



The Ramna āśram at Dacca

would leave Dacca that very night. Bholānāth was to stay at Ramna āśram. In conformity with Her role as an obedient wife, She asked Bholānāth's permission to leave, although She made it unmistakably clear that permission had to be granted: "If you say, 'no,' I shall leave this body at your feet just now." She was amenable, however, to Bholānāth's request that She travel in the company of Her father. Otherwise: "People will speak ill of you...," he had pleaded.

Ānandamayī Mā left Ramna around midnight by the next available train which took Her to Mymensingh in East Bengal. From there She traveled to Cox Bazar (East Bengal) and then to Hardwar, Dehradun (in the Himalayas), Ayodhya (Uttar Pradesh), and Vārāṇasi. She did not inform Bholānāth about Her moves. Shortly after Her return to Dacca, She was no longer able to hold on to kitchen utensils and consequently had to relinquish all household work. This new development was more than Bholānāth was willing to bear. After all, he was still very human. Feelings of frustration had accumulated

by that time. In addition, his relatives urged him at long last to assert his position as head of the household. He mustered all his courage and remonstrated with Ānandamayī Mā. What ensued is best described in Her own words: "I tried to cook for a few days with mother's help... I had no objections and it made no difference to me... (but) Bholānāth fell ill after a few days, and then I myself was ill. So it did not after all come to anything at all." Evidently the household *lilā* was over, while Bholānāth's education continued.

Not only was Bholānāth deprived of Her cooking skills, he had to give up one more physical comfort which he had so far still enjoyed: sleeping in a bed. Some time in October, 1929, when Ānandamayī Mā was again in poor health, She made him leave his bed in the middle of the night, ostensibly because She wanted to occupy it. He had to lie on the floor in a blanket, the way She was wont to sleep. This more austere mode of sleeping became a permanent arrangement for Bholānāth, for within a few days Ānandamayī Mā had his bed taken apart while She returned to sleeping on the floor.

At the time when Ānandamayī Mā was further disciplining Bholānāth, She experienced Her first encounter with the academic commu-



Temple in Dhakeshwari, Dacca



nity. When a congress of Indian philosophers was convened in Dacca in 1929, some of the delegates visited Ānandamayī Mā. For hours

the uneducated Mā answered spontaneously the most profound questions thrown at Her by the erudite scholars. Her “reputation” was