night I walked into my little meditating room. It has an altar on which are some flowers, etc., and on the wall hung pictures of the Masters, and on either side of

the altar was a chair.

As I came into the room to meditate, there sat Ma Durga on the chair, looking at me with her breath taking innocence and smiled at me. I stood there in the door unable to believe my eyes and as I looked at my good fortune, suddenly, out of her body came projected the body of my Guru, and I went through the routine again of seeing them come in and out of each other, but this time I knew the message. They are one and the same.

I woke up as usual after such a dream, deeply grateful, satisfied and happy. I felt I had a great revelation.

That is who Ma Durga is, just a visible form of the invisible Cosmic Christ, which is what our beloved Master is.

She is one with him. And she is his other voice and hands to do his work and to accomplish his purposes on earth.

One more incident. This time I was in a very arid and empty period. When one changes residences and cities one has few or no friends, but apart from not having any real friends which I did not mind, it was the desolations that made me feel low and without energy, or rather sans vision or drive.

Ma Durga walked into my dream one night as I lay in my bed not feeling too well. She stood there and counselled me and then, to my uttermost surprise, she pulled the blanket off me and got into bed with me and just melted into my body as though she was taking it over.

[The counselling Ma gave me remains a mystery until this day for I didn't understand what she was saying. I told her once that Master came and spoke to me in a dream but that I was so dense that I didn't understand what he said. She calmed me and said that 'he was speaking to your soul and the ego did not have to understand, but that the soul understood everything.')

I woke with that feeling of tranquility and knew also that the desolate period had ended and knowing that something very important had happened in my life. The dream told me that Ma is so intimate as to be within me - perhaps even being me?

However, from that time on all good has happened. I have now good spiritual friends (it is true that I prayed to Master to lead me to them or bring them to me), got a new volume of poetry being published and a lot of other spiritual and temporal gifts.

I wrote a lot of poetry over the years and friends encouraged me to publish them and I wanted to print them myself, not thinking that any company would want to do so. But I ran into lots of difficulties, mostly financial, and finally one day, after having

been let down by a printer, who really lied to me about the price (and which I gratefully found out before I committed myself) I felt that I had enough. I was deeply let down and disillusioned and whatever hopes I had to publish anything just left me. I gave up wanting to publish anything!

So I called out to Master: 'Well, Master, this is it! No more. I've had enough! I am now giving up all desire to publish anything. If you want it done, then you better do it all by yourself! I will not stop writing poetry, for I enjoy you speaking to me through them, but I am not going to look for a publisher.'

To days later a friend from Thousand Oaks called me and told me that she sat next to a publisher at a luncheon. She asked the woman if she knew me and she told my friend that my song Take my hands was her all time favorite. Then my friend told her that I now wrote poetry, and she wanted to know if I had a publisher for them, and when she heard that I hadn't said: 'I will publish them sight unseen.'

I signed a contract (for a volume of 200+ poems to be published in spring 1995), two days later in Los Angeles.

It was Master's doing. I was not rude or disrespectful when I shouted the above to him. Only letting go, and then he

could do his thing through me.

Blessed indeed is anyone anywhere in this world who has Paramahansa Yogananda as his guru. There can be no greater blessing than this, except in doing his will with all one's energy and skill for then he becomes exceedingly real to the devotee.

And his will, as it came to me through the great Sri Durga Mata, has given me what I cannot ever put in words, but let me assure my reader of this: All things that the Guru promises if you follow him, happen just as he said they would, but in his own time and place.

Heavenly Father, Gurudev, Paramahansa Yogananda, I thank you a million times for the privilege I had of knowing and associating with Ma for over 34 years. What a blessing that was and although I would have loved to have been in your bodily presence, I thank you that you gave me the rich gift of knowing Ma Durga in you and knowing you in her. Amen.

And now I am sure she is in Hiranyaloka, where Sri Yukteswar went to prepare a place for Master and his 'exalted' ones*, but being one with God and Master, she also shares in that omnipresence, for as Guru says in his writings, our natural habitat is omnipresence.

My Mother

I WAS greatly blessed in this life with an angelic earthly mother, whose charity helped many when in distress, whose sincerity won the hearts of all who knew her, whose cheerful nature gladdened the hearts of those who chanced to contact her, whose understanding cleared away sorrow from human minds, and whose wisdom dispelled darkness from many souls. Deep was her devotion unto God.

Thankful am I to feel and know that no matter who came into my life, she was the only one who fully occupied the hive of my heart. Many seek truth for various reasons, but I heard that through certain definite technique for gaining Self Realization one could in time learn to leave this body willingly and consciously, so my fear of losing my earthly mother drove me to seek this truth, not for my health nor for prosperity, but for the sole purpose that mother and I could go beyond the gates of this life together.

Two weeks after receiving this truth, God gave my mother the long deserved rest, but He was gracious in His mercy and permitted me to see her joy in going to His Infinite Home. Shortly after her going, the great desire I had planned in my consciousness, that we should go together, came very near manifesting itself, but it wasn't to be.

In the course of time, I met someone who reminded me of her. She too helped to wax this little hive, then bit by bit the old life slipped away, and I gave my life to the service of God. In the course of my service, I came in contact with many mothers. One would have hair like my earthly mother, another would have her eyes, still others her loving ways. The many reminded me of the one. But one day this realization came, to my great joy, that my earthly mother and all mothers had melted into one Great Universal Mother.

My earthly mother came to make this hive, others have helped to wax it in preparation for the Great Queen Mother. Now my heart cries: "Take full possession of this hive, O Divine Mother; fill Thou my mind with Thy Wisdom, sit Thou upon the throne of my soul with Thy luminous Presence. All that I have I give unto Thee. But, Mother, I ask You to leave a little nook in my heart unoccupied, just large enough for me to lay my offering of ever-increasing love at Thy Blue Lotus Feet.

—By Florina Darling.