

## PREFACE

On the tenth anniversary of Mother Hamilton's Mahasamadhi this book of writings by devotees and friends of Mother's is issued in order to honor and celebrate her life as a God-woman.

Mother's life is unique: a woman of complete God-Realization, yet fully human in characteristics and personality. She came to fulfill a purpose that was destined to help mankind over the hurdle of ignorance and darkness of a passing age. Her destiny, and the truth of her real nature, was confirmed by some of the greatest modern Saints of her time: she was a manifestation of the Divine Mother Herself. Yet, Mother did not gain great fame or recognition by the public at large. So how may her life be understood in these grand terms?

Mother's life and teachings were based on the life of Christ. In them she recognized a model, a Way for her to follow and thereby be transformed. After meeting her Guru, Paramhansa Yogananda, in 1925 in Seattle, Washington, she firmly set her feet on the path toward gaining the Self-Realization that was at the heart of Yogananda's life and teachings. After Yoganandaji's passing in 1952, Mother felt a powerful inner direction to go to the south of India, to Anandashram, home of Swami Ramdas. It was there that Mother underwent the Mystical Crucifixion, a series of spiritual experiences that released her consciousness from the bondage of separation from God. She returned from India after one year, but for a total of sixteen years Mother passed through various stages of the Mystical Crucifixion. During that time, details of the inner meaning of the Mystical Crucifixion experience were revealed to Mother. Mother not only penetrated the truth of the life and teachings of Jesus the Christ, she also became an expression of that very same Christ Consciousness.

After Mother's return from India she started to accept disciples, having been given rare permission by her great Guru to initiate others, thus carrying on the hallowed Guru-disciple relationship. By the 1970s, Mother had gained her complete God-Realization. It is stated in some traditions

that there are only twelve completely illumined Masters in the world at any one time. On one of her trips, Mother met a great saint in India who stated that he recognized her as one of those twelve; he had met six before Mother and would be destined to meet one more in his lifetime. Her group of disciples grew, all by word of mouth: Mother never advertised, she never charged for anything she did in her service for God, and she formed no organization. Meditation centers started up in different geographic areas with Center Leaders selected by Mother; meeting in people's homes to listen to recorded talks by Mother. She gave Kriya Initiation when she felt an inner direction to do so; during the 1970s about every two years. Many highly revered her and believed that she would become quite famous during her own lifetime.

During the early 1980s Mother's health suffered terribly. Mother's whole life had been full of physical suffering, but the strokes, the catastrophic shingles infection in her head, the heart attacks and other maladies were devastating in their results. Many saints, including Papa Ramdas, had said that the pain and suffering that Mother underwent was not for herself, but for others. In this strange way, great spiritual Masters can help their disciples, or in some cases the world at large, by taking on difficult karmic effects into their own bodies. Mother's bodily suffering was terrific. She carried on serving all as best she could, but her outward expression was but a shadow of her previous self.

Not only was Mother affected physically, she also manifested traits common to stroke victims: occasional loss of memory, disorientation, confusion about events etc. This, of course, was shocking to those who followed her as teacher and Guru. Gradually the many who followed Mother and her teachings started to stay away. Time took its toll: more and more left, fewer and fewer stayed. Mother, it seemed, was undergoing another Crucifixion experience, along with the group who had gathered around her. Through her valiant struggle over the years, Mother regained the use of most of her body again, her mental faculties improved immensely, and she still continued, with every part

of her being, to serve everyone she met. Throughout her suffering, and it was beyond what most of us can understand, Mother loved everyone as her very own, and she never lost her desire to bring all to their oneness in God.

All that Mother did and accomplished, through so many years of realization and service, is now seen through the inscrutable filter of those last years. How are we to understand a life such as Mother's from the standpoint of a fully realized God-Woman? Like a psychological test, how we view her life may say more about us than it does about Mother. I will write here my own understanding. I believe that Mother did, in fact, undergo another Crucifixion; not for herself, as her whole life had not been for herself. Mother willingly surrendered everything that she had attained; the health of her body, her mental ability and peace; everything was placed at the feet of God. And God took Mother's life; He took it all and used it for His own purposes. And for one reason only: she was to be the ransom for the many. Before she went into the final period of her life, Mother had a vision. In that vision a long dark tunnel stretched out before her. The tunnel was very long and very dark, but at the end, far down at the end, was a pinpoint of light. She knew that she had to go through that tunnel; there was no other way. Mother surrendered her life, even as the Christ gave his life, at a time in her life when she was at the pinnacle of her spiritual powers, at "the top of her game," and everything pointed to her pre-eminence for world acknowledgment.

But, as the Christ said, "My kingdom is not of this world." To look at the end of Jesus' life, one would say it was not remarkable; in fact, from a worldly standpoint, the end was a miserable failure. I see Mother's life in the light of her own teachings. Her life, her teaching, everything about Mother was to follow the way of the cross; follow the Christ in every detail. Her kingdom was not of this world; it was not to be on television, to gain fame, to be a celebrity. The meaning of her life to me, to us; is to follow, to serve, to love, to sacrifice everything at the feet of God; knowing that what is in store for us is more wonderful than we can imagine.

One of my favorite stories Mother told of St. Theresa of Avila went something like this. Mother Theresa had it in her mind to visit the different convents she had established. She was old in body, her health, always in question, but she had an indomitable will. She left in the middle of winter to make these visits. She and a small group of nuns walked hip deep in snow and struggled from one monastery to the next. Finally they were trekking their way to the last convent. Spring was in the air, which meant the snow was melting and the streams and rivers were rising. They came to a rapidly flowing river, ice cold and with dangerously strong currents. Mother Theresa said she would go first. She found a place to ford the stream. She was about half way across the river when the current swept her away. Caught in the powerful water, Mother ever had her wits about her. She prayed to God, "O Lord, all I have ever tried to do is to serve You. Here I am, doing Your will, and now You are drowning me. Why?" Immediately God answered, "This is how I treat all my friends." Mother, ever with humor, sighed complainingly, "Well, maybe that is why You have so few!" St. Theresa was soon seen on the other side of the river signaling the nuns as to where they could safely cross.

Once Master had said to Mother, "You are like St. Theresa, and you look like her too." Perhaps they had even more in common. Another story of St. Theresa took place in her later years. She was not the personality she once was, old age and disease having taken their toll. Mother Theresa was often left alone, although someone always would come to feed her meals to her. Once there was some confusion and it was realized that no one had fed the Mother. A nun rushed to Mother's room with the meal, but upon entering saw an amazing and humbling sight. There sat Jesus, in physical manifestation, feeding the holy Mother.

It is natural to judge a life by worldly, human standards. With Saints and Realized Masters, this is a crucial mistake. Masters fulfill a law and a Will that goes beyond human reckoning. In my view, Mother lived one of the most remarkable, selfless and dedicated lives to serving God and Gurus of anyone I have ever known or heard about. I observed Mother up close during the most difficult experiences a per-

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son could go through, and my observations only confirm what I now say. The lessons I learned from Mother when she fully manifested the outward signs of complete realization of God are beyond my powers to describe. Equally great are the lessons I learned during her last years; God wearing an altered mask, but with the same Light ever shining within.

I am very pleased to have this book come out now, ten years after Mother's Mahasamadhi. There will be many interesting views of Mother's life through these writings. Mother was one who drew to herself people with strong personalities, and they will express themselves in unique ways. I am also keen to have writings from those who did not know Mother while she was in the body, but have had the full benefit of her teachings and Spirit. Through these small writings, each will seek to pay homage, to honor the life and Spirit that is Mother. But to honor Mother's life best may be summed up by her own teachings. When those who followed her wanted to do something for her, for the work she did, Mother's rejoinder was, "The best thing you can do for me, or for this work, is to get busy and get your own God-Realization." I pray that, in some small way, this book will inspire you to do exactly that.

Yogacharya David R. Hickenbottom

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